

Sunday Sermon June 18, 2017

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 22: 10-28

Sermon Theme: No Other Claim Than To Stand on the Foundation of the Lord

¹⁰ Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. ¹¹ Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.' "

¹² All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."

¹³ The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably."

¹⁴ But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me."

¹⁵ When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?"

"Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand." ¹⁶ The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

¹⁷ Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"

¹⁸ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"

¹⁹ Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'

"One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

²² " 'By what means?' the LORD asked.

" 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said.

" 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'

²³ "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked.

²⁵ Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room."

²⁶ The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son ²⁷ and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.' "

²⁸ Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

Imagine you are an eye-witness to the events of 1 Kings 22. As this scene unfolds in front of you hear two very different things which "God" is saying. Who is really taking their stand on the foundation of the Lord, who is daring to make the Lord's claim and who is not?

You see two kings before you. King Ahab of Israel, wants to retake Ramath Gilead, a city he had lost some time ago. He could not win a battle himself, so he reached out to his relative King Jehoshaphat of Judah, for help.

Even though these men were related, these two men, kings and leaders of God's nation could not have been more different. King Jehoshaphat was a good and faithful king of Judah. The Bible tells us: "**The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baals, but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel...His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord.**" Jehoshaphat loved the Lord, tore down the temples of false gods, and restored the nation to worshipping the only God. He loved the Lord and walked in his ways.

King Ahab, on the other hand, was probably the most evil and sinful king Israel ever had. The Bible tells us: **“There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols...** It was Ahab who killed Naboth and stole his vineyard, it was Ahab who gave his wife Jezebel permission to pursue the prophet Elijah to try to kill him, and it was Ahab who built temples to false gods and encouraged his wife to build her false temples and train her false prophets. Ahab hated the true God and his prophets who spoke his Word.

But..... King Ahab needed help. He had played the family card in asking for an alliance with Jehoshaphat and Jehoshaphat had accepted with one condition: Before we go to battle, let’s seek the council of the Lord.

Ahab is one of the sneakier people in the Bible. He had planned ahead for a request like this. He had a contingency plan. He did not bring in one prophet to satisfy Jehoshaphat’s request, he brought in 400 prophets who would answer Jehoshaphat.

All around you there is joy and excitement. The celebration of victory has already started because first one, and then another, and then another claims not only victory, but that God has declared the victory is already won. Zedekiah even brings in those iron horns as a symbol of the victory.

Jehoshaphat is no fool, he knows that his cousin to the north has no love for the LORD. As these 400 prophets are dancing and prophesying in front of him, he makes a request, **“Is there not a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?”**

When you hear this, you want to laugh. You can hear the disdain in Jehoshaphat’s voice because he has seen right through Ahab’s lie.

Even though Jehoshaphat has insulted him by questioning his honesty, it doesn’t seem to bother Ahab at all. He wants this alliance badly. For this alliance, he is willing to bring in a true prophet of the LORD. But he tries to discredit him before he comes in. **“There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad.”**

Ahab sends his messenger to get Micaiah. What walks in is not another pompous, loud, jubilant prophet who is dressed in finery. In walks a man who is different. He does not look like the other 400 prophets, he is not acting like the other 400 prophets and he certainly does not answer the like other 400 prophets. Ahab asks him the same question, “Should we go to battle? Will we be victorious?” Micaiah answers with an underwhelming, “Sure, go ahead. You’ll win.”

You hear Micaiah’s answer and you know he is being sarcastic. Ahab knows it too. He is embarrassed and angry, but he must make a good show for Jehoshaphat. He yells at Micaiah, **“How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”**

Micaiah has everything to lose and nothing to gain by sharing God’s truth. He is standing before the king’s throne, with an army of false prophets standing against him, and there is a king who is known to be a prophet killer glaring at him from his throne. He has given the king an answer, but the king demands truth.

