

I'll add my welcome to that of Pastor Bolt. It indeed is a joy to be gathered this day. Reading from the scriptures from the book of 2 Kings, chapter 22. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedediah, the daughter of Adediah of Bozoth. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David, his father. And he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan and he read it. And Shaphan the secretary came to the king and reported to the king. Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and had delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have oversight of the house of the Lord. Then Shaphan, the secretary, told the king, Hilkiyah, the priest, has given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaziah the king's servant, saying, go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that have been found for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book to do according to all that is written concerning us. And from chapter 23. Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. and all the people joined in the covenant. Have you ever lost something? Recently, my wife and I lost her set of keys. Now, this was a car to which we only had one set of keys. We were searching high and low for a couple days. And finally, it was found in a little container that was more popular during COVID that was used for sterilizing objects. We found it, finally. Well, you know what it's like to lose something. and then find it. But have you ever lost something and you don't even know that you lost it? You're so unattached to it. It's become so unimportant to you. You're so distant from it. You don't even realize that it's lost. Have you ever discovered something that you didn't even know was lost? It's hard perhaps for us

to understand, but that is what is going on in this passage. In the opening of 2 Chronicles 22, we learn something of the character of the great King Josiah. The description of the 16th King of Judah is glowing. He became the king after his father, Ammon, served only for two years when Ammon's servants put an end to his life. And King Josiah became a king at the tender age of eight. And he led in Judah for 31 years. And from the very beginning, we learn of the contrast between King Josiah and King Josiah's father and even his grandfather. His father, Ammon, as I mentioned, reigned for two years, we read, and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He walked in all the ways of his father and walked, served the idols that his father served and worshiped them and abandoned the Lord, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord. And Ammon's father, Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, was even more wicked. He was 12 years old, we read, when he began to reign. He reigned for 55 years. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. He rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah, his father, had destroyed, and he erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab, king of Israel, had done. He worshiped all the hosts of heaven and served them. We read that he did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. that he led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done. What a contrast to Josiah, for everything mentioned about him is positive. We learn of his mother and his grandmother's names. And then in verse two, of our chapter. We read that he followed the good path. He's compared to King David. He turned neither to the left nor to the right. So only King Hezekiah, who we considered last week, and now King Josiah, his great grandson, are said to have done things right. He is the last good king of Judah. And we read of him in the book of 2 Chronicles 34, that in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David, his father. This word of seeking God is a word that's used in the Old Testament for those that had a living and vital relationship with the Lord. It's used of Enoch, who knew God and who was no more. We read that when he was 26 years old, he established a royal decree related to the maintenance and care of the temple to see that the funding for the temple would be underwritten in the right way. We learn of his love for the temple. But in this passage, for just a few moments, after this kind of lengthy background, I'd like for us to look at three things. A powerful discovery in verses eight to 10. A glorious transformation in verse 11 through 13. And then finally, the inauguration of a reformation. That's in chapter 23, verses one to three. There was a powerful discovery

that was made. The southern kingdom of Judah was heading in the same direction of the northern kingdom. It was a time of great darkness, of spiritual blindness, much like the darkness and spiritual indifference that we encounter in our own day. It was a time when there was a rarity of the preaching of the word of God. When there was a famine of the hearing of God's word. Even in our own country, during the war between the states, The then President Abraham Lincoln made a declaration on March 30th, 1863. And part of it, Lincoln says this about our own country. We have forgotten God. We've forgotten the gracious

hand, he writes, which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. We have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts

that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming grace. and persevering grace, too proud

to pray to the God that made us. A period of distance from

God, of spiritual darkness. And this is what it was like

in Josiah's day. And then we read, while they're

working in the temple, We read from Hilkiah, the priest said to Shaphan the secretary, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave that book to

