

Lessons from Lepers

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- [0 : 00] Let us now read from the Old Testament, from the second book of Kings, on chapter 7.
- The Old Testament, the second book of Kings, on chapter 7. Then Elisha said, And there were four leprous men at the entry in of the gate, and they said to one another,
- Why sit we here until we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there.
- And if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, let us fall into the host of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we shall live.
- And if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight to go into the camp of the Syrians. When they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.
- [1 : 55] For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host. And they said one to another, And they said, And they said, And they said, And they said, And they said,
- This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us.
- Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city, and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians.
- And behold, there was no man there, neither voice of men, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.
- And he called the porters, and they told them to the king's house within. And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us.
- [3 : 49] They know that we be hungry. Therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.
- And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain which are left in the city. Behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it.
- Behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed. And let us send and see. They took therefore two chariot horses.
- And the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. They went after them unto Jordan. And lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste.
- The messengers returned and told the king. And the people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

[5 : 08] And the king appointed the Lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate. And the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

And it came to pass, as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel and a measure of fine flour for a shekel shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria.

And the Lord answered the man of God and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?

And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And so it fell out unto him, for the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died.

Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his truth. Let us further sing to his praise from Psalm 119, and at verse 132.

[6 : 26] Psalm 119, verse 132. Look on me, Lord, and merciful do thou unto me prove, as thou art want to do to those thy name who truly love.

O let my footsteps in thy word a right still ordered be. Let no iniquity obtain dominion over me.

From man's oppression save thou me. So keep thy laws, thy will. Thy face make on thy servant shine. Teach me thy statutes still.

These verses from Psalm 119. Look on me, Lord, and merciful do thou unto me, As thou art want to do to those thy name who truly love.

O let my footsteps in thy word a right still order be.

[8 : 15] Let no iniquity obtain. Let no iniquity obtain. Let no iniquity obtain. Thy own iniquity obtain. over me. From man's oppression save the week.

So keep thy laws, thy will. Thy face take on thy seven shine.

Teach me in thy sky to still. Let us now turn to the passage that we read from the second book of Kings and chapter 7.

Second book of Kings, chapter 7. Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord. Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.

[9 : 44] Then at verse 16. And the people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

By way of background information, after the death of King Solomon, who was reigned over Israel as a nation, the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

The ten tribes formed what became known as Israel. And the tribe of Judah plus some of the tribe of Benjamin formed what became known as Judah.

In the new Israel, Samaria became the capital city, whilst in Judah, Jerusalem remained the capital.

And the division of the nation rose mainly from a dispute about conditions of service. The opposition was led by a man named Jeroboam.

[11 : 11] His claim was that the ten tribes had been treated oppressively by Solomon. Your father, he says to Rehoboam, made our yoke heavy.

Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you. It's difficult to be a hundred percent sure how much truth there was in the claim or whether it was a ploy for political maneuvering.

At any rate, Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor to the throne, asked for time to consider the claim of Jeroboam and those he represented.

And Rehoboam consulted two different sets of advisors. We are told he first consulted with the old men who had served with Solomon.

And he asked the obvious question, how do you advise me to answer the people? And their response was, if you will be a servant to this people today and serve them and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.

[12 : 42] As those who had served under Solomon, given the wisdom that Solomon possessed, these men gave valuable advice.

They know that to govern, the king needed the consent of the governed, something that seems to be lost on many positions in politics today.

They were counselling godly humility, servant leadership, and moderation in exercise of power. However, that was not the advice Rehoboam wished to hear.

And so he decided to ignore the advice of the old men. He abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.

So he took advice from his own contemporaries, probably men in their 30s and 40s. How do you advise, he asked them, that we answer this people who have said to me to lighten the yoke that your father has put on them.

[14 : 09] and you get the sense that he is far more willing to listen to the younger element. There's no indication of prayer or guidance from the truth.

And you know, when we are young there is always the temptation to assume that the elderly are out of touch and out of date and that they don't know anything.

But the converse of that is that the old must not assume that they know everything and that the young know nothing.

You see, it's a two-way. There must be a balance stroke. There's always the temptation on the part of the young, the older people know nothing at all. and there's the temptation on the part of the older people.

Who do they think they are? We have much more experience. But there's a balance to be struck there between the old and the young and neither age group should be disparaging about the other.

[15 : 26] It's always wise to test things against the word of God. Well, the young men who had grown up around Rehobo, they gave him advice and the advice they gave him was this, thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, your father made a yoke heavy but you lightened it for us.

Thus shall you say to them, my little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. And now whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke I will add to your yoke.

