

June 18 — Love for God's House

READ

2 Kings 11:1-12:16

2 Kings 10:32-26

2 Chronicles 23:1-24:22

2 Chronicles 24:4, *"Now it came about after this that Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord."*

THINK

Have you ever walked by a dilapidated old theatre or previously majestic-looking building and pictured it restored to its days of glory? You can just imagine the outside lights, inner ambiance, plush carpet, and people's energy buzzing all around. Now, picture the local church, and imagine it being in disrepair. It almost hurts to think about your place of worship with doors hanging off the hinges, paint peeling, and an unwelcoming appearance. Well, that is what was happening in today's reading! Solomon's glorious temple had been neglected and was desperately in need of restoration.

As we've read, Israel had fallen under the reign of terrible kings who'd led the nation in a downward spiral of idol worship and pagan practices. Finally, a new king, Joash, took the throne and ordered God's people to right their wrongs. He ordered a chest be set up outside the temple for people to give as they felt led. And the people obliged, joyfully, and renewed their love and dedication to the Lord. Isn't it true that sometimes it just takes a little push to get us back on track? To refresh our heart for God and motivate us to give, just as He has given to us?

Although you attend a local church that's unlikely in disrepair, you can help restore lives and rebuild families through generous giving. This thought is echoed in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart ... for God loves a cheerful giver." Remember this, and let God lead you to give with joy to the only institution Jesus ever built — the local church!

PRAY

God, Thank You for the example of Joash! Open my spirit to commit to You in new ways because I truly want to have a heart for Your house so others can find a new life in You and ultimate restoration In Jesus 'name, Amen.

June 19 — Don't Stop Short!

READ

2 Kings 12:17-21, 13:1-25

2 Chronicles 24:23-27

2 Kings 13: 14-19, *"Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. 'My father! My father!' he cried. 'The chariots and horsemen of Israel! Elisha said, 'Get a bow and some arrows, 'and he did so. ... Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. 'Open the east window, 'he said, and '...Shoot! ... The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!' ... Then he said, 'Take the arrows, ... Strike the ground. He struck it three times and stopped. The man of God was angry with him and said, 'You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.'"*

THINK

As we go about living our everyday lives, we can forget how quickly time passes. Suddenly, the kids are going off to college, getting married, and becoming parents themselves. As time passes, we have to say goodbye to people who we imagined would always be there. In these crucial phases of life, we often recognize all-important words or lessons we need to say.

Perhaps this is what Elisha sensed as he spoke his last prophecy to Israel's king, Jehoash. Elisha had tried for so long to get through to him what God wanted to say. This last visit to Elisha tells us that the king's heart had finally been moved by the ailing prophet. We see that he intends to hear and follow Elisha's instructions as he sensed the limited time Elisha felt he had. Jehoash seemingly understood, and then, just like that, he fell short in completing the instructions.

There are times when we may feel like Elisha — trying so hard to convey a message that desperately needs to be heard, but the words don't seem to get through. There are also times we may feel like the student who stops just short of realizing God's best for our lives. Don't stop sharing the lesson with a heart of compassion and passion. And don't stop being teachable as you always strive for God's best!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I know that time can be fleeting. Help me to remain focused on You and following the path that You have for me. In Jesus 'name, Amen.

June 20 — Running Man

READ

2 Kings 14:1-27
2 Chronicles 25:1-24
2 Kings 13:12-13
2 Chronicles 25:25-28
2 Chronicles 26:1-21
2 Kings 15:1-5
Jonah 1:1-4:11

Jonah 1:1-3, *“The word of the Lord came to Jonah: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before Me. But Jonah ran away from the Lord ...”*

Jonah 2:1, 9-10, *“From inside the fish Jonah prayed: ‘Salvation comes from the Lord. And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.’”*

Jonah 3:3, 10, *“Jonah obeyed... and went to Nineveh ... proclaiming, ‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown. The Ninevites believed God. ... When God saw ... how they turned from their evil ways, He relented...”*

THINK

When God calls you to do something hard, to step outside of your comfort zone, what do you do?