Shaphan and he read it. This is the book of the Old Testament,

at least the book of Deuteronomy, perhaps the whole Pentateuch,

the first five books of the Bible. And how striking that the very

word of God was lost in the very temple of God. And how true that

can be of the church down through the ages when we neglect the

truth and power of God's word and of the gospel itself. Because the king, he was charged

with making his own personal copy of God's word. The king

should have known better. The people of God were to hear

the word of God every seven years at a special gathering, it was

to be read to them. But not so in their days. And we read that Hilkiah, the

priest, and Shaphan, the secretary, read and take the book, the book

of God's word, of his law, the very testimony of our true and

living God, something that was lost, something that was forgotten,

something that was distant from the people. It was so lost they

didn't even realize that it was gone, God's own word. There was indeed a powerful,

a great discovery in this passage. But we learn secondly here that

there is also a glorious transformation in verses 11 to 13. God's word can change the trajectory

of someone's life. Perhaps it has changed your life

as you have read the word of God and the living God has opened

your mind and your heart and your ears to the glory of his

truth and his word and the greatness of our savior that the word points

to so that you are born and given new life. Well, King Josiah was

touched deeply by this word, the law of the living God as

it was read to him. We read that he tore his clothes as an outward and visible sign of his inward distress, his spiritual brokenness and need. He knew that he was undone before God. that he fell short of the requirements of God's word and God's righteous kingdom. And God gave him a soft heart, a tender heart for the word and for his own need of forgiveness. The Lord, perhaps as God worked in David in Psalm 51, verse 17, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. Oh Lord, oh God, you will not despise. The king realized the great chasm between what the word and the way in which he and the people of God were living, and it pierced his soul. How important it is for us to each receive the word of God for what it is, to allow it to penetrate into our thinking, into our living, that it's not just an academic exercise to fill us with knowledge or to puff us up. He has a deep response. In his name, Josiah, which means whom Jehovah heals comes to fruition, for he is healed, as it were, transformed by the word of God. Matthew Henry says that the word became the richest jewel in his crown. Do you see the word of God as something all together, something that is truly precious to you, deeply, sincerely, something without which you are not able to continue? A few years ago, during the time of the Reformation, when God brought light, a rediscovery of his word and his gospel to his church where there had been darkness. Martin Luther, one of the leaders by God's grace of this reformation, was summoned to appear at an imperial court of the Pope and Emperor Charles, Charles V. they required Luther to come and to either defend his teaching or retract his teaching. And when he first appeared at the imperial hearing, he would ask if he would repudiate his writings. And after a fitful night of sleep and a night of remarkable prayer, he appears on April the 18th, 1521. And he makes a very significant speech that concludes with these words. Since your most serene majesty and your lordships require of me a simple and clear, direct answer, I will give you one, and it is this. unless I am convinced by the testimony of scripture and clear reason, for I do not trust in popes or councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves. I am bound by the scriptures I have quoted. My conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot nor, and I will not retract anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I can do, I cannot do otherwise. God, help me. Amen. The word of God is what is central for the church of God. And we learn from Josiah that we are to be men and women and young people of the book, committed to Scripture and its authority. to feed upon the word of God, to draw strength from it, and to order our lives by it, to

have a confidence in the scriptures, the holy scriptures from God that are true, that are infallible, that are inerrant in what they teach, and they're all sufficient for us to live the Christian life. It is this that God has chosen to so anoint to bring transformation. The Apostle Paul speaks in Romans 12 about the Christian being renewed, being transformed, not squeezed into the mold of this world as the world keeps, tries to squeeze us into its mold. Instead, that we might be transformed by the living, the true word of God. Martin Luther, again, reflecting on God's word as God brought reformation to Europe. He's reflecting on it and he says this. about the success of the Reformation. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's word. Otherwise, I did nothing. The word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing. The word did everything. And it's that same word that is given to us and trusted to us that we might be changed by it. There is an inherent power in the true and living word of God as the Christian takes it in. We are changed to become more like our savior Jesus, Josiah, transformed by the word. And then finally in this passage, the opening of chapter 23, verses one to three, we get a snapshot of a deep reformation that was begun or inaugurated. We find Josiah himself as the king gives himself in whole-souled, whole-hearted commitment to doing whatever God had said. In Jesus's first miracle, remember the instruction of his mother, Mary? Do whatever he says. Well, the attitude of young Josiah is that God's word would be obeyed and honored, that his testimonies would be kept, that we would follow his statures. He was determined to do everything in his own power with God's help to keep the written word of God. It's a solemn, sacred vow for him. And as the king made the promise, as he stands by the pillar as a testimony, and as he gathers all the people around him, great and small, the princes, the priests, the Levites, the moms, the dads, even the little ones, it says, that they all would hear the word of God and be changed by it. And it was the Bible in their own language. At the time of the English Reformation, William Tyndale had a little testy conversation with a priest. Tyndale argued that what was needed in the church was a better understanding of the word of God, of the Bible. And the priest replied increasingly that insisting upon what is needed is a clear pronouncement of the Pope. And Tyndale in this conversation got exasperated and said, I defy the Pope and all his laws if God so preserve my life that even a young plowman, a young boy who's working in the fields will be able to teach even the Pope. And he gave himself to the translation of the Bible in English. What we now have received is a faithful translation of the word of God. The king had a great