My father disciplined you with whips but I will discipline you with scorpions. And the decision based on that advice had huge repercussions for the nation.

It resulted in the split of the kingdom and caused problems for centuries. enemies. Jeroboam, the new ruler of what became new Israel, stopped trusting God.

He introduced false worship, idolatry and flagrant contradiction of the second commandment. And that had huge repercussions for the nation.

[16 : 51] In the previous chapter to the one we read this evening, we are told how the Syrian forces made incursions into Israel. We are told of the siege of Dothan, how it ended in such humiliation for the Syrian forces.

And then we have an account of their next incursion where the Syrian forces besieged and surrounded Samaria itself. And this siege led to dire conditions in the city of Samaria.

The rich who could afford extortionate prices were eating poor fare. And the poor who had not the means to purchase the food that was available at such extortionate prices and it was poor food, they were eating one another.

In addition, an impatient king wanted Elisha dead. I suppose Elisha was a convenient scapegoat for the king.

So, three thoughts from our text this evening. First of all, a startling prophecy. Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and so on.

[18 : 16] Secondly, a surprising occurrence. And thirdly, striking proof. A startling prophecy.

Why do I say that? Well, I have already referred to the prevailing conditions in the city. The very vivid narrative in the previous chapter tells of a pitiful and a grisly story of women boiling their children, of unclean food being sold for more than its weight in silver.

A city faced with a choice of slow and painful death by starvation, already practising cannibalism.

Such were the low moral and spiritual standards that prevailed in the city. A government shorn of answers to the desperate and rapidly worsening conditions in Samaria.

The king, working himself up to a pitch of frenzy, had murderous designs and renounced his allegiance to Jehovah.

[19 : 38] Yes, he wore the garments that one would associate with contrition, but it is evident that his contrition was superficial.

Why do I say that? Because true repentance means waiting upon the Lord. For example, listen to the psalmist in one of the great penitential psalms of the psalm book.

I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word, I hope, my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning. More than watchmen for the morning.

That is evidence of a true penitential spirit. But there's no evidence of such a penitential spirit in the life of this king.

He is bent on murder. this is his response, as it were, to God's judgmental act. It's one of outright defiance.

[20 : 51] His pledge to behead the prophet Elisha shows that he was anything but truly contrite. May God, he says, do so to me and more also if the head of Elisha, the son of the king, the son of Shapheth remains on his shoulders today.

Well, the response of Jehoram, that was the name of the king of Samaria, is still with us today. It's the kind of response of those who essentially hate the interference of God.

And they take out their hatred on God's people. just recently, I heard a radio broadcast, for example, and there was this congregation, and they had a food bank for people who were in dire need.

And they were inviting, I think they were a Baptist congregation, but I'm not sure on that point. They were inviting people to come to avail themselves of the food bank provisions.

And at the same time, they were speaking to them, as you would expect, of people who believed in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

[22 : 21] They were speaking to the people who came about their need of salvation. And the interviewer said, oh, but are you not forcing Christianity down their throat?

Now, if you are a Christian in the world, what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to witness to your fellow men about what Christ has done for you.

Not forcing it down their throat, not trying to run it down a resistant throat, but in order to show the grace and the love and the mercy of Jesus Christ.

That if you have received salvation from Christ, that others too might share in this huge and precious blessing.

So you see, that kind of hatred is with us to the present hour. It is still there and it was very evident that it was there in the time of Elisha.

[23 : 35] When people are challenged by the truth, when the truth challenges our values and our views, and especially our views of self, when the truth destroys the reputation that we think we have, and I say that advisedly, when the truth destroys the reputation that we think we have, like Jehoram, this king of Samaria, often the reaction is one of anger, where there is no evidence of repentance.

You know, I'm not going to listen to that kind of message. so, his messenger was sent to tell the prophet that the king would not wait for the Lord any longer.

That's in the chapter before the one we read. And it's into that seething, turbulent, hate-filled cauldron that God chose to make this startling, prophetic statement through the prophet Delisha.

And note how the prophet emphasizes the source and authority of the message in delivering it. Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord.

Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria. Hear the word of the Lord.

[25 : 16] thus says the Lord. Listen, in other words, to the word of the Lord in the sense of paying careful attention to it for our eternity hangs on our response to the word of God.

I wonder do we think of it in that way? Our eternal destiny hangs on the response that we make to the word of God. Thus says the Lord, that's a classic formula used to indicate that God is addressing us.

A prophet was not just a forth teller, but a foreteller. The prophets predicted events that would happen, and in this particular situation, it appeared to most, but especially, to the unbelieving heart.

The prophecy that was made, it appeared to be pure fiction, pie in the sky, that food would be sold again at reasonable prices in comparison to the extortionate prices demanded in their city.

