

January 9-13, 2023 Edition

Following
The Year^(s) Of ^ Jesus Part 54

The Beatitudes: Blessed Are The Who?!?!

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday: "Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command- be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:6-9 (NLT)

Reflection: These are the devotional thoughts I put out just after Riverside lost our worship pastor of 10 years suddenly back in August of 2017. I thought it might be beneficial to look back at a time when we as a church were struggling through a very tough time and maybe it might help us as we work our way through an world filled with uncertainty. I hope they help you navigate whatever you're going through right now.

The last few weeks have been pretty brutal on all of us at Riverside Community Church. The unexpected and catastrophic loss of Pastor Jeff as well as Pastor Mitchell's announcement that he will be moving to Florida at the beginning of November has left us all reeling a bit (or a lot). As a leader at this church it has been a real struggle to try to provide much direction during this time and for that I apologize. With the loss of Pastor Jeff I don't just lose my worship pastor and the guy who took care of just about every technical aspect of Riverside's inner workings but also a brother in law- someone that I've known since I was 16 and someone who was one of my biggest supporters and encouragers. I truly don't know where grief over losing my brother in law ends and shock over how we will go on at Riverside without our spark-plug and my right hand begins.

So I truly don't know exactly what to say to everyone that calls Riverside home to make us all feel better. I am still in shock. I am still overcome by waves of grief on a fairly regular basis- especially when I'm at church trying to continue on putting one foot in front of the other. There is a lot I don't know but I do know this- God will never forsake us. He hasn't over the last 19 years as we moved towards this unprecedented place in our history. He didn't during the last 10 years while Pastor Jeff led us in worship every weekend and made my job and life the easiest and most fulfilling it's ever been. He didn't forsake us two weeks ago as Jeff had a massive coronary event and left this world, his family and this church to try to figure out what next steps might look like. I know it might feel like we've been forgotten about but we haven't. God is still in control even when it doesn't look like it. He is still in control even when we hurt. And God will lead us on from this place we find ourselves in. Over the last 19 years Riverside has learned a unique way of planning for the future. It's a strategy suggested here:

Since the Lord is directing our steps why try to figure out everything that happens along the way? Proverbs 20:24 (TLB)

There is A LOT that I don't know as I sit here typing this devotional today. There is A LOT that threatens to frighten me and discourage me and overwhelm me. There are a LOT of things I don't do not know but one thing I do know and believe with all my heart- God will continue to direct the steps of Riverside Community Church even through this dark time and we will not be shaken. We will overcome even this darkness. I LOVE one of the songs that Pastor Jeff

used to lead us in by Rend Collective called We Are More Than Conquerors. As I sit here today this verse is running through my mind over and over:

We are more than conquerors, through Christ. You have overcome this world, this life
We will not bow to sin or to shame. We are defiant in Your name
You are the fire that cannot be tamed. You are the power in our veins
Our Lord, our God, our Conqueror

I may not know what the future looks like for Riverside but I know this- in Christ we are more than conquerors. And if Christ is for me then it really doesn't matter who (or what) is against me:

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:31-39 (NLT)

And so we can be (and indeed are commanded to be) courageous and defiant in the face of death, sin, shame, regret and fear. What happened to Pastor Jeff sucks (sorry if that word offends you- Connie would be aghast... she hates that word) and I can't say I fully understand it. I don't know why God wouldn't step in and do something. I don't know why He doesn't just fix all of this for me. For all of you. I don't know. I have to admit to more than a few feelings of anger and resentment towards God over the last couple weeks. I hate to admit it but there it is. And even so I know God can handle my deep disappointment and confusion. I know even in the midst of all of that I am more than a conqueror.

And so rather than trying to figure out everything that happens along the way I will continue to just look for whatever the next step God is laying before me in a series of steps as He directs my path (and all of yours as well). So I guess this brutally honest devotional is my next step. Not an easy one but I'm so tired of trying to figure out everything that has happened and everything that will happen on this path God is leading me (and all of you) on. I'll pray for all of you and you guys pray for me. I'm sure it's going to get easier for all of us. I'm sure that after this weekend of putting on a church service without Jeff for the first time in 10 years a bit of this heaviness will be lifted off my chest. And we will follow Jesus wherever He leads.