Micaiah dares to make no other claim than what the LORD has actually said, **“I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master. Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’”**

This was certainly an inconvenient truth to have to tell. Zedekiah’s slap rings through the room. Ahab wants to discredit Micaiah so that Jehoshaphat will not believe him. **“Didn’t I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?”** Zedekiah tries to make Micaiah’s message about the false spirit look foolish, **“Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?”**

With the king and his government and an army of false prophets aligned against him, Micaiah boldly took his stand on the foundation of the Lord. He made no other claim than what the Lord had told to him.

We are God’s children who live in this world. As we sang in the last hymn, we are built on the solid rock, the solid foundation of Christ. Yet, we face Ahab’s and Zedekiah’s in our life. We have armies of false teachers standing against us and speaking against the truth of the LORD even as Micaiah had against him. These false prophets and evil, unbelieving people want to chip away at that foundation, until it is no more.

When family members or friends are living in, or participating in open sin, aren’t they really asking us to look the other way to give them our approval as Ahab wanted from the Lord and Micaiah?

When society is mocking someone, a Christian, a popular figure or even a president, by tearing them down, lying about them, or belittling them, aren't they trying to get us to join in with them in their sinful behavior and say that it is right, just as Ahab mocked Micaiah and his message?

When the elected officials in our government, or our unchristian friends or family, tell us that faith in God is foolish and laugh at us for trusting in our Savior, aren't they really mocking God as Zedekiah did?

When our friends in another church tell us that their church is so progressive and loving because they are able to overlook differences in doctrine for an earthly unity, aren't they really asking us to overlook what God has said and speak a message this is a lie, just as Ahab did?

What do we do when our friends and family, even our government and society, stands in opposition to Christ and the message that we have to speak. It is very easy and convenient to give the world the approval they are looking for. It is easy to give our family members and friends the impression by our words and actions that their sins don't mean much to us. It is easy to join in with the mocking of others. It is easy to look the other way instead of saying something when the God's wisdom seems foolish to the world. It is easy to overlook the truth of God's teachings for the truth of the world.

When we do these things, it is no longer others that are chipping away at the solid foundation of Christ, it is our own sin and unbelief. We cannot blame these sins on the Ahabs of the world, it is our own sin which chooses to give in to the pressures of the world and not stand on the solid foundation of Christ.

Even before Micaiah came into the presence of the king, he was warned by the messenger of the possible outcome of speaking against Ahab and his prophets, **"Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Be like everyone else... tell him what he wants to hear. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably."**

Micaiah dared to make no other claim than to stand on the foundation of the Lord alone, **"As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me."** As Micaiah said, we just sang, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare to make no other claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

Our only hope as sinners is not built on the lies and shifting sands of the world, our only hope is built on the sure hope and foundation of Christ. Christ is the only hope, help and rock of salvation upon which the sinner can trust. God sent Jesus for us. Jesus lived perfectly in our place, he took the punishment we deserved. The help we need is not found in ourselves or in the world around us. Our only hope and help in this world lies in Jesus' blood and righteousness. His blood, shed for us, brings us the blessing of a righteousness from God, that the world can never give to us.

As Micaiah is being led out to prison, he gives the LORD's final words that he cannot be mocked. **If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"**

Ahab knew that Micaiah was not lying. He knew that Micaiah was telling him what the Lord said. Yet, Ahab still tried to fool God and cheat death. He had his royal armor put on another and he wore the common armor when he went into battle. But God would not be mocked, just as the LORD said the battle was lost and Ahab died.

Christ is the solid foundation of salvation. He is the truth which never changes. The words of the hymn we sang are so wonderful because they remind us we will face high and stormy gales, in life, but the truth of God's love remains constant. Satan will send his raging floods against us, but the truth of God's Word remains secure. Like Micaiah, led by faith, we confront the powers of this world. We stand toe to toe against kings and rulers, government officials, false prophets and unfaithful friends, family and neighbors alike.

We take our stand against the ever-changing winds of culture and boldly declare as Micaiah did, that we will not be moved, not by threat of violence, professional disdain, earthly or hellish power. By the grace of God and power of his Holy Spirit, we take our stand against anything that would try to separate us from the truth of God which leads us to heaven. We dare to make no other claim, than to firmly stand on what the Lord has said. Amen.