

“Desperate”

March 22, 2009

First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

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In 1934, in Mexico, a woman named Maria Grever wrote a song. The original title was “Cuando Vuelva A Tu Lado” which translates, I’m told something like this; “When He Returns to your Side.” But you don’t know the song by that title. In fact, the only reason you know it at all is because a man named Stanley Adams took a summer vacation to an oceanfront resort on the Mexican coast twenty years after the song was originally written.

And while he was there, Stanley Adams heard someone sing it. He didn’t understand all the words, but he knew the tune was destined to be one of those that everyone would end up singing. So he took the tune with the composer’s permission and rewrote the lyrics. He gave them to a jazz singer named Dinah Washington. And in 1959 she recorded them and won a Grammy.

Since then, the song’s been recorded by over 50 different artists. And all I need to do to show you the song I’m talking about is to sing the first two lines: “What a difference a day makes, twenty-four little hours.”

But before you start singing the rest, stop and think with me about the truth in those words because we’ve all experienced it, haven’t we? Maybe that’s why we remember them so well; the days that made a difference in our lives. What were some of them for you? The day you left home? The day you got married? The day your first child was born? The day someone died?

Whatever day it was, it took just twenty-four hours to change the landscape of your life, didn’t it? And the Bible says the same thing happened to David! What a difference a day makes in his life. For in twenty four little hours David moves from the limelight of the royal court to the lonely life of a fugitive!

And the man who used to sit at the king’s table is now what! Disillusioned? Disappointed? I doubt those words even start to describe how David felt. Devastated? Desperate? Those words probably come a lot closer.

And I wonder, have you ever been there? Have you ever been desperate? Because unless you have, you'll have trouble understanding this story. For this is a story about a man who was in shock, trying to find a way to make sense of what had just happened to him. In the last twenty four hours he has lost everything.

He needs a place to go, to think it all through. But where can he go? If he runs to his family in Bethlehem, he puts them in danger. If he runs to the wilderness without food, he puts himself in danger. So Scripture says David just ran, stumbling out of the city, into the growing darkness.

It reminds me of a Navy diver who was trying to enlighten a friend about the difference between snorkeling in Hawaii and the kind of diving he did in the Navy, deep diving, *really* deep diving. He told his friend that a couple of times he'd been diving in water so deep it was almost impossible not to become disoriented.

"What a terrifying experience" the snorkeler said, "being under water and not knowing which way is up. What did you do?"

"Feel for the bubbles," the diver replied.

"Feel for the bubbles?"

"That's right. When it's pitch black all around and you have no idea which way to is up, all you can do is reach with your hand and feel for the bubbles, because the bubbles always move toward the surface."

And somehow Scripture says, in the deep dark waters of one of his most desperate days, when he had nowhere else to turn, an idea bubbled up in David's mind. He would stay away from the places people would look for him. He wouldn't run where a soldier would run. Instead he'd go to Nob.

As one source says there, "Ahimelech, the great grandson of Eli, headed up a monastery of sorts. Eighty-five priests served in Nob, earning it the nickname 'the City of Priests.'" Why were they there? Because the relics from the Tabernacle were there, at least the ones that hadn't already been carted away by the Philistines. The bronze laver was there and basin. So was the carved lamp stand, the altar of incense, and the golden offering table.

But monasteries and military men don't mix much. So when David got there, Ahimelech was puzzled. What was he doing? And why was he alone?

The questions aren't really accusations. But they could be. And David didn't know. Was Ahimelech a friend or a foe? He couldn't tell. So David does what desperate people do. He moves to protect himself. He gives the priest an alibi and then before he has a chance to think it through, David diverts his attention with an order, "Now then, what is there to eat? Give me five loaves of bread, or anything else you have."

The order makes the alibi sound better. And Ahimelech buys it, because he has no reason to doubt. After all, it's tough to tell the difference between a voice of authority and a voice of desperation, isn't it?

So Ahimelech answers, "I don't have any regular bread. But there is the holy bread." And there it is, lying on a table, the bread of the Presence that had been removed just that day from the golden offering table by one of the priests.

It was holy. It belonged to Yahweh. It was His bread. But it was there and it was available, just like it always is to desperate people. Have you discovered that truth in your walk with God yet? That God's bread is always available to desperate people; because it's a truth the Storyline of the Bible teaches us more than once!

Within days of crossing through the sea on dry land, the people of Israel, Scripture says, ran out of bread. They got desperate. They had nowhere else to turn. So they turned to Moses and Moses turned to God. And God took manna, bread no one else had ever eaten and gave it to those who were desperate for it.

A century or two after David stands in front of Ahimelech it happens again! A prophet named Elijah is running from a king named Ahab and a queen named Jezebel. He's alone in the wilderness without provisions. And he's desperate. He has nowhere else to turn. So he turns to God and God takes bread and sends it to Elijah.

