



L I F E I N T H E W I L D E R N E S S

In our sermon series, we've been following the Israelites' journey, filled with defiance, punishment, and divine instruction. Today, we focus on their final approach to the Promised Land. As they camped in the plains of Moab, Balak, the Moabite king, sought to curse Israel through the diviner Balaam, driven by fear and the allure of occult power. Despite his greed and repeated attempts to curse Israel, Balaam ultimately blessed them, illustrating God's unshakable protection and the futility of opposing His will. Balaam's story, including the miraculous speaking donkey and his eventual realization, serves as a reminder of the dangers of greed and disobedience and the power of God to turn intended curses into blessings. God's promises to Israel, and by extension to us, are immutable. We are called to trust in His unwavering love and protection, knowing that with God on our side, no force can prevail against us. Let us hold fast to these truths, stand firm in our faith, and rejoice in God's eternal blessings. If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Savior, now is the time to embrace the true joy and peace found in Him.

Monday: The Allure of the Occult

Devotional:

Imagine standing on the brink of the Promised Land, a moment filled with joy and anticipation. Yet, amidst this celebration, a dark plot is brewing. King Balak of Moab, overcome with fear of Israel's might, turns to divination and sorcery, seeking to curse God's chosen people through Balaam, a renowned diviner. Balak's fear drove him to seek control through spiritual powers other than God. This same desire for control leads many today to paganism, witchcraft, and other occult practices. As Deuteronomy 18:10-12 makes clear, such practices are detestable to the Lord.

Today, the temptation to explore the occult is very real. Many dismiss the Bible's warnings as outdated, but the appeal of the occult is rising. People are drawn to the sense of power and community it offers without the perceived constraints of traditional faith. However, this path leads to bondage and destruction. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:12 that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against

spiritual forces of evil. It's a stark reminder that the allure of the occult is not a harmless trend but a dangerous departure from the truth.

God calls us to trust in Him alone. The practices that Balak turned to in his desperation are still detestable to God today. Let us turn away from any temptation to seek power or answers outside of God. Instead, we must hold fast to our faith in Jesus Christ, knowing that His power and His plans for us are far greater than anything the world can offer.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think people are drawn to occult practices today?
2. How can we guard ourselves and our loved ones against the allure of the occult?
3. In what ways can we strengthen our trust in God when faced with fear and uncertainty?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your unwavering protection and love. Help us to resist the temptations of the occult and to trust in You alone. Guard our hearts and minds, and lead us in Your truth. Strengthen our faith so that we may stand firm against the schemes of the enemy. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday: The Allure of Wealth

Scripture Reference:

2 Peter 2:15, Numbers 22:9-12

Devotional:

Balaam was a man driven by greed, living off the dark arts of divination and sorcery. When officials from Moab and Midian came offering a hefty fee to curse Israel, Balaam's lust for riches was exposed. Despite knowing God's will, Balaam entertained the possibility of cursing God's people for financial gain. God firmly instructed him not to go with the officials or curse Israel, yet Balaam's desire for wealth led him down a dangerous path.

Today, we may not be tempted to worship other gods as the Israelites were, but idolatry is still very much alive. Wealth, status, and career can become idols if they take precedence over our relationship with God. Balaam's story teaches us the dangers of greed and covetousness. Paul warns in 1 Timothy 6:10 that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. We must examine our lives and ask ourselves if there are 'other gods' we have placed alongside or before God.

Balaam's story is a reminder to align our hearts with God's will, rather than trying to align His will with our desires. No amount of wealth or honor is worth turning away from God's commands. Proverbs 16:8 says,

"Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice." Let us strive to live with integrity, seeking God's approval above all else.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. What are some modern-day idols that can distract us from our relationship with God?
2. How can we ensure that our pursuit of wealth and success aligns with God's will?
3. What steps can we take to guard against the love of money in our lives?

Prayer:

Gracious God, help us to guard our hearts against the love of money and the allure of wealth. Teach us to seek Your will above all else and to find contentment in Your provision. May we live with integrity and align our desires with Your commands. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Wednesday: God Speaks Through a Donkey

Title:

Hearing God in Unlikely Ways

Scripture Reference:

Numbers 22:22-33

Devotional:

Despite knowing God's will, Balaam entertained King Balak's lucrative offers, arousing God's anger. God's response was to send an angel to block Balaam's path, and when Balaam couldn't see the angel, his donkey did. The donkey tried to avoid the angel, leading to Balaam striking it three times. God then performed a miracle, opening the donkey's mouth to speak to Balaam. Through this unlikely messenger, God revealed Balaam's disobedience and saved his life.

This story illustrates God's boundless power to protect His people and communicate His will. He used a donkey to thwart Balaam's reckless path, demonstrating that He can use any means necessary to fulfill His purposes. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 19:26 that with God, all things are possible. God's commitment to His people is unshakable, and He will use any means necessary to protect and guide us.