The prophet, Jonah, was called to relay God’s message to others. But when God told him to go to an exceedingly evil city and tell strangers they needed to change, he tried to outrun God and hopped on a ship heading in the opposite direction! God wasn’t having it, and Jonah soon got the message. When a storm hit, Jonah knew that it was due to his defiance and asked to be tossed overboard to spare lives and calm the raging sea. But God had other plans — in the form of a large fish.

In the dark belly of the fish, Jonah turned back to God and eventually led the Ninevites to salvation. What had seemed like a daunting and undesirable task was God’s plan, and, therefore, Jonah’s mission was a huge success!

Jonah wasn’t a fearless hero — he was us. We’ve all tried to run from God. Maybe we fled from sharing the gospel, giving generously, facing fear, confronting an unhealthy habit, or refusing to let go of unforgiveness — only to run right into God. Yet, when we turn around in surrender and obey, we can accomplish amazingly God-blessed feats!

Every day we have two choices: run from God or turn toward Him. But, either way, we can't outrun Him! So, what's your turning point? A drastic situation? A guilty conscience? All you have to do is turn around. Today, will you say "Yes" to God's best? Even if it's hard, do it and be blessed!

PRAY

Lord, Thank You for Your mercy and grace. Whenever I try to flee from You, remind me to stop and turn around. Use me to accomplish great things in Your name! Amen.

June 21 — Love Your Neighbor

READ

Amos 1:1-6:14

Amos 1:1,3, *“This message was given to Amos, a shepherd from the town of Tekoa in Judah ... when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, was king of Israel. ... This is what the Lord says: The people of Damascus have sinned again and again, and I will not let them go unpunished! They beat down my people in Gilead as grain is threshed with iron sledges.”*

THINK

“Love your neighbor.” How many times have we heard that? It seems so simple, and in theory, it is. But it’s not as easy to live it out. Think about it. How many times have you passed by someone in need and maybe even felt a nudge in your heart to stop and help them and kept going? It may not happen all the time, but we’ve all been guilty of it at some point. Conversely, think about how our blood boils when we see or hear about people being taken advantage of by those who wield far more resources and power? We say, “Somebody should do something!” Yet, we fail to stop and consider that we may be that “somebody” God wants to use to bring about justice.

Today’s reading covers the majority of the book of Amos. He was a “somebody” God called into action. A man of simple means, he had a heart for the poor, downtrodden, and abused during a time of unparalleled success in Israel. The rich were unceremoniously taking advantage of the less fortunate — they had no love for their neighbor. Their arrogance, materialism, and overall sinfulness angered God, who is patient — but even He has a fuse length! So, did they listen to Amos’ repeated warnings? No! They considered him a mere nuisance despite his pleas for them to look beyond themselves and show others lovingkindness and compassion. They would soon come to realize God’s utter disdain for their hypocrisy and face judgment.

What can we learn from this? Everybody can be a somebody. No matter how much or how little we have, when we obediently place ourselves in Jesus’ care, He can use us — like Amos — to help right wrongs and be His hands and feet.

Bottom line: Love God and others as you avail yourself to His service. You never know what amazing purpose He has chosen for YOU to fulfill!

PRAY

Lord, Open my heart to the needs of others and help me to better “love my neighbor.” Alert me when arrogance or materialism get in the way of me fulfilling Your purpose. I want to be “somebody” who’s available to serve You, Father. Amen.

June 22 — Royally Ruined

READ

Amos 7:1-9:15
2 Kings 14:28-29
2 Kings 15:6-29
2 Chronicles 26:22-23
Isaiah 6:1-13

Isaiah 6:5,8, *“Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, Here am I. Send me!”*”

THINK

We all face moments in life when we feel like everything is ruined. A lost job, a broken relationship, a poor financial decision, or a moment of moral weakness can push us to despair. Phrases such as “God can never use me now” or “I’m so worthless” echo through our minds. But we must realize that they’re not God’s words — they’re the enemy’s lies. Therefore, we must be ready to battle such thoughts and feelings with TRUTH.