And. We. Will. Conquer. (whatever that looks like).

Tomorrow we will begin looking at what this looked like in the Bible.

Tuesday:

Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-Nissi (which means "the Lord is my banner"). Exodus 17:15 (NLT)

Reflection: This story in a way illustrates something Moses said WAY back in the book of Exodus. Moses and the people of Israel had been in a fight for their lives and God had come through and brought them victory so Moses erected an altar and named it, "Jehovah Nissi" (the LORD is my banner). Basically what Moses was saying was, "this is the God who defends. This is the God who has my back. This is the God to turn to when the odds are stacked against you."

What do you do when the odds are stacked against you? What's your strategy for surviving when you're stressed out or worried? I don't know about you but it happens to me plenty so this is actually incredibly practical advice for me. Maybe for you too. But before we look at this story I want to talk a little bit about what Jesus had to say about worry. Jesus Himself spent an awful lot of time talking about worry. Do you know what His policy on worry was? Don't do it.

So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Matthew 6:31-34 (NLT)

That's Jesus' advice for worry. Don't do it. It will rob you of the energy you need to take care of the stuff you can actually take care of (your part) so God can take care of the stuff you can't handle (God's part). Figuring out the line between where my responsibility ends and God's begins is not always easy. In fact, it can be incredibly tough. I would say at least half of the time someone wants to meet with me it's because they think I can tell them where that line is (and then tell them what God's part will actually look like and either God isn't sharing that info with me or I'm just not smart enough to see it. What do you worry about most? How does it make you feel to know Jesus said not to worry? Does it make you worry more? I wonder how the people He was speaking to in the first century felt about His advice? Sometimes I wonder if maybe it was easier for them than it is for me. Maybe because things were simpler it was easier not to worry? Think about the crowd Jesus is talking to- did they have it easier or tougher than us? They were poor, lived on less than \$1/day, no medicine, no universal healthcare, plagues would sometimes wipe out 1/3 of a city, many of them were slaves, odds were only 1 in 3 babies survived and average lifespan was 30. Living conditions were pretty tough for people in Jesus' day so anxiety/worry level probably pretty high.

Over last 2000 years conditions have improved a lot. We are better educated, healthier, better resourced, wealthier, cleaner & freer. So isn't it great we don't have worry anymore. We've pretty much eliminated that from our lives! Not so much, huh? Depression & anxiety are more common now than in Jesus' day even though by objective standards we have it so much better now. That's what Jesus is getting at here... if you think more money, health, success will free you from worry you've got another think coming. You will never get the

worry free life through improved circumstances (more wealth, better health, etc.) the only way to less worry in your life according to Jesus is to put your life in the hands of the Father.

Jesus is incredibly realistic. He never says to just pretend bad stuff isn't out there. He never says that His teachings are about storm avoidance... they are about how to handle it when we find ourselves in a storm of life. The Biblical definition of "peace" isn't the absence of conflict in our lives (that's great when we can get it but how often do you get there and how long do you remain in that place?) but the ability to remain calm and focused no matter what storms are raging in your life. Have you ever just wanted to say, "stop the world... I want to get off!"? How do we handle days like that? Weeks like that? Months like that? Years like that? That's what one of the things the Bible does really well- shows us how others have handled those kinds of moments.

The Bible shows us multiple times when people were in storms they didn't know how they were going to get through and how their faith got them through whatever storm they were facing. Maybe not in the way they would have picked... but God got them through. This week we're going to look at how God got king Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah through one of the darkest moments in Judah's history. What's the point of the story? It's an example of the power of the God we serve. It's a process for taking your faith to a place its never been before. It's not a recipe for controlling God. It's not a formula for getting exactly what you want exactly the way you want it. It's an invitation to let God be God and remind ourselves that we aren't Him.

