

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 14 April 2024
Sermon Title : In God We Trust
Speaker : Rev John Foo
Text : Zechariah 10:1-3

INTRODUCTION

Zechariah is one of the Old Testament minor prophets called by God when he was young and his contemporary was another familiar minor prophet, Haggai. His prophetic ministry was during the Persian rule when the Jews were returning from captivity. God called Zechariah to urge the Jews to start rebuilding the temple, to restore the pure worship of God and wait with hope in the expectation of the coming Messiah. Zechariah is a messenger of hope but in his heartening message in Chapter 10, the Jews were to be mindful of certain things which will help them to avoid suffering the same kind of punishment that their fathers had suffered.

These may be some of the things that it will do well for us to observe as well in our relationship with God.

1. Never Take God's blessings for Granted

Zechariah began the chapter with the word 'Ask'. Rain is essential for a predominantly agricultural society, so it sounds normal to ask for rain from the Lord. But why asked God for rain since it was the season of spring rain, and from the Lord who makes the storm clouds? Why ask the Lord for something that is expected to occur as it will be redundant since God is the one who made everything, the whole creation including the whole earth – He sets the seasons in its place and nature around us in this world, setting all the natural processes in nature in its place. If God has set everything in place, why ask God for something He will do anyway in its proper time and natural process of nature?

- Zechariah was to bring hope to the people who were returning in Chapter 10 and even in Chapter 9 he was already painting a blessed picture of restoration of the Jews by God. But in their return, the Jews could not afford the same mistake that their forefathers made – taking God for granted. Their fathers took for granted that their God would bless them, look after them and protect them because they were the covenant people of God; the chosen people of God. They assumed that since God had chosen them, God would surely look after them. So, they started behaving in any way they wanted taking for granted that God would bear with them, continue to love them, and show mercy to them. Hence, they started

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indulging in all the pagan things around them even though they were the chosen covenant people of God. Zechariah was sent to ensure the returning Jews would not make the same mistakes and ignore God or take God for granted. Hence, his call for them to ask rain from God, turning to God as their provider.

- They needed to ask before the Lord will send His blessings because their asking posture was an expression of their faith. Asking from God is also an indication of their submission to Him, their trust and faith in Him and their dependence on Him.

We too need to ask from God by praying and talking to God and commune with God for His blessings and provisions. We need to pray sincerely from our heart, prayers that show our conviction in our faith in God, prayers that connect us deeply with God. Prayers that move mountains, that will move the hands and heart of God to act.

Our problem could be that we do not pray or ask because we take for granted that God would naturally bless us. Some of us think we only need to know about God and what He has done as that already puts us on His team and so He should take care of us and bless us. We need not talk to Him because He already knows what we need, and He should just carry on blessing us.

- God knows we need Him and all the needs we have in our lives, but He wants us to ask Him and tell Him that we need Him before He will open His hands to bless us, that is His way of blessing us. If we do not ask, we will not receive. (James 4:2) But even if we asked, we might not get what we prayed for because we asked with wrong motives. (James 4:3) It is not a blanket request, but we still need to ask for what we need.

Jesus in Matthew 7:7-8, says we are to ask from God. It is God's design for us to ask Him as asking is an expression of our faith in Him; that we trust Him to provide for us. It pleases God when we His children ask Him. That is the Father's heart of God. God is waiting for His children to come and ask Him so that He can give and bless us with the things we need in our lives. We have a generous God who wants to give and bless us generously. But we need to ask Him because that is His principle of blessing.

- Zechariah gave the Jews the assurance that if they ask of God, He will give them showers of rain, heavy enough to produce vegetation for everyone. That is the kind of abundant blessings that God wants to give us if we ask of Him.

2. Never look to other places for blessings

There are other things that we can, will and do turn to for blessings. Zechariah reminded the people that the household gods that their forefathers turned to, utter nonsense, the diviners see lies, tell false dreams and give empty consolation. (v.2)

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They did that because they thought these things would bless them. Unfortunately, they made a mistake and in turning to these things, they got lost.

- To avoid looking for blessings elsewhere, we must be utterly convinced that – God is the only source of blessings and there is no other.
- We must believe that every good and perfect gift is from above coming from God Himself. (James 1:17)

Unless we believe that God is the only one who can give us true blessings, we will always be looking elsewhere for our blessings. The solution is that we must believe that God is the only one who could provide for us.

What the household gods and diviners give may appear to be blessings, but Zechariah declared them to be nonsense, lies, false and empty. Such are the things that are around us as well. We may have things around us that lure us to trust them. They may appear to be real, but they are counterfeits and definitely not harmless. They do not give us real blessings as they take us away from God by making us focus on and chase after these things.

One example is mammon (money) and some of us have a lot stashed up for retirement or investing and waiting for the day because we are putting our security, hope and dreams in it, thinking these will give us blessings of contentment, fulfilment, affirmation etc. If we look for these blessings, we will be like what Zechariah was warning the Jews – wander around like lost sheep, afflicted for lack of a shepherd.

3. We have a God who cares

Let us turn back and look to God as the real source of blessings and ask of Him because we have a God who cares. We must truly believe that God cares for us and when we do, we will turn to Him, trust Him and ask of Him. Zechariah assured the Jews that the Lord cares for His flock and He will never leave them. Like Zechariah's assurance to the Jews, we need that assurance that we have a God that cares for us, who will look after us if we put our complete trust in Him.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps, we are looking at the wrong places to provide for us and something is lacking in our lives. It is time to turn back to God and ask of Him and He will give us more than we can imagine. Ask of Him and only Him and not from anywhere else. Let us not only ask God when bad things happen to us, when we are desperate and forget that behind all good things is a God who cares for us. God is reminding us to put our trust completely in Him, to ask of Him, because He cares and He is the only source of true blessings.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

- 2a. Since hearing the sermon, how have you been asking God for His blessings?
- 2b. How has knowing that we can be seeking blessings from the wrong places even as Christians, helped you to avoid making this mistake?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

2. Read Zechariah 10:1-3 slowly and reflectively.
 - a. In what ways could you have been taking God for granted?
 - b. What can you do to ensure that you do not continue to take God for granted as in 2a above?

3. How ready are you to ask God for help and blessings?
 - a. How does that reflect your attitude and posture towards God and your relationship with Him?
 - b. What is one action you need to take to be sincere in praying and trusting God?
 - c. How can your group members support one another to stay committed to achieving 3b. above?

4. 'The Lord of host cares for his flock' (Zechariah 10:3).
 - a. How much do you believe that the Lord cares for you?
 - b. Does the way you live your life reflect your belief that 'the Lord cares for you'?
 - c. How may you build your faith to increase your trust in God? Share some concrete steps you or your Life Group would like to take for this coming week to show your trust in God.

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

6. Share your testimony on how the Lord blessed you when you asked sincerely.

OR

Give thanks to God that He cares for us and is always ready to bless us abundantly with every good gift that comes only from Him.

7. As a group, go to God in gratitude, taking turns to express your sincere thanks for how He has cared and provided for, and helped you all these years. Seek His blessings in your areas of need sincerely as you pray and talk to Him. Commit to the actions and concrete steps to be taken for Question 3 and 4 to put your trust only and fully in God. Pray also that in all our church endeavours we will put our trust only in God.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. I Believe – Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7PRGMQxNcM>
2. Goodness of God – Bethel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f4MUUMWMV4>
3. Same God – Elevation Worship <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yse43TUrces>

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