Isaiah encountered God, and in the presence of His holiness, he was immediately humbled by the awareness of his own sin and personal failures. Although he saw himself as “ruined” in front of the Ultimate Royalty, the prophet was not worthless or of no use in God’s eyes. In fact, he was soon emboldened by the encounter to throw off every bit of shame and doubt in order to respond wholeheartedly to God’s call.

Will you respond? God is calling you in a unique way, wanting to work through your abilities and talents to serve Him and bring glory to His name. Is there anything holding you back from answering His call? Be it pride or doubt, lay it all at the foot of the cross! He can and will use you to accomplish great things. He believes in you!

PRAY

Lord, You are holy, and I recognize that I am not. Here I am, ready to serve You wholeheartedly. Humble me, purify me, use me! Amen.

June 23 — Stand Firm!

READ

2 Kings 15:32-38

Micah 1:1-16

2 Kings 16:1-9

2 Chronicles 28:1-15

Isaiah 7:1-25

Isaiah 7:2, “The news had come to the royal court of Judah: “Syria is allied with Israel against us! ’So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, like trees shaking in a storm.”

Isaiah 7:7,9, “But this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘This invasion will never happen; it will never take place. ’If you do not stand firm in your faith, I cannot make you stand firm.”

THINK

Imagine sitting by a dock on the ocean in an untethered lifeboat, basking in the sun. Suddenly, you look up and realize that you’ve drifted far from shore. You trusted the craft to remain stationary, but there you are, moving farther and farther out. So, you put your faith in the wind to carry you back to shore — but the winds change. Then you hope that the ocean waves will carry you back to the dock — but a storm hits, and you’re now lost without any land in sight. Had you chosen to anchor the raft, to tie yourself to a reliable source that’s proven trustworthy, you would not be in such a predicament and fearful of being lost at sea.

In today’s reading, the Judean king, Ahaz, was overcome by fear over the news of a dual-nation attack. God sent Isaiah to tell him to “stand firm in faith” because it wouldn’t happen. He chose not to. Instead, he trusted in the “winds and waves” of idolatry, making sacrifices to false gods and many other evil practices. Although the enemy’s plan was thwarted as God promised, Judah endured many other attacks under his reign, and its citizens suffered greatly.

Detrimental consequences come with poor decisions. So, don’t drift on the seas of relativity or immorality. Instead, tether yourself to the ultimate Anchor, Jesus Christ, and stand firm with faith in His almighty power. No matter what life throws at you, trust that God will see you through as He pulls you into the safe harbor of His loving arms!

PRAY

Lord, Thank You for being the Ultimate Anchor. Give me the power to stand firm in my faith, no matter the circumstances. See me through each trial and deliver me. Amen.

June 24 — Mighty God

READ

Isaiah 8:1-11:16

Isaiah 9:2,6-7, *“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light...For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given ... And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

THINK

Almost 700 years before the first coming of Christ, the prophet Isaiah foretold the light and hope God would bring to the world as the Messiah. How incredible is that! We struggle with organizing weekend plans or deciding what to eat for our next meal, yet the God of the universe sovereignly arranged the world's salvation before the beginning of time. He knew His creation would fall into darkness and determined to prepare a way to have a relationship with Him, even before we existed. Mighty God and Everlasting Father, indeed!

Wherever you are right now, take a moment to pause and really let that sink in. The Creator of the universe has extended His love to you since before the beginning of time, just *waiting* to welcome you into His family. God cares and sent His only Son for *you*. All we have to do is turn our backs on stumbling in the dark, follow His radiant light, and allow Him to infuse our lives with His love.

PRAY

Praise You, Mighty God, for there is no one like You! Lord, shine Your light in my life today. I don't want to stumble in the dark any longer. I lay my life at Your feet. Thank You for giving us Your Son, Your counsel, and Your peace. In Jesus 'name, Amen.