

June 4, 2023
Trinity Sunday
Pastor Matt Duerr

PPP-Headline Recovery

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father, and our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. Well, as we continue with our PPP sermon series, (that is Powerful Prayers of Pentecost) we remember that it's powerful because we're talking directly to God and Christ the son of God has promised us the Holy Spirit who comes with power as a result of our prayers.

Today we're going to continue to look at the power of those prayers. I would first like to start with then a little commentary on life in America or life in the world today. I'd like to take you back to the late 1970s. I was in high school, and I was in a journalism class. I was actually the copy editor and the sports editor for the highly esteemed Bronco Roundup high school newspaper. One of the things that we were taught in journalism is that you need to catch the reader's attention. This was done first with a headline. The headline needed to be short but use very catchy language. I won an award for an article that we wrote titled "Outward Bound Calls You." It got people's attention. We won an award for the thing. Then comes the lead. It's the first sentence in the story and again the emphasis here is short and catchy. Mrs. Martinson told us that if your lead has more than 11 words, you've already lost the reader.

Well, let's fast forward now to 2023. Headlines-shorter is better; catchy, extreme language is gonna get you the clicks; and we don't really read paper newspapers anymore we do almost all of it online. And the lead, where we were told or less, the goal today is 3. Why? Well because readers have very, very, short attention spans and we like to be entertained. The result is super hyped headlines and lead sentences in the stories. And another result is that we feel like we're bombarded with catastrophic, so much drama, news. And this results in a feeling of hopelessness, everything's out of control, we're doomed and so we get depressed.

Which is kind of like the life of a prophet who had extreme messages. If we look at the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; their message, their

headline, their lead, was boiled down to one word WOE. Which again, is the opposite of the word hope in the Bible. Hope is an assured expectation. We have the hope of eternal life with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ in heaven. It's not wishful thinking. It's a guarantee by God because He sent His son, who died on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, is going to return and take us home. He went through all of that to finish that. We have the guarantee, it's going to happen. That is biblical hope an assured expectation.

Woe is assured condemnation or destruction. It's God's extreme message; repent or die. But what does that look like? Well, if we go to the prophet Amos, he gives us a little bit of a look into how it happens and then what happens when you don't pay attention to God's one line headline. WOE-Amos paints a picture of privileged wives demanding more. Their husbands want to please their wives, so they get their wives more. But they do this at the expense of others. It's a culture of greed. We always want more; using violence if necessary to get it all because we are wrapped up with self pleasure. I want this, I want that, I did that. We end up replacing God with "I." And what does Amos say happens when we do that? Well, when you do that condemnation comes. God allows an enemy to come, and the men are going to die in the breaches of the wall. When the other army comes and they break down the wall, that foreign army is going to come rushing in and they're fighting against them and they're going to be killed. That foreign army is going to come in and they're going to see all the children and go 'children, getting them back to our area, that is going to be way too much work. Kill all the children. Now the wives, and all the young ladies, why they're good looking. Let's take them home with the spoils of war. And so, they would put hooks in their noses, all tied to a long rope. And Amos says, "they will be paraded out through the breaches, walking past all of their dead husbands."

Wow! About this time, you're saying, 'hey Pastor, these are happy times, happy thoughts. I'm afraid it also is a commentary on today because when we look at the news, everything is alarming. We've got climate change, if we don't change it, we're going to die. We've got all the transgender, queer, focus on equity and diversity, and all of that stuff combined with climate change. And then we go to throw in the critical race theory that our children are being

taught, which is just a bunch of bunk and garbage. And then you look at the headlines, and you see Ukraine, Russia, China, North Korea-war is imminent! Not to mention, the debt ceiling. And if we default, well, it's going to be economic collapse. Then I bet you could throw another 50 or so headlines on there.

And about now, you might be saying, Pastor, yeah, it's kind of like the prophets. How did the prophets make it through? Meet Daniel, one of those prophets, one of the great prophets. When we look in scripture, he is clumped together with Moses and Joseph. Two awesome and inspiring servants of God, who both went through unbelievably hard times. I mean their life was on the line and God told them, trust me, stand in your faith, do what is right, and I will deliver. And He did!

And so here's Daniel, this guy that is taken away in captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in the battle of Babylonians. And he's well he's of the royal family in some way or another we don't know how. He's good looking. He's smart, but he along with his cohorts, Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego are now going to be trained in the Babylonian way of life which includes eating non-kosher food. And Daniel very calmly talks to, his name was Ashpenaz, who is the king's individual servant who's in charge of these potential wise people. And he says, 'hey, I don't want to defile myself before my God. Could you put us to a test? Let the four of us here, the four Hebrew guys, let us eat kosher food 10 days at the end of 10 days judge us versus the other guys. If we look better, then let us keep eating kosher food. And if we look worse well, OK, we'll eat the pigs. At the end of 10 days, they looked better, and when it came to aptitude testing, they were wise enough, in fact, to interpret king Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

But yet so interestingly, when Daniel is brought before the king, and he has the interpretation of the dream, as well as what the dream was about, because that was the challenge. Tell us tell me the dream and its interpretation. When Nebuchadnezzar asks him, do you know the dream, do you know the interpretation? And Daniel says, 'no, I don't, God does. And God gave me this message.' And then gave him the dream, gave him the interpretation. He gave all the glory to God. He was wise enough to know, he needed to give the glory to God and not himself.