Balaam's story serves as a reminder to be attentive to God's voice, even when it comes through unexpected sources. Let us remain open to God's guidance and correction, trusting that He will lead us on the right path. Our obedience to God should be unwavering, free from the distractions and temptations of the world.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. How can we be more attentive to God's voice in our daily lives?
2. What are some unexpected ways God has spoken to you or others you know?
3. How can we ensure our hearts are receptive to God's guidance and correction?

Prayer:

Lord, open our hearts and minds to hear Your voice, even in the most unlikely ways. Help us to remain obedient and attentive to Your guidance. Use us for Your purposes, and let our lives reflect Your will. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Thursday: God's Unshakable Protection

Scripture Reference:

Psalm 139:5-6, Numbers 23:20

Devotional:

The Israelites had no idea of the conspiracy brewing against them by King Balak and Balaam. Yet, what was hidden from Israel was fully known to God. Balaam's attempts to curse Israel were thwarted by God, who turned intended curses into blessings. Balaam declared, "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel," pointing to Jesus Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises.

God's protection extends to threats we cannot perceive. We may never fully grasp the depth of God's shielding hand, but we can trust that He is always at work on our behalf. Psalm 139:5-6 reminds us that God hems us in behind and before, laying His hand upon us. This truth offers us comfort and assurance that no force can curse what God has blessed.

In moments of despair, when the darkness seems overwhelming, we can find comfort in knowing that God's blessings and presence are constant. His support is our shield, and His presence our fortress, offering us hope and strength to persevere. Let us rejoice in the knowledge that God is with us, protecting us from unseen dangers and guiding us with His unchanging love.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. How does knowing God's protection extend to unseen threats impact your faith?
2. What are some ways you can remind yourself of God's constant presence and protection?
3. How can you share the comfort of God's unshakable protection with others?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unshakable protection and constant presence in our lives. Help us to trust in Your shielding hand, even when we cannot see it. Strengthen our faith and use us to share Your comfort and love with others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Friday: Blessings Instead of Curses

Scripture Reference:

Romans 8:28, Numbers 23-24

Devotional:

Despite Balaam's initial intentions to curse Israel, God turned his words into blessings. Balaam proclaimed blessings over Israel, affirming God's promises to Abraham and speaking of Israel's future prosperity and security. He declared, "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel," pointing to Jesus Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. Through Christ, God's blessings are secured for all who believe.

God's power to transform intended curses into blessings is a testament to His sovereignty and love. Romans 8:28 assures us that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him. If God could bless through Balaam, how much more can He bless through Christ, whose blood secures our salvation? This truth reminds us that God's plans for us are good, and His blessings are irrevocable.

In our lives, we may face situations that seem hopeless or filled with adversity. Yet, we can trust that God is at work, turning what was meant for evil into good. Let us hold fast to the assurance that God's love and protection are unchanging. With God on our side, we are more than conquerors, and His blessings will prevail over any curse.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. How have you seen God turn difficult situations into blessings in your life?
2. What does Romans 8:28 mean to you personally?
3. How can you encourage others to trust in God's power to transform curses into blessings?

Prayer:

Gracious God, thank You for Your power to transform curses into blessings. Help us to trust in Your sovereignty and love, even in difficult times. Strengthen our faith and use us to encourage others to hold fast to Your promises. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Saturday: Rejoicing in God's Unchanging Blessing

Scripture Reference:

Numbers 23:20, Romans 8:31

Devotional:

As the Israelites stood on the brink of the Promised Land, they were unaware of the conspiracy against them. Yet, God was fully aware and turned Balaam's intended curses into blessings. Balaam declared that God's blessing is immutable and irreversible: "No force can curse what God has blessed." This unchanging truth offers comfort and assurance.

In moments of despair, when the darkness seems overwhelming, we can find comfort in knowing that God's blessings and presence are constant. His support is our shield, His presence our fortress, offering us hope and strength to persevere. Romans 8:31 reminds us, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" This eternal truth gives us the courage to face any adversity, knowing that we are safeguarded by God's unyielding power and blessing.

Let us hold fast to these truths and stand firm in the assurance that God's love and protection are unchanging. Rejoice and be thankful, for no matter the adversities we face, we are safeguarded by the unyielding power of God's blessing. With God on our side, we are more than conquerors, and His blessings will prevail.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. How can we find comfort in God's unchanging blessing during times of adversity?
2. What are some practical ways to remind ourselves of God's constant presence and protection?
3. How can we share the assurance of God's unyielding blessing with others?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unchanging blessing and constant presence in our lives. Help us to find comfort and strength in Your unyielding power and love. Strengthen our faith and use us to share the assurance of Your blessing with others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.