enthusiasm for the word of God. And chapter 23 outlines his steps of reformation to bring the kingdom back in line with biblical principles. that God's people, that God's church may live according to the word of God. It's the biggest reformation that we see in the Bible. And it was according to the word of the book that Hilkiah found. He got rid of the prostitutes that were there by the temple as the temple was dedicated to the Canaanite gods. There were even dorms built for them. He broke down the high places and he contaminated them with unclean pagan bones of the dead so that no one would go there. He put an end to child sacrifice and worship, the worship of Moloch. but he also established new habits and new thoughts, new patterns of obedience to God's clear revealed word, especially in this restoring the covenant ceremony of the Passover. We read at the end of his ministry, For no such Passover had been kept in the days of the judges who judged Israel or during all the days of the kings of Israel or the kings of Judah. But in the 18th year of King Josiah, the Passover was kept to the Lord in Jerusalem. It was a great day of celebration, of worship, of reformation. When the reformer John Calvin made his way to Geneva, the worship services became warm and lively in that the word of God was proclaimed and the people of God received it as it is with truth and with faith, with an eager expectation. of hearing the voice of the living God, the good and faithful shepherd of his people. And it changed, it transformed their entire community. It brought reformation to Geneva. Think of how education was transformed. as the Geneva, the academy at Geneva admitted boys and even girls to it that they may learn and learn about God and his word and be able to read the scriptures. They had a concern, not only for the mind, but for the body as well. They started a hospital. and they developed a sewer system to help promote health. And there was the marvelous care for the needy, and the poor, and the refugees, and of the thousand or so missionaries that were sent out in Jesus' name across the globe. In the early 1800s, We find in the church history in Europe that there were faithful men and women who believed the word and the gospel, who preached. The men preached the word of God and marvelous things occurred in bringing transformation to Europe and to the communities in which they lived. But by the end of the 1800s, Ian Murray writes of this in one of his books. He talks about how that at the end of the 1800s, that the focus was on perpetuating these different institutions and organizations and beginning to lay aside the centrality of the word of God. And what happened was a great disaster and set the stage for later liberalism. is there was a departure from God's word. God's word does its work. He brings renewal. He brings transformation. He brings life where there is once spiritual death. And he brings

change to our lives as we give ourselves to his word, as we receive it, we are changed by it. And we pray that as in Josiah's day, that he will use it to bring refreshment, spiritual refreshment and renewal in our own community, our own church, our own city, our own state and nation. Those who have studied the history of reformation and renewal have each had a fervent prayer. God, do it again. As we study and consider Josiah, and last week as we considered Hezekiah, his grandfather, our prayer should be God, do it, do it again. Begin in me and change us as your people. We're so enriched by the faithful preaching that we receive Sunday morning and Sunday evening. May it be a profit to our own hearts and souls for the glory of our great God and marvelous Savior. Let's give Him our joyful thanks. Let's pray. Our Father and our God, we come to you for we are needy We face desperate situations, living in a day of spiritual darkness that seems perhaps at one level to be growing, and yet we know that you are the God of light and of life, that you have given us your word. We pray that your word would not be lost to us or to your church, that there might be a continual discovery and adventure of meeting you, our true and living God, as your word is proclaimed and as it is read and studied. Use it to change us. Use it to bring renewal and reformation for the glory and praise of your excellent name. Our hearts adore you. and praise you that as we open your word, we meet with you, the God of grandeur and majesty who created the heavens and the earth and who has made us in your image. Help us as your servants to listen, to learn, to be changed. In Christ our Savior's name, amen.