Wednesday:

After this, the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat. Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar." (This was another name for En-gedi.) 2 Chronicles 20:1-2 (NLT)

Reflection: Today we begin looking at a story from the Old Testament. In this story the nation of Judah is threatened by a coalition of nations that wanted them gone. In other words- Judah and king Jehoshaphat were in a very difficult and troubling situation because they didn't have the resources to fight off this threat. How king Jehoshaphat handled this situation can teach us a lot about how to handle it when life knocks us for a loop which I don't know about you but for me this seems like it might be incredibly timely advice for all of us here at Riverside right now.

Once the king found out about this situation he did something brilliant- he turned to God first. I don't know about you but often my first thought when I hear something troubling isn't to turn to God. I hate to admit it but there are times when I have to remind myself that my first step should be asking for God's presence and intervention in the things I go through. But that's exactly what king Jehoshaphat does in this story. When he hears about this threat the first thing he does (maybe after changing his shorts? Too much? Sorry but that reminds me of a silly joke and you know how much I love silly jokes... ;o)

There was a sea captain who was attacked by pirates. When he was told the pirates were approaching he asked his first mate to fetch him his red shirt. The first mate wanted to know

why the red shirt? The captain said, "there is a good chance I'll be wounded in this battle and if I am I don't wish my crew to know so they don't lose heart in the midst of the battle. With a red shirt my blood will be hidden and my crew will not lose heart!"

The first mate was super impressed. This happened a few times and each time the captain and the crew fought off the attackers. Then one day the first mate ran to the captain to tell him that not one but five pirate ships were bearing down on them at once (sort of what happened to Judah). And the captain said to his first mate, "please bring me my brown pants!"

Sorry... I couldn't help myself ;o) But there actually is a point to telling that joke that was at least approaching the line if not sliding right on across it- king Jehoshaphat doesn't decide that he has to appear unfazed in order to win the battle. He is "terrified" according to this story (and today I can identify with him) and he doesn't try to hide it by requesting a certain color shirt or pair of pants. His strategy is to immediately ask for God to join him and the nation of Judah in the situation they find themselves in.

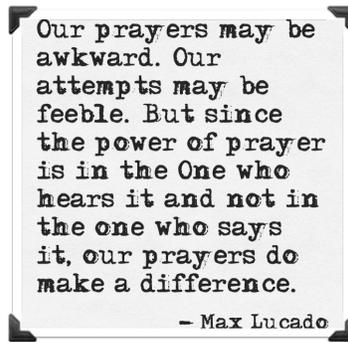
Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance. He announced that everyone in Judah should fast during this special time of prayer to God. The people of Judah came together to ask the Lord for help; they came from every town in Judah. Then King Jehoshaphat went and stood before them and prayed aloud.

2 Chronicles 20:3-5 (NLT)

Have you ever heard someone say, "well... I guess the only thing left to is pray," and everyone will shake their heads like they can't believe it's come to that? That is not what's going on here. Jehoshaphat doesn't immediately do everything he can think of on his own and then after exhausting his own resources turn to God and then invite Him into the situation. He turns to God first. Not only does he turn to God first, but he invites the entire nation of Judah to pray with him and when everyone arrived the king stood up and prayed out loud. This is REALLY smart... to ask other people to pray for you. I don't know if it was this part of the equation that tipped the scales in Judah's favor but it's worth mentioning. What would have happened if the King hadn't asked everyone to pray? Would things have turned out differently? I'm not saying that they would have but it's an interesting question, right? When it comes to prayer, the more the merrier as far as God's concerned. There just seems to be a correlation between prayer and results in this world.

Did you know at Riverside we have an email prayer chain? We have people who pray for requests that are brought to Pastor Ed here at church or through the prayer request cards in the chairs or through the prayer request link online. All you have to do is send a note or email and Pastor Ed forwards that on to the team and you'll have tons of people praying for you and your situation. And by the way... if you'd like to be part of the prayer team just email Pastor Ed and he'll add you to the chain. It's really very important... and you see just how important in this story. Prayer changed everything for Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah.