Why did it appear to be so pie in the sky? Why did it appear to be pure fiction?

[26 : 45] For the very reason that there was a stranglehold placed on Samaria by the superior Syrian forces. Where would such resources come from?

Every road to the city was blocked. No goods could come in without the sanction of the Syrian army. Was that likely that they would give any sanction to goods to come in, although the people were starving?

And the answer is no. And yet note the precision and confidence of the promise of the prophet this time. The time when the promise will be fulfilled, tomorrow about this time.

And then we are told of the price of flour and barley. We are even told of the spot where it would be sold. A measure of fine flour would be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.

Men's promises are vague, but God's promises are specific. But although the promise is specific, note the entire silence of the promise as to the method of its fulfillment.

[28 : 10] We are not told, for example, if Elisha knew how this prediction was going to be accomplished. So you have a combination of precision and imprecision.

perhaps a hint as to how it was to be done would have made belief in the fact much easier, but it wasn't given. The apparent impossible promise was left in its starkness.

I suppose you could say that emphatic assertion of the fact and emphatic silence as to how is a frequent characteristic of God's promises.

If ever we are kept in the dark as to the latter, it is for our good and for the encouragement of our growth in utter dependence and perfect trust. We want to ask how, don't we?

We have an innate curiosity and we want to know how. It is better for peace and the simplicity of our trust that we should be content to cling to the faithful word.

[29 : 26] If God has said it, to trust in his word, to believe in his word, that it shall be even as it was told, without troubling ourselves about the method of effecting his purpose and his promise.

man. One other factor, I think, with regard to this staggering prophecy, we are shown the cynicism of the unbelieving heart as demonstrated by the reaction of the king's chief of staff.

It says here in the authorized version, the Lord might be understood, the captain on whom the hand of the king leaned. That's what the Bible calls it.

And this man, who occupies this position, you might say a position, an important position in the city, he is sneeringly dismissive of the words of the prophet, but more sneeringly dismissive of the God of the prophet.

it. Impossible in the view of this man for deliverance to be effected. Where would the food come from? To drive prices down?

[30 : 53] And you remember, not even manna from heaven would save them now. Remember what he said? If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?

He's just mocking the whole thing. God could not do it. He refused to believe what he could not understand. And if he could not understand it, then in his view, God could not do it.

He heard the good news, but then he rejected it. He heard stories of the miracle of grace, but he refused to believe them because he doubted God's saving power.

He thought himself wise. You know, there are many who have the same modest opinion of their own perceptiveness and go on the supposition that what we do not see is invisible and what we cannot do or imagine done is impossible.

But this man was to be taught, as every one of us is taught, that he had not quite exhausted all the possibilities, open to omnipotence, and that something much simpler than the windows of heaven being opened would be done, and that the promise would be fulfilled.

[32 : 26] You see, unbelief which rejects God's plain promises because it does not see how they can be fulfilled is common enough still. and it is as irrational as it is disrespectful.

Elisha may have not known the how, but his faith fixed his eyes on the God who was faithful and had given his word, and he trusted, while intellect, self-conceit, and worldliness, if I can put it this way, a mole, pretending to have an eagle's eye, declared that it was impossible.

because he could not see the way to bring it about, and thereby he exposed his own blind arrogance, and so you have this additional word of prophecy, you shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.

And you know the sad thing is, not even that solemn word of warning could shake that man out of his unbelieving cynicism. let every one of us ask ourselves this evening, how do we view God's word?

Do we take it at face value? Do we accept it as the word of the living God? Do we believe it, or do we treat it with disdain?

[33 : 54] A staggering prophecy. Secondly, a surprising occurrence. Note God's way of fulfilling his promise. It's nothing so dramatic as opening windows in heaven.

We are told the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, the sound of a great army.

So that they said one to another, behold the king of Israel has hired against us, the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come against, they fled in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, their donkeys, leaving the camp as it was, fled for their lives.

That's all it took for this huge army surrounding the city. That's all it took for them to flee, imagine sound.

And it doesn't need great powers of imagination to know how the panic would spread fast.

[35 : 05] And so an army became a mob under the influence of groundless terror. There's nothing wonderful about the helter-skelter rush for the Jordan, or the road being littered with abandoned luggage and baggage left behind.

Yes, divine intervention produced the impression which naturally brought the flight about. But if we looked on events as devoutly and saw into their true character as deeply as the author of the book of Kings do, we should see that many a similar coincidence which we trace no further than to men or circumstances is due to the same divine cause which made the Syrians to hear a sound of a great army.