Centuries later Jesus stands in front of a crowd near the Sea of Galilee. He's already fed them regular bread in the wilderness the day before. But he knows that what the crowd desperately needs is another kind of bread. So he talks to them about "living bread." "I am the living bread," he says, "the true bread that's come

down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread they will live forever. For the bread I'm talking about is my flesh, which I'll give for the life of the world.”

You see, my friends, there's a pattern here as there often is in the Storyline of the Bible. And it's pretty clear. When we are desperate, God is dependable. He has the bread we need and He's on record more than once. He will give it to us. The problem is we seldom get desperate enough to ask for it!

We think we can meet our own needs. And we can, most of the time. But then there are those moments in each of our lives when we can't, those moments when something makes us desperate; a diagnosis at the doctor's office, a pink slip at work, a crisis in our marriage, a call from a debt collector. I could go on, but do I really need to? Because we all know what I'm talking about. We all know what it's like to be desperate, don't we?

Some time ago, I went to the hospital. I went to see a person whose name I didn't recognize when the request came in. But he'd been in touch with someone from our church and asked for a pastor to come and see him. So I went.

I walked into his room. We talked for a while. I learned a little bit about him and his life, and then I offered to pray for him, for his healing, and I noticed that a different look came across his face. So I asked him if it was alright with him if I prayed. And he nodded. Then he said, “It's just been a long time Pastor, a long time since I prayed for something I really need.”

So how long has it been for you? Because if it's been a while there may be a problem. You see I doubt that the man in that hospital bed would have prayed for himself that day. Oh, he was desperate enough; that wasn't the problem. The problem was that he had no pattern established in his life of asking God for what he really needed. So now it was hard for him to believe that he could.

And that's a tragedy because it is exactly the opposite of the pattern God wants us to build into our lives. “Have no anxiety about anything,” the Bible says, “but in everything by prayer and supplication, make your needs known to God.” But do we? Do we? Is that our pattern? Do we make our needs known to God regularly so that on the day that we're desperate we'll know we can ask?

I hope so, because that's the pattern God wants us to learn in our spiritual lives. In fact it's the pattern Jesus teaches his disciples, isn't it? He tells them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." And the reason he teaches them to pray that is not because they can't provide bread for themselves. The reason is because they need to learn, we need to learn that God wants to help us meet our needs, that we don't have to do it all ourselves.

And this is one of the places in his life where David learns that lesson. This is one of the places in his life where David learns that when there's nowhere else to run, he can run to God, when there's no-one else to ask, he can ask God, when we have no bread, God will give us bread.

But now look even more closely! It's not just bread that God gives David. That's what David asks for, five loaves of bread, ordinary bread. But that's not what David gets, is it? No what David gets is "the bread of the Presence." And there's a difference. So let's go back for a moment and remember what we've already learned this year in Storyline.

You see the "bread of the Presence" was much more than just ordinary bread. It was bread that was placed on a golden table in the Tabernacle. It was to remain there "before the Lord" for a day. That's why it was called the "bread of the Presence," because after it had been in God's presence for a day it was no longer just bread. According to the Leviticus, it was now holy.

According to one Old Testament scholar, it symbolized this truth; "that Israel's life depended on God's sustaining presence. The eating of the bread of the Presence by the priest after it came out of the Tabernacle symbolized the promise of God to be continually present to his people."

Now think what that symbolism would mean to David! What he requested in his desperation was simply enough to feed himself for five days. What he received was much more. What he received was a sense of God's presence, bread that spoke to him through its symbolism and said to him, "You're not alone. I've been with you until now and I have not left you. I'm still here. And I won't leave. I'll provide for you. No matter how many days Saul hunts for you, no matter where you may be forced to run, I'll provide for you. My presence will go with you."

And I wonder my friends, do you know this morning that God has made that same promise to you? Because He has! In fact He has made it to you and me through David's Son, our Savior. For after his death and resurrection, Matthew says, Jesus stood on a hilltop in Galilee. Remember? Those who followed him were there with him. And to his followers, then and now, Jesus said something we should never forget.

“Don't ever forget this” he said, “I'm with you, always.” So I just want to say this morning, on Jesus' behalf, if you are sitting here and you feel desperate about something this morning. If you're here and you need some help in your life, God is here for you.

He has a record of helping people who are desperate enough to ask Him for help. And if you will ask Him, He will help you. He will give you what you need to make it through whatever you're going through. In fact, He will give you not only what you think you need. He will give you more. He will give you the bread of the presence, His promise to be with you and stay with you no matter what you're going through, no matter how long it takes.

The book of Hebrews puts it this way in chapter 13, “God has assured you, He will never fail you or forsake you.” And He has. God has assured us in the story of David and in the story of the Son of David. When we become desperate, He is dependable. Always! Always!

Let's pray