It doesn't mean that there won't be steps that God asks Jehoshaphat to take as the story unfolds. In fact, God does ask Jehoshaphat to do his own part and that part turns out to be pretty powerful stuff but it's not because the actions in and of themselves were inherently a great strategy. It's because when we do what God asks/requires of us and don't charge



beyond that point thinking we've got to "help" God miracles happen- whether we notice them right away or not. And while I think figuring out exactly what God is asking us to do and then doing that and no more can be a fine line that's tough to distinguish it is absolutely imperative that we look for that fine line and do our best to stay behind it. When we do we see God's power unleashed in our lives and into the bleakest situations we've ever seen.

So what's got you down today? Is there anything causing stress or anxiety or worry in your life? How about today you and I do our best to remember to turn to God first? Don't do anything else- just invite Him into the situations that are troubling you. Tomorrow we'll talk about the next step but for goodness sake, don't decide to handle it yourself by putting on your red shirt ;o)

Thursday Reflection: So when faced with a situation that worried him, king Jehoshaphat turned to God first. But what then? What do I do once I turn to God? Well, it's actually pretty simple and yet it can be intimidating if we're not careful- he prayed and told God exactly how he was feeling. I think a lot of times we're unsure about prayer because we don't feel like we know how to pray. We've heard other people pray but we feel like our prayers are somehow less powerful because they're not as flowery or impressive. But prayer isn't about your ability to pray- it's about inviting God into your life. Take a look at this quote from Max Lucado:

What's Max saying? That the power in prayer doesn't come from our ability (or inability) to pray poetic, flowery or impressive prayers. The reason God wants us to pray is not so we can get really good at praying- it's to cultivate our connection with Him. You can't expect to decide to pray for the first time in your life when you are in the midst of one of the most severe storms of life you've ever encountered and feel peace because of it (which doesn't mean you shouldn't pray if you've never prayed before- just don't expect for it to feel natural or for you to feel a connection when you pray that you never felt before). Prayer is a spiritual "discipline" or habit. The more you practice it the more connected you will feel. It's like playing the piano. You wouldn't go to bed tonight wondering if you'll be able to play the piano when you wake up tomorrow. No matter how much you'd love to be able to play you know that in order to make playing beautiful music a reality you'd have to practice.

First you'd have to learn the basics- reading sheet music; where do I put my hands?; what are those pedals for?; am I supposed to crack my knuckles before I get started? Then you would probably take lessons and practice- a lot. Your teacher would probably have you playing the scales over and over again. Why? So I could be really good at playing the scales? No. I

practice so eventually I can be free to play beautiful music. The same thing is true with prayer. The point of prayer isn't to get really good at impressing other humans with our ability to string all the right cliches together in just the right way with just the right intonation. The point of prayer is connect with the Father.

To that end, when you pray don't worry about how you sound. Just tell God how you feel. Are you scared? Tell Him. Are you sad? Cry out to Him. Are you happy? Tell Him and thank Him for the good things in your life. The more you do the more of God's power will be unleashed into your life. I mean, look at this prayer... does it seem like these words were especially tough for Jehoshaphat to figure out?

We are powerless against this large army that is attacking us. We don't know what to do. 2 Chronicles 20:12 (NCV)

That's as plain a prayer as you're ever going to hear. And it's interesting that it's not exactly the way most leadership books would tell you to behave as a leader. Never let them see you sweat. Always appear as though you have everything under control- even if you don't. That's what most leadership training would tell you. But God's not looking for the most beautiful prayer He's ever heard. I mean, if you're poetic by nature then go ahead and speak poetically but God isn't any more impressed by a prayer that is poetic and impressive sounding than He is by a five year old's prayer for their sick pet. God just wants to hear what's on your heart... so tell Him.

That's what the king does here. He admits that this is beyond anything he can handle on his own. Leadership gurus may frown on this prayer but it turns out it was a brilliant strategy on the part of the King and unleashed the power of God into this situation. So how about you? Do you have something in your life that you have no idea how to handle? God specializes in those kinds of scenarios. Tell Him what's going on and how you feel about it. Not because He doesn't already know but because there is just something powerful about talking to God about the things we are experiencing. But that's not the final step that Jehoshaphat takes in this story. There's more but we'll leave that for tomorrow...

