

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED **II Chronicles 34:14-28 (selected verses)**
HOW COULD IT BE LOST !?!

Then Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan. So Shaphan carried the book to the king [King Josiah] bringing the king word, saying, . . . "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiyah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

So Hilkiyah and those the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, . . . Then she answered them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man who sent you to Me, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched

"But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him, Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Concerning the words which you have heard—because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants."

I have done it with my keys, my wallet, my checkbook--Lost them! How could it be? Something so important! How could I lose it? Isn't that your reaction to the words of the text for this morning? The Book of the Law, the words of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—had been lost! How does this sort of thing happen? When we don't give something the attention it deserves.

The King in our text for today is King Josiah of the Kingdom of Judah. Judah was what was left of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. After the time of Saul, David, and Solomon, who were the first three kings, the Lord caused the nation to divide. Ten tribes went their own way—they were called Israel. These ten tribes quickly turned away from God. After 300 years of calling them to repentance, the Lord let them be defeated and destroyed. Done. However, the remaining two tribes, called the nation of Judah, continued, ruled by descendents of King David. The kingdom of Judah, although it endured a little longer, also turned away from the Lord. About 400 years after King David, Judah was also defeated, destroyed, and taken captive to Babylon.

Our text for today involves Josiah King of Judah, indeed a descendant of King David. The events about 30 years before the End of the Kingdom of Judah. Likely you can see why. At Josiah's time the Book of the Law was suddenly discovered in the Temple of the Lord. It had been lost! Imagine if we conducted worship at St. Luke's, but for years, the Bible was lost! Shocking. The kings, the people, and those serving at the House of God had not given it the attention it deserved, so much so that it had become lost, stuck away in a corner or closet or someplace-somewhere. Their worship had become ritual, mechanical, and even ungodly.

Josiah's father Amon and grandfather Manasseh had done much to cultivate idol worship in the nation of Judah, and in its capital city Jerusalem, and even inside of the temple building itself. A majority of the church leaders and people willingly followed, blithely turning their hearts away from the Lord who had rescued them from Egypt, established them in the land of Canaan, and who was still carrying out His promised to send through their people the Savior from sin. They had turned away.

By God's grace, Josiah was different. He became king at age 8 after his idol worshiping father was assassinated. He followed the ways of his "father" David—his great-grandfather with about 15 "greats" in front of it. At age 16 he began to seek the ways of the Lord, like David. At age 20, he began to clear out all the idol temples, altars, and priests from the land. At age 26, he began to repair the 350 year old temple. It had been allowed to go to shambles. Why was Josiah different? Was it because he was one of the lucky ones chosen by God to be godly and different, whereas others were chosen by God to be wicked? Definitely it was by God's grace that Josiah was different. But the others? