

**'AN EASY THING'****2 KINGS 3****[St Mark's Northbridge, January 19, 2020 – All Services]**

As a dad one of the things I've always loved doing is watching movies together with my kids

And over Christmas I was reminded again how much fun it is, because now it's become a Christmas tradition for my daughter, to watch "Home Alone" at Christmas time.

To recap on the movie: It's just before Christmas and the family are all leaving together to fly off to France for Christmas. As a punishment, the youngest son, Kevin is made to sleep in the attic. The next morning the family sleep in and then race to the airport, just making the flight. The plane takes off, mum and dad are sitting on the plane, mum says to dad, "I've a terrible feeling we didn't do something – did we set the timers for the lights, did we lockup, did we close the garage door - Kevin!!

They've left Kevin, behind

The slapstick antics that follow are very funny but in all seriousness, how could they go off and forget their son?

How could they be so distracted that the most important becomes an afterthought.

But how often in our own day to day lives do we get distracted and step out forgetting the most important?

It's what happens in our passage this morning – 3 Kings step out forgetting the one essential item they need most – God.

But before we go much further and to understand a little more about King Joram, his circumstances, the current state of his relationship with God we need to travel back in time to Moses.

A time when Moses and the new generation of Israelites are just about to enter the promised land and Moses stops to prepare and equip Israel for what's ahead - it's recorded for us in the book of Deuteronomy:

He covers a lot of ground: how they should live, what they should do, who they should associate with, when they'd be blessed, when they'd come under God's judgement and for us this morning most importantly who a king should be and what this Kings should do:

I won't read it all, just a few verses, enough to provide insight into the characters, specifically King Joram

**Read Deuteronomy 17:18-19**

**In a sentence: The king is to saturate himself in the word of God and obey it.**

Well, eventually Israel do ask for a King, we read about that in 1 Samuel

King Saul, King David (a king after God's own heart), when we get to 1 Kings King Solomon, and then when Solomon dies and Rehoboam becomes King and as Simon reminded us a couple of weeks ago, Israel then splits into 2 kingdoms

- The south – that we know as Judah and
- The north - Israel

And instrumental in the split is the rebellious Jeroboam who is made king over Israel

As it turns out Jeroboam leaves quite a legacy for those who would follow him:

**Read 1 Kings 14:7-10**

And then before long we come to King Ahab, King Joram's father, in 1 Kings 21

**Read 1 Kings 21:25**

But surprise, surprise, Ahab repents, and disaster is averted or at least delayed

**Read 1 Kings 21:28-29**

And so, the dark cloud of judgement is ominous and threatening over Israel, as Joram, Ahab's son, becomes king

He inherits a kingdom in reasonable shape economically, politically and strategically but things have already started to fall apart, as we've already seen in 2 Kings 1, with Joram's brother Ahaziah

And so, we come to the start of this intriguing, somewhat random account of events

**Read 3:1-3**

Joram might be a massive improvement but: definitely not a king described in Deuteronomy 17

**verse 2** "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord"

Joram is still clinging to the evil of Jeroboam and whilst he's not as wicked as he could be, he's certainly not as righteous as he should be

Better does not necessarily mean good and just because we give up something really bad, doesn't mean we get to do, or justify doing something in our own minds that's a little better

But we move on and are introduced to Mesha.

Mesha is the King of Moab, who most likely under duress, had agreed to send a lot of sheep to King Ahab. But now, with a change of King in Israel, Mesha seizes the opportunity to renege on the deal by not fulfilling what seems like, a substantial debt

Understandably Joram is not pleased and sets about mobilising Jehoshaphat King of Judah and the king of Edom to help bring Moab back into line

They head off through Judah and approach Moab through the Desert of Edom

But the Troops and animals walk into disaster – their water supply is exhausted

And in **verse 10** Joram despairs pointing the finger at God, blaming God for the disastrous circumstances and all but gives up

**Read verse 10**

Many years ago now, my son was very sick in hospital.

At the time, I think I actually believed in God, I'd even learnt a little bit about God at Sunday school and through scripture

I wasn't such a bad person, you could even say I didn't do some of the really bad things others got up to

But with my son lying there in hospital I felt helpless, and just like Joram, I despaired, felt like giving up, I blamed God, and it never crossed my mind, to ask God for help

But Jehoshaphat, in stark contrast, does want to ask God for help

**Read verse 11**

So then Joram, the son of Ahab, ironically meets Elisha the successor of Elijah

Remember, Elijah had been the one who'd proclaimed future judgement on those who would follow Ahab

And in **verse 13** Elisha picks up where Elijah left off

**Read verse 13**

But then, as at all great moments of Biblical history God's word intervenes

And we read about a really cool miracle, which leaves us in no doubt that God is the one who's made it happen

Not limiting himself to the precious water needed for men and animals God also provides victory over the Moabites – deceiving the Moab troops through a brilliant optical illusion **3:21-25**

But **verse 26 & 27** are not the ending we expect

Mesha, the King of Moab because he's about to lose, and lose huge, has two moves left and both are desperate.