Friday Reflection: So far we've seen that king Jehoshaphat turned to God first and then he told God exactly what was on his heart. The next step is incredibly important- trust that God will help you. Once you've done everything you know you're supposed to do in a situation then you hand the rest over to God and trust that He will help you. And trust doesn't mean that you're not still concerned. Trust is more about commitment than it is 100% certainty. And thank goodness- because when we turn over a situation to God we're never sure how He's going to help us. We're never sure what the end result will be. I don't know about you but that keeps me on my toes. I want so badly to be able to control the outcome of things. I am pretty good at having an idea of where I want to go and how I want to get there (they may not be a good ideas but I get them anyways and they seem so right to me). But there are some things that just aren't in my control.

I'm guessing that's how King Jehoshaphat felt. They were totally outnumbered. Nothing short of a miracle was going to save them. The king turned to God first, he told God how he

felt and now he shows his willingness to trust God with the outcome. Look at what he says in his prayer:

We don't know what to do, so we look to you for help. 2 Chronicles 20:12 (NCV)

Have you ever prayed that prayer? Have you ever admitted your powerlessness to God? Have you ever admitted your powerlessness to God out loud in front of other people? I'm telling you... we don't like to do it but there is power in admitting our weaknesses. I know that seems strange but it's true. You see it throughout the stories in the Bible. It's like when a toddler doesn't want a parent to help them do something that they obviously can't do for themselves but the parent just stands back and watches until the toddler realizes they can't do it on their own and so they ask for help. When we try to handle something we really can't handle on our own I picture God doing the same thing- standing back until we recognize we can't do it by ourselves and then stepping in and helping us and blowing us away by His ability to do what we couldn't do on our own. The trick for me is being patient and trying to calm down while waiting to see what God is going to do. I know you've been hearing a lot about King David over the last few weeks. He was someone who seemed to know a lot about this concept. In the 23rd Psalm David wrote this:

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Psalm 23:4 (NLT)

He doesn't say he won't wonder how it's all going to turn out. He doesn't say he won't be concerned. He just says he won't let fear knock him off course. And this isn't something you just decide your going to do. Just saying, "I'm not going to be afraid... I'm NOT going to be afraid..." doesn't really work, does it?

I have two extremely cute grand-nieces (and two extremely cute grand-nephews too but they are too young to have experienced this yet) in Southern California- Tara & Hollie. Whenever I visit they will ask to play hide-and-seek. If I hide somewhere that's the least bit dark they will hold hands while they approach the shadows repeating, "bunnies are brave... bunnies are brave... bunnies are brave..." I don't know why? I think it was a book they read that gave them that idea. But I tell you about it because just repeating the words doesn't really work (although it is extremely cute). How do I know? Because if I were to jump out and scream "BOOOO!" at them they'd shriek and run out of the room. I haven't done that to them but I always think about it and smile a little mischievously to myself even as I scold myself for having that thought in the first place. But even if I stand stock still and quiet when they finally see me they jump and gasp a little.

So what does work? Practicing my connection with God. Working through it with smaller things so that when the truly massive things come along we've already seen what God can do with smaller things. This is just another part of what we've been talking about with putting on the armor of God- you have to be practicing it before you really need it. If you're in the midst of a battle you don't know how you're going to win this will be much harder if you haven't been training for it. It doesn't mean God won't help you but the more you practice and train before hand the more equipped you'll be to handle whatever life may throw your way. So Jehoshaphat turns to God first and tells God how he feels and then decides beforehand that he is going to trust God with the outcome. Look at God's response:

Listen, you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, march out against them... But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you... Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the Lord is with you! 2 Chronicles 20:15-17 (NCV)

Do you remember a couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the fight between David & Goliath? Do you remember what David said to Goliath? It was eerily similar to what God is telling Jehoshaphat here. The battle isn't yours... the battle belongs to God. God promises to help Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah in this fight but God asks a lot from them. Do you see what God is asking from the King and from the army here that might be difficult for a king and an army? He asks them NOT to fight. He asks them march out and line up in formation but then to just stand strong in their places and watch what God does. I imagine that's not an easy thing for a soldier to do. Can you imagine if you were a general and you went to your troops and told them the plan?