He was of course promoted because he was wise enough to be the head of all the wise men. And later, number two in command of all Babylon. He was wise enough to read the writing on the wall when king Belshazzar was having that great feast using the items, the vessels from the temple. He was wise enough when Babylon was overthrown by Persia to become one of the three governors over all of Persia. He was wise enough to know that when king Darius made a decree that you cannot pray to any other God other than himself; Daniel was wise enough to keep praying to the Lord. In the open so the other governors and satraps would see him, report him, get thrown in the lion's den, and be saved by God's Angel.

He was wise enough as a result, to become the only governor in Persia; because the other two governors and all those satraps became lions' food. Talk about drama! Trials, captivity, Daniel is way up there. What was behind Daniel's success, behind that faith? What did Daniel do? And what can we learn from him? What can we take to heart? And that is my plea. That is my plea this morning. Please take this to heart! This is Daniel, this is one of the big three. He was living in harder times than us, but this is what he did.

Number one, he prayed three times daily. Prayer is powerful! Number two, he read scripture. What was the result of his reading scripture? He was reading the prophet Jeremiah, and I quote, "he perceived the number of years that had to pass before the end of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely seventy years." So, he looked at the time that they were taken into Babylon, and he saw it was supposed to be seventy years in exile, and he realized hey it's been about sixty-eight, sixty-nine years. I better take what I have learned in scripture and apply it. He took it seriously. What was Jeremiah's message from the Lord? Woe, you're going into exile unless you repent. So if you want to come out of exile, what do you think the Lord expects? Follow the message of all the prophets. Repent! Acknowledge your sin, confess your sin to God. Turn from that sin. Learn from the past.

And so, number four, Daniel repented. It began by fasting, withholding self-pleasure, and self-needs and putting God first. Next, he put on sackcloth, simple almost like a burlap bag. It was the cheapest clothing around, was the clothing of the servant, and it's his way of saying, I'm your servant O LORD.

And he sat in ashes, basically saying I'm dirt. From dust I was made, to dust I return.

Then he started to pray. He took those actions to get ready to pray. And he prayed. We read: then I turned my face to the LORD, (all capital letters) God. Literally Yahweh, Elohim, I am God, that God. Seeking Him in prayer and pleas for mercy. Oh LORD, don't give us what we deserve. That's mercy. "I prayed to the LORD God, and made confession saying," What did he say? Well, he began, just like we saw in last week's sermon with Jesus teaching his disciples to pray. And how do you address God? Jesus said, "Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." Daniel addresses God, 'O LORD, awesome God who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him.'

And or what's he do next? The very next word, we, (he doesn't point a finger) we. He includes himself. He knows he is also a sinner. We have sinned. We have done wrong, we have acted wickedly, we have rebelled, we have turned aside from your commandments, we have not listened to your prophets who spoke to our; and now please listen to this! Who spoke to our kings, princes, fathers, and the people. Notice the progression. He spoke to the king, it's the King's responsibility to preserve knowledge, to lead the people in God's way. If the king won't, its the Princes,' his son better do it. If they're not doing it, dads it's time to step to the plate and do what is supposed to be done. Raise your children in God's Word. And if they fail, then women, then children. Somebody, for Pete's sake, step up to the plate and do what you're supposed to do!

Next comes the reality check. To us, Daniel writes, to us belongs open shame. Again, there's no finger pointing, or blaming our stupid king, stupid prince. We are without excuse. We are really stupid. We are the problem. We should know better! The message was there, we ignored it, shame on us! But, 'to you Lord, belongs mercy and forgiveness.' Daniel ends this awesome prayer of repentance and confession still glorifying God. It's all about You God, to You belongs forgiveness. And so, he finishes out by saying, and please listen. "Oh My God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolation and the city that is called by Your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of Your great mercy. Oh Lord

hear, oh Lord forgive, oh Lord pay attention, and act delaying not for Your own sake, Oh my God because Your city and Your people are called by Your Name.”

What we need today is Powerful Pentecost Prayer and like Daniel, we need to read God's word and understand the times; be aware of what we are living in. It is a bad time; it could be the time that's leading right up to the very end where Christ returns. But you won't know that unless you read scripture. But if it is the last days, boy what is needed is we need to be fervently praying. Even if it's not the last days, because this world is a mess. And reality check, to us belongs the shame. It is shameful when we look at the things that I talked about before; so, caught up in war and critical race theory and gender ideology and climate change and all of this. We've turned from God and we're on the way to hell in the handbasket.

But our prayer to God is, “Lord please, for Your sake, show us mercy, and forgiveness. We were once known as Your nation; may we return to that. Bring us leaders who will lead us in that. Give us a pastors who will lead us in that. Give us congressman, senators, representatives who will lead us in that. Give us Supreme Court justices that acknowledge that You are above the constitution. Give us fathers who will lead their children in their house and in their neighborhood. For Your sake LORD, forgive us, have mercy on us, restore us, so that You may be glorified. We're not gonna take the credit for the change. Oh LORD, it is You who act, in accordance Holy Spirit led prayer of your people. In Jesus name, Amen