

Chest Of Joash

Reflecting on 2 Chronicles 24:4-14

by Travis Smith McKee on 11-23-2014 for Fairview Christian Church

Q: What kind of motor vehicle is in the Bible?

A. Acts 1:14 Honda... because the apostles were all in one Accord.

Q: Why was Moses the most wicked man in the Bible? A: Because he broke the Ten Commandments all at once. (Exodus 32:19)

Q: Which old testament character was know for having a foul mouth at a young age? A: Job - He cursed the day he was born. (Job 3:1)

Q: Where is the first tennis match mentioned in the Bible?

A. When Joseph served in Pharaoh's court.

Q: Where is baseball mentioned in the bible?

A:- In the big inning (Genesis 1:1)

- Genesis 3:6- Eve stole first and Adam stole second
- Genesis 24:15 Rebekah went to the well with a "pitcher"
- Exodus 4:4 "And he put out his hand, and caught it"
- Numbers 11:32 "Ten homers"
- Proverbs 18:10 "The righteous run into it, and is safe"
- Ezekiel 36:12 "Yea, I will cause men to walk"

Funny stuff, and they're some of my favorite bible jokes, because they draw upon the fact that the words in the Bible have a context and when we take them out of that context, we miss the point. It's a practice called proof texting, seeking

scriptures just prove a point ...in contrast to drawing a lesson FROM scripture. The way we approach scripture tells so much about its value. Do we just ape everything we see in the Bible, taking it at face value? I certainly hope not. Because there are so many things written for a certain time and to a certain people. Face value reading devalues the rich depth these scriptures contain. What I think is a better approach is to look at the larger story and the lessons learned in the context of the story.

With this in mind, today we are participating in a practice modeled after the Chest of Joash story in 2nd Chronicles. We read this story, and yes, the people of Israel placed their offerings into a chest on the Temple steps. And this money went to the repair of the temple. And if we take the story at face value, that is all that happened. And so, when we give our offerings today, and our pledge cards, we will put them in the chest up here and that is it.....

So, yes, I'm asking us to think about the larger story. Much like in the scripture reading today, we have to call back to the foundational stories like Moses in the wilderness. The people of Israel had been enslaved, removed from who they were, an identity based on other stories like the creation. They lost their identity of God's creation, and by going to the desert, they forgot the oppression of slavery put upon them and regained the identity of God's creation. After they left the wilderness, entering into the promised land, they had kings and leaders who oversaw the building of the Temple. The Temple was where God's dwelling was, how the people of Israel encountered God, why it's called the House of the Lord in our scripture. It stood as a permanent structure to remind them of the permanent nature of God, their God who will never abandon them.

After 130 years of the Temple, it was in need of structural repairs, sure, but the most recent history of the Temple was how it was defiled. Athaliah, mentioned in our scripture reading today, verse 7, had been in control of the kings for many years. Athaliah was the daughter of Jezebel, who had defiled the northern kingdom, and was the wife of king Joram in the southern kingdom. She influenced his usually pious actions towards false priests and idols, turning the Temple into a place of worship for the false god, Baal. When Joram got sick and died, her son Ahaziah took the throne and continued the efforts to destroy God. During a separate revolt, Ahaziah was killed, and the throne was open. Athaliah had all the members of the House of David killed so that the throne couldn't be claimed by any of them and she would continue allowing Baal worship in the House of the Lord.

Ok, now if that soap opera isn't enough, Joash was a descendent in the house of David at the time, but was only one year old when this happened. The High Priest Jehoiada and his wife saved Joash until he was seven years old. At that time, Jehoiada gathered the priests and Levites to crown the seven year old Joash king. Athaliah was without power and backed off during this time. Ok, and now we are at the scripture reading for today. Like I said, there's a bit of back story to this.

Chronicles is a history book, trying to tell the lineage of the book of Kings but with a more narrative focus. Chronicles emphasizes the best of the best and the worst of the worst, so this time in Joash's life was focused on as his best. Joash was thankful to High Priest Jehoiada for saving him and followed the ways of God he promoted. The call to restore the temple wasn't just for building repairs, but for a restoration of identity. The people of Israel were reminded of their time of strength, when the tax set by Moses went to the building of the tabernacle, sort of

a portable temple in the wilderness. This call to give was reminding the people of the spirit of the temple, before it was defiled by Athaliah's worship of Baal. When the people gave, and gave abundantly, they were giving to set things right, to restore the place of importance for the temple, they were giving in response to hope.

"and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. And whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance."

We've been talking about giving these last few weeks, about how and why we give. We give of our money, our resources, out of abundance. We give of our time, and I'll be honest, time seems to be a more precious resource. What we give our time to, how we devote ourselves, shows where we place our value. And when we look at giving in this church, you have used the Chest of Joash as a method for giving, a model for your generosity. Its an obscure reference. I've asked fellow ministers about the Chest of Joash, and they've had to go look it up like I did. I mean, 2 Chronicles 24 isn't exactly John 3:16. But once you dig in, this example is rich with meaning. You all, through this practice, have taught me about a strong biblical example.

Kassie and I are coming up to six months here with Fairview Christian Church, and six months in Gladstone. It's nothing compared to the nearly 60 years this congregation has been in existence. But what we have come into as we arrived here is a truly a unique time in Fairview's history. We have come here with a

congregation excited to move forward. This is a congregation that was done being stuck in ruts, ready to try something new to connect with the community. We were called to a church that had hope for a future. We were called to a congregation that had many financial worries just a few years ago but who have been abundantly faithful in giving and helped make a solid foundation. We were called as young ministers to a congregation who have never had co-ministers before, called by a congregation that wanted to take some risks and succeed in those risks. I've said it before and I'll say it again, We consider ourselves privileged to serve here at this time in Fairview's life, ready to move it into future generations with hope and energy.

When we practice our Chest Of Joash model of giving today, bringing our gifts forward, do we bring them forward out of a sense of obligation? Is it just a simple walking forward, or a practical action that helps us plan our budget better? Or does our action today signify something different? Like the people of Israel, who gave to the Temple, can we give out of a sense of hope? Can we give with a vision of the future instead of the past? Can we give with the hope of shedding our past struggles and weights? Can we give hoping to restore the awe-inspiring encounter with God that this congregation was founded on? Can we give with a focus on sharing that God encounter with others? When we give, it is not just simple money, or investment returns, or building repairs.....when we give it is giving like the people of Israel, we give with Hope. There's a lot of momentum here at Fairview, lets keep it going. Trusting in God, seeking God's ways, let's give hope.

4 After this Jo'ash decided to restore the house of the Lord. 5 And he gathered the priests and the Levites, and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah, and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that you hasten the matter." But the Levites did not hasten it. 6 So the king summoned Jehoi'ada the chief, and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the Lord, on[a] the congregation of Israel for the tent of testimony?" 7 For the sons of Athali'ah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God; and had also used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Ba'als.

8 So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it outside the gate of the house of the Lord. 9 And proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for the Lord the tax that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. 10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. 11 And whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance. 12 And the king and Jehoi'ada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the Lord, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the Lord, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the Lord. 13 So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. 14 And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and

Jehoi'ada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the Lord, both for the service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes for incense, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoi'ada.