Sometimes the things God asks us to do don't make much sense to us. Sometimes it takes a lot to trust God and not take it upon ourselves to make it happen. But the trust is a HUGE part of this process. Our faith or commitment to do what God asks even when it doesn't make sense will change the world but it will often make us very uncomfortable first. Tomorrow we'll talk about the final step that Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah took but for today spend some time thinking about how you might be able to figure out what God is asking from you and what he is not. It's not an easy thing to figure out but the process of learning will change your life (and that's how God changes the world- one life at a time).

Saturday Reflection: The final piece of the equation that unleashed the power of God for king Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah was all about trust- they thanked God in advance for whatever it might be that He was going to do to save them. This step is not easy but there's real power in this step. To thank God for something He's already done is gratitude and that's really important... but to thank God for something He has yet to do and trust Him to do it and trust Him and not try to manage the outcome... that's faith.

Some of you are in struggles right now that you have no idea how you're going to get out of. You have no idea what's going to happen and you're worried. What would it even look like to thank God in advance for whatever you're going through right now? Well, I don't know exactly what it would look like for you but do you know what it looked like for king Jehoshaphat? And it was kind of strange.

He goes back to his generals and says to them, "ok... here's the plan. We're going to assemble the armies and march out for battle but we're not going to engage the enemy. That's right... we're going to stand still no matter what the other armies do. No... I don't know what the other armies are going to do but this is the plan for us not for them. Then we're going to take the worship team and we're going to put them out in front of our army and they're going to sing... yeah... that's right... the worship team will be out in FRONT of the soldiers between our army and the armies that want to destroy us. What then? Well, then we wait and see what happens. The worship team will sing and the soldiers will stand in formation and we'll see what God does. Ok... sound like a plan? Then let's get moving!"

How do you think the king feels giving these orders? How do you think the generals feel hearing them? How do you think the generals feels relating this battle plan to their soldiers? How do you think the soldiers feel when they hear the battle plan? How about the worship team? How do you think they feel? But do you want to hear about a miracle? The greatest miracle that happened that day might not be what God does after everybody does what they're supposed to do. The greatest miracle may be that everybody was willing to do their part in what sounds like an absolutely crazy plan.

But they do. And do you know what song they sang? A song we still sing today. In fact we did sing it last weekend at Riverside. Remember when we sang the song called, "Forever"? That song comes right out of the Bible from this particular story. Look at what the Bible says:

The king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising Him... This is what they sang: "Give thanks to the Lord for His faithful love endures forever!" 2 Chronicles 20:21 (NLT)

Can you imagine singing that song when you're not even sure how God is going to answer your prayer? Because that's a big part of this story- nobody's sure how God will intervene. And when you or I pray and ask for God's intervention in our own lives we're not sure what that's going to mean. What He's going to do. I don't know about you but I'm almost always sure how I think things should work out when I pray but faith is when I trust God enough to thank Him in advance for whatever He does in my situation. Sometimes God doesn't do what I want Him to do and I don't know why that is but I've also noticed that God knows better than I do. It's not an easy thing to remember but there it is. So the worship team starts singing- thanking God in advance for whatever He's going to do and look at what happens:

At the moment they began to sing and to praise, the Lord caused the armies... to begin fighting among themselves, and they destroyed each other! 2 Chronicles 20:22 (TLB)

Can you imagine that? In this case they don't take any casualties which I imagine was a HUGE relief for the worship team, right? And Judah is safe for the time being. And this is a fantastic story but you've probably noticed that things don't always work out that simply for us- the way we'd choose for them to work out- why is that? Well, that's another lesson for another time and we don't really have time to get into why that is today. This lesson is about trust over worry. This lesson is about giving God the outcome and thanking Him in advance for what He's going to do. It's not always easy but as we practice this it will lead us into lives we never dreamed were possible.