**Beware the Siege Mentality**

2 Kings 6:24 – 7:20

**When we refuse to adopt a defeatist mentality, and rely upon God, our battles are won.**

In compliance with Romans chapter 13 and out of respect for our Governor we have temporarily closed OSLC’s sanctuary. We urge worshippers to “shelter in place” as a strategy for defeating the coronavirus pandemic.

Short-term social-distancing and warnings against gatherings of more than 10 people may save lives. We pray this behavioral change will reduce the coronavirus spread, enough that our hospitals won’t be overwhelmed with patients. We gratefully acknowledge, as well, the human spirit (Micah 6:8) and ingenuity that God has invested in us. We truly *can* overcome difficulties that confront us (Romans 8:31-39, Philippians 4:13).

At the same time, we wisely recognize that government-ordered tactics simultaneously produce human costs. Income losses and family upheaval are consequential. Worldwide economic disfunction may cause tens of millions to lose their jobs as commerce and production are disrupted. Risk-avoidance may make future jobs less likely to develop. Government borrowing weakens every social safety net. These unintended effects are profound and will take years to repair.

Some in our media and government place faith in an assumed nobility of human nature and infallibility of bureaucracy to resolve whatever brokenness may occur. Some in business rely upon the free market to absorb losses and allocate resources. Some in the military and public safety call upon their training to maintain order. Some in education advance theories. Surely our temporal leaders and society will ultimately shift their virus-fighting strategy to something that is sustainable. We Christians appreciate a portion of all these perspectives but place our faith solely in God.

This is a good time to consult the Bible; particularly 2 Kings 6:24 – 7:20. There it describes a siege of Samaria, capital city of the breakaway and idolatrous tribes of Israel. They hadn’t been faithful to God, though he remained faithful to them. When they rejected his prophet and less gentle reminders, God brought the Syrian army against this city to wake his wayward people and bring them back into his grace.

The Syrian army surrounded and besieged Samaria. The situation became catastrophic. There was a great famine in the city; food and water became so scarce that a donkey’s head sold for more than two pounds of silver, and nine ounces of dove’s dung for about two ounces of silver. The famine was so bad that the Jews of Samaria resorted to cannibalism just to survive. The Israeli king said, “This trouble has come from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?” Elisha, God’s prophet, answered that tomorrow all would be well, “You will see it with your eyes…”

So it happened. That night the Lord caused the Syrians to hear chariots, horses, and a large army. They panicked, telling each other, “The king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!” They fled in the twilight, leaving their tents, horses, and donkeys behind. They left the camp standing and ran for their lives.

The next morning four unknowing lepers, exiled to die, went to the Syrian camp intending to beg for mercy. They found it abandoned; the Syrians had left behind all their food, drink, treasure and weapons. The lepers began to feast and then said to each other, “Today we have good news… Let’s go right now and tell the people in the king’s palace.”

So they went and called to the gatekeepers of Samaria. The gatekeepers shouted to the people. The king, believing it to be a trap, told his most trusted officer to guard the gate in order to keep starving Israelites inside the city. But people truly in need rush toward God’s incredible salvation.

Elisha had told this officer that all would be well within a day. Disbelieving, the officer answered, “Even if the Lord opened windows in the sky, that couldn’t happen.” Then Elisha said, “You will see it with your eyes, but you won’t eat any of it.” It happened to the officer just that way. The people trampled him in the gateway, and he died.

The Israeli king and his chief officer demonstrated siege mentality. Beware of it. We, too, occasionally face seemingly impossible circumstances. We may feel overwhelmed. But we are not. God is faithful.

Have you spent time in the Psalms? They are not sugarcoated. They are not happy-talk clichés. Cries from the Psalms are the echoes of life, drawn from blunt reality. One moment the singer stands on the rock of hope, the next he is struggling in the quicksand of despair; one minute he is shouting, the next he is shaking. One minute, faith thrills him; the next, fear threatens him. But always God is faithful.

Assaulted by an infinitesimally small virus, maybe we seesaw back and forth between confidence and collapse. A pandemic has laid siege against us. Our curative powers can only wait for deliverance. We’re told that our best hope may be to “flatten the curve”.

But struggles and victories have one common purpose: to create within us an insatiable hunger for God’s faithfulness. When we refuse to adopt a defeatist mentality, and rely upon the Lord our Rescuer, our Savior, no enemy can long prevail. We will not be defeated!

This is true of our health. This is true of our individual and societal prosperity. This is true of our future.

Sacrifice and patience may be required as we walk through very dark valleys, but ultimately our battles will be won. Our God is faithful! We will see it with our own eyes. He prepares a banquet for us even in the presence of our enemies; he fills our cup to overflowing. Surely goodness and love will be with us all our life, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.