

Jesus' Family Tree 3: JOSIAH

2 Kings 22:1-13 [MW19-29]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai & Wellsford, Sunday 15 December 2019

Jacob was a rascal

- Rahab had a difficult background and personal circumstances to overcome by contrast the person from Jesus' family tree we look at this week is a thoroughly good bloke
- there is nothing bad said about him in fact he only made one recorded mistake admittedly it was a big one, but that is not important right now ...

What is important is to see what you know about King Josiah

- before this morning had you ever heard of King Josiah? do you every recall hearing a sermon preached about him? do you remember ever having a Sunday School lesson about him?

2 Kings 22:25 tells us:

Before him there was no king like him; no king turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his might ... nor did any like him arise after him

Which makes it all the more surprising that King Josiah, who had no equal

- is so unknown skipping over his reign would be like ignoring Richard Seddon in our history
- yet apart from three places in the Old Testament Josiah is not mentioned at all

So just who is King Josiah?

- his great-grandfather was Hezekiah who was a pretty good ruler his grandfather was Manasseh who ruled for 55 years and was evil for all 55 of them!
- his father was Amon who ruled for two years and a miserable and wretched two years they were

That is 57 years since there was a good king

- who is 57 or older? that is a long time – 19 parliamentary terms! 19 consecutive bad governments!!!
- who can remember what it was like 57 years ago? sorry, I can't who was New Zealand's Prime-minister then?

At the time Josiah became king things were worse than pretty bad

- but that was not unusual the people of God in their own land seemed to be on a downward slide to destruction caused by idolatry and godless behaviour
- the good kings who did what was right were vastly outnumbered by the bad kings who did evil

It was always like one step forward worshipping the Lord

- followed by ten steps back worshipping idols and the bottom had not even been reached yet!
- the Lord was going to send the Babylonian army to destroy them because having been given every opportunity, they would not change they would not repent and turn back to the Lord their God

This was the situation when Josiah became King

- and the amazing thing is he was only 8 years old!
can you remember what you were doing when you were 8?
- what was your spiritual life like, your relationship to God
your understanding of your destiny and purpose???

2 Chronicles 34:3 records that:

When Josiah was only sixteen years old he began worshipping God, just as his ancestor David had done. Then, four years later, he began to purge the kingdom of idols, shrines and sacred poles ...

Josiah is serious - he has a burning desire to get rid of all this junk

- to destroy the horrible things that had been worshipped
he grinds the images to powder and burns the bones of the priests
- he has first hand involvement in ripping away and tearing down everything false in his kingdom

However it is when Josiah is 26 that something remarkable happens

- the Temple had fallen into a terrible state of disrepair
because every bad king either did not care or allowed horrible things to go on
- Josiah tells the high priest to use the money which has been collected to 'fix the place up'!
- in the process the workmen come across a scroll buried under a pile of junk
it is the "Book of the Law"
- the "Book of the Law" was lost in the Temple!
it would be like us losing our Bible here at Christ the King
and not even noticing, not missing it for years

Josiah has the scroll read to him and as he listens is overcome with fear and grief

- for the scroll contains the word of God for the people of God
and as he listens Josiah realises the wicked things the nation has done
as well as the things they were supposed to do, and have not
- the consequences are clearly spelt out
the people have broken their covenant with God
and they will be punished severely if they do not repent
- in response Josiah tears his robes as a sign of deep repentance
and sends the high priest and other officials to check out
the nation's spiritual health and their standing with the Lord God
- the more that was read from the book of God's law
the more Josiah realised the gap which existed between God's law and people's lives
- and he was moved to do something about it

Josiah was only 26 years old

- he had been a follower of the Lord for only ten years
yet note his authentic and mature response to hearing the Word of God
- Josiah calls the people together
together they listen as the Word of God is read
together they recommit themselves to live as the people of the Lord God

2 Chronicles 34:31-33 tells it like this:

After Josiah had finished reading he stood in the place reserved for the king. He promised in the Lord's name to faithfully obey the Lord and to follow his laws and teachings that were written in the book. Then he asked the people to make that same promise and to obey the God their ancestors worshipped. Josiah destroyed all the idols in the territories of Israel, and he commanded everyone in Israel to worship only the Lord God. The people did not turn away from the Lord God of their ancestors for the rest of Josiah's rule as king.

Which seems a pretty good result all round

- 57 years of bad leadership and false worship ended
the nation back on track as the people of God
- everything is sweet
just like a Mills and Boon story with a 'happily ever after'

And yes it was happy, but unfortunately it was not ever after

- you see, like I said at the beginning, Josiah was a thoroughly good bloke
who only made one mistake
- however it was a costly one
for all his life Josiah obeyed the Lord God
except, except when the Lord told him not to go out in battle against Egypt
- for some reason Josiah did not listen
and marched against Neco the king of Egypt and was fatally wounded
- however the last words recorded about Josiah, even after this
highlight that he *faithfully followed the Lord*

On a scale of one to ten Josiah's grandfather and father

- Manasseh and Amon score negative seven!
Josiah rates a positive nine point five
not bad, not bad
- unfortunately after him it all fell away
his sons and grandsons were terrible leaders
the nation ended up being taken away in captivity
- it seems that not even one good king
not even one *very good king* could stop the decline ...

So now hopefully we know more about Josiah than we did a few minutes ago

- and it is more than just a story about a good king in a dark time
there are things that we can learn from Josiah
and apply in our day, apply in our own life and circumstances

From Josiah himself we can see that you are never too young to serve God

- remember he was just 8 years old when he became king
- 16 when he made a commitment to follow the Lord
- 26 when he helped a whole nation turn around
- we also learn that worship and devotion to God come first
that is the foundation, everything else comes from that

The situation Josiah faced in some ways looked pretty hopeless

- how do you stop a nation and people who seem hell-bent on destruction
it might have been easier for Josiah to throw in the towel
than undertake what some have described as
“the most ambitious religious reform in history”
- a greater change in many ways than Martin Luther and the Reformation

Did Josiah know how these reforms would be received?

- did he think the repentance of the nation would be short-lived?
was he aware that people's hearts were as hard as sun-baked clay in the desert
- perhaps, perhaps there were always signs of this
yet he still did the right thing
- he was determined to do what was right and leave the results up to God

We can be encouraged by that

- not to give in easily or throw in the towel
when it seems our efforts have little or no reward
when perhaps it seems what we do and how we live makes no difference
- Josiah did not give up, nor should we
Josiah remained faithful to what he knew was right
even when everything else seemed against him, so should we

William Wilberforce was a great Christian and vigorous opponent of the slave trade during the early 1800s. As he surveyed the terrible moral and spiritual climate of his day, he did not lose hope. He wrote, "My own solid hopes for the well-being of my country depend, not so much on her navies or armies, nor on the wisdom of her rulers, nor on the spirit of her people, as on the persuasion that she still contains many who love and obey the gospel of Christ. I believe that their prayers may yet prevail." Within a few years after he made this statement, the country he loved experienced one of the greatest revivals in modern times. We sometimes think we can't make a difference. WE CAN! Our life lived for the glory of our God matters!

Remember Josiah – he did what was right and made a difference

- his life is a blessing and encouragement to us
we can proudly take our place and respond to God's call
and know the blessing of being a daughter or son of God
- and as we faithfully follow those, who like Josiah, have gone before us
we make the way for others to follow
- that is what it is to be in the family of Jesus