The first - **Verse 26** – is going at it with more troops. But they fail

The second and most hideous - **Verse 27** – Mesha offers the one who would rule in his place, his first born, the most valuable thing he owns, in the most evil of ways, sacrificing his son and all hope for the future

But then Israel withdraw surprisingly and spontaneously. It's difficult to really understand why and to know for certain the source of the fury, but the conclusion is clear: Israel and Joram have been unable to escape the impending threat and ever present dark cloud of God's judgement.

So, what does all that mean, what can we take away with us as we go home to start our week?

Importantly:

### **1. What do we learn about God?**

Firstly, we learn that **God is sovereign and with that sovereignty comes power**

The idols, that Joram and his family before him, have turned to and relied on, are insignificant and powerless in comparison to God

When Elisha seeks the Lord – God's answer and God's response are remarkable

**Read 3:15-19**

Some of you might remember me talking about one of my heroes of the faith Florence Young. Florence was a missionary in the Solomon Islands:

She writes:

***“The result of our work... is a glorious proof of the mighty power of God - God is able to lift even savages out of the horrible pit of sin even though they're bound by chains of witchcraft, ignorance and cruelty”***

Yes, our God is sovereign and powerful and “It's an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord”, to save

But:

### **God does and will judge**

We saw God's promise of future judgement fall on Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14 and then on Ahab's descendants in 1 Kings 21

We've seen it in Elisha's response to Joram in verse 13 here in 2 Kings 3

And we see the threat of judgement still a reality when we come to the end of chapter 3

The same judgement that will eventually fall upon Israel at the hands of Assyria in 2 Kings 17

The judgement that will eventually fall upon Judah at the hands of Babylon in 2 Kings 25

The judgement that Jesus announces when he enters Jerusalem confirming: "not one stone here will be left on another" - the temple will be destroyed and Jerusalem torn down. A warning sign that a day will come when final judgement comes on the whole world

### **But this same God is also wonderfully gracious**

There's no way Joram deserves the mercy of a cup of water from God, let alone water flowing from every direction and a seamless victory over the Moabites.

He's been worshipping the prophets and idols of his mother and father

He may have destroyed a few statues but it's hard to get those words of **verse 2** out of our minds: "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord"

There's no seeking of God's direction before they trek 7 days into the desert, No, commitment, no loyalty, no desire to live for God, no humble dependence and no repentance

His little outburst in verse 10: one of despair not faith.

But yet, God's undeserved goodness and mercy are extravagantly bestowed on Joram with water and victory.

### **So, what about us? What do we learn about ourselves and what will we do?**

#### **There are likely some of us here just like Joram**

Like Joram we can hear about God, we can read about God, we can be told about sin and judgement. We might even believe it and sense that the Bible is right about sin, right about sin's consequences and even, that there is a hell or should be a hell

But oh, so sadly nothing is done. Too scared, too proud, too afraid of feeling bad to address the guilt or maybe unwilling to deal with the trauma of shame, wanting to protect a fragile sense of self

In Joram's case he despairs he's not willing to turn to and make a priority of the one thing he needs most – God.

But true repentance is not just about despairing, saying: I deserve judgement but rather it's humbly acknowledging to God that you need help and when you do: God's judgement is met with God's patient mercy and grace

**But many of us however will be already:**

Seeking and listening to God, acknowledging sin, confessing sin and seeking to please God

And you're safe and secure, at peace with God, forgiven and standing before him in grace everyday

However, a chapter like 2 Kings 3 prompts us to examine our hearts, prompts us to ask ourselves:

Am I still willingly and joyously participating in sin, hanging onto sinful habits?

Am I deceiving myself, committing sin in my heart that nobody else knows about, looking perfectly respectable with nobody having a clue what's really going on in my imagination or behind closed doors?

Asking, do I no longer notice the polluted air, I breathe, in the atmosphere of the sin in our city, in our world.

Do I get distracted, stepping out each day, forgetting the one essential item I need most – God.

I have no idea what might be going on between you and God, what you're thinking, what you'll do when you get home, what God has planned for you today, this week or next year. But what I do know:

A king, King Jesus, a perfect King came into the world, endured the shame and suffering of a cross, for undeserving people like you and like me

We're forever indebted to his saving power and his gracious mercy

Which is: ***"An easy thing in the eyes of the Lord"***