If you track the river of life to its source, you come to God. Proverbs, book of Proverbs chapter 28 verse 1, the wicked flee when no one pursues.

Imaginary terrors are apt to beset those who have no trust in God. If we fear God, then we have no need. We need no other fear.

But if we don't have God for our anchorage, we shall be driven by gusts of passion and terror. The arrogance which said impossible had not measured all the resources of divinity.

[36 : 57] How foolish men's demonstrations of impossibility look beside God's deliverance. We have not gone through all the chambers or the rooms of his storehouse.

And as he reminds us, my ways are higher than your ways. His ways are far above out of our sight. Let us hold fast by faith that his arm is strong to do whatever his lips are gracious to engage.

and the writer shows how the fulfilled promise was received. He adds this bit to the story.

Four outcasts, four lepers, you know, people who were ostracized, they weren't allowed into the city, they were unclean.

They had heard nothing of the promise. But despair made them daring. How reckless they were and how they constantly dwell on the one depressing word, die.

[38 : 15] You know, when you read the chapter, why are we sitting here until we die? If we say we will enter the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die. If we sit still here, we die also.

Therefore, come and let us fall into the host of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we shall live. If they kill us, we shall but die. Again and again and again there is an awareness of the nearness of death.

The thought was familiar to them, and yet although they were lepers, you have to say they were clinging to life. Life was still sweet.

They didn't want to vacate life even if they were leprous, and even if they were ostracized. Any chance of prolonging life, even as slaves, was worth trying.

And you know there is that innate within us to cling to life. Perhaps you've seen people where death has begun to encroach upon lives, and there is that struggle to cling on to life, right up until the last breath, to hold on to life.

[39 : 50] life. And here were these men, lepers, hungry lepers, and they seemed to be more aware of their hunger than they were of their leprosy.

And they chose twilight to approach the Syrian camp, that they might be unobserved. You know, you could say that they were living in a twilight world.

and in your mind's eye you can see them creeping cautiously with beating hearts towards the camp of the Syrians, expecting every moment to be challenged and possibly killed.

And you note how their caution is diminished and their wonder grows as they go from one end of the camp to another, and there is no one there, apart from the animals that were abandoned, the horses and the asses, left behind, lest the noise of the horses and asses of their hooves would be a warning to the citizens of Samaria, or to whatever spooked the Syrian army, the noise that spooked them, left behind every tent empty of men, full of food and goods.

And the lepers began to plunder. They had gone from end to end of the camp, and they had established there was no threat to their safety, so they ate and they drank as ravenously as men who had been starving so long would do.

[41 : 50] Twilight deepened into darkness before their hunger and greed was satisfied. And not till then did they awake to their duty, and even when they do it, is the fear of punishment, and not their great care for a city full of starving people that moves them.

And their belated awakening to duty is contained in the words which carry a great truth, especially to every person who has tasted of the bread of life.

And you know who the bread of life is? Jesus is the bread of life. And every person who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, has tasted of the bread of life. And the lepers say to one another, we do not well, we are not doing right.

This day is a day of good tidings, a day of good news. You know, if we have good news, especially the good news of the gospel, its possession obliges us to share it.

If we have tasted the graciousness of the Lord, we are bound to tell of the stores we have found in God. While lepers were strange messengers of good news, but you see the message graces the bringer, and they who tell good news are sure of a welcome.

[43 : 28] God doesn't choose great men for the heralds of his mercy, but the qualification is personal experience. These four lepers could only say we have seen and we have tasted, but that was enough.

And as one writer puts it, that is vintage Yahweh, using unclean lepers, nameless servants, God's freedom in the choice of means.

He chooses some men among others. He associates men secondarily with himself in the doing of his work. But what men?

Not the most qualified, the most informed, the most worthy, the most alert, but the rejects of society, the despised, the unclean, the ostracized. And you remember, how the apostle Paul summarizes this in his letter to the Corinthians.

For consider your calling, brothers, not many of you were wise. According to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. And you notice when he says not many, he doesn't say not any.

[44 : 44] They're always the exception. But he says not many. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. Why did God choose this? And Paul gives the reason.

So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. God is God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord, the Lord. It's always something to hang on to.

See, it's not the talents you were given or the grounds for your boasting or the talents that you weren't given. The ground of boasting lies always in him.

[45 : 53] And it reminds me of a story that was told by the late Professor Collins of an elder who was responsible for conducting services in a vacant congregation.

The name of the elder, if my memory serves me right, was Duncan Macrae. And he didn't dare to preach, but he would read sermons.

So the congregation were treated to sermons by Thomas Boston and Robert Murray MacChay. The care of the congregation often was a burden to this man.

And it weighed him down and frequently he was discouraged. One Sunday he was walking to church and he was overtaken by a man who we would say had learning difficulties.

In many ways this man, although an adult, was like a child. He wasn't able to dress very well or take much in.

[47 : 07] But he was always in attendance at the church service. And this man, Macrae, was so despondent that morning as he walked along when he was overtaken by this man who had learning difficulties.

And just for the sake of conversation, Macrae said to him, I wish he said, you had a good word for a poor man. He didn't expect a real answer, but to his surprise, back came the reply, I do have a word for a poor man.

And Macrae was really taken aback and he said to him, what is that? And the answer was this, he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.

What a terrific word. What a terrific word. He regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.

And you can't help but wonder whether that man with learning difficulties found himself within the embrace of that, these words.

[48 : 29] How wonderfully does the Lord encourage his downcast servants. And in that instance, through one with learning difficulties, without formal education, incapable of dressing himself properly, my prayer was given uplift.

And here, through lepers, through outcasts, God's ways are so mysterious. And you notice the caution of the king.

It would have been natural and blimless if God's promise had not been communicated to him the day before. God's love. But that surely makes his reluctance to believe a sin.

It showed his distrust in the promise of God. And so, people were dispatched to make a reconnaissance.

It was totally unnecessary. necessary. But you see, people are inclined to think that faith is but a shaky ground of confidence, unless it's backed up by human logic.

[49 : 47] When God gives us his word to trust in it, it is surely enough to trust in it alone, and we may save ourselves the trouble by sending out scouts to see if it is really beginning to fulfill.

You see, Elisha didn't have any need to wait the report. of those who were in the scouting party. Others found incredible when spoken and too good to be true, even when fulfilled.

But you see, what we are asked to do is to trust God, whether our senses are able to confirm the initial accomplishment of his word or not.

A surprising occurrence, a staggering prophecy, and finally, and the time is going, a striking proof. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

In other words, everything Elisha said came true, both the good news and the bad. And the people went out and spoiled the tents of the city, and so a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

[51 : 00] Note the emphasis on the fulfillment of the word of the Lord. Whose word? God's word. Notice the constant emphasis on the word of the Lord, and all of that emphasis is to highlight that God's word is God's word, that it is reliable, that it is shewed, and that it will always be fulfilled.

the God of Israel is Lord of the market. He can pull the rug out under the supply, demand, curve as easily, can bring shortage that drives prices right out of sight.

And the chief of staff, this captain guy, he lived to see the prophecy of which he was so dismissive, but he never tasted of the fruit.

the people trampled him in the gate so that he died, as the man of God had said. You shall see it with your own eyes, you shall not eat, and so it happened to him, just as the man of God predicted.

The good news that meant life for some also meant death for others, and so it is still with the message of the gospel. It gives life to some, and it deals death to others.

[52 : 29] You see, receiving the gospel in faith brings joy, but rejecting the gospel is a deadly error. Remember how in the New Testament Jesus compares himself to a huge stone, and he's quoting from the Old Testament, the stone that the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone.

In other words, he is setting before us that he is a strong foundation for anyone who builds a life on him. And then Jesus went on to word, everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

to come to the Lord. So to summarize, you cannot but wonder if the chief of staff recognized that the prediction made by Elisha was absolutely spot-on before he was trampled in the rush and the stampede for food.

We have all heard the news, the good news in Jesus Christ, but the question for every one of us is, how have we responded to the message of good news?

That's the serious question. It's the question for any one of us. You know, it's easy to dismiss it. It's easy to put it to one side and say, I'll consider it later on.

[54 : 07] But we're asked to consider it now and to respond to it. How have we responded to the message? Have we trusted?

Or are we still under the power of cynical unbelief? Because to do that is to be trampled underfoot?

We are encouraged not to refuse the one who speaks. Remember how the writer to the Hebrews puts it in that letter, if they did not escape, when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

them. So here we have a staggering prophecy. Tomorrow about this time, there will be supplies sold in the gate of Samaria.

A surprising occurrence. The Lord made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, the sound of a great army, and they fled.

[55 : 30] the striking proof, the sale of the grain in the gate, and the death of the cynical chief of staff. Does that end to a man who had such an important position?

Oh, friend, where are you this evening with regard to the word of the Lord? Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed one, O, we thank thee that the message of good news was not curtailed in the sense that it didn't come into the communities in which we live.

But we are hugely indebted to thee that the message of good news arrived in these distant islands, in our communities.

days, but we have a responsibility as to how we treat and respond the message of good news. Help us to accept it.

Help us to live by it, and the glory shall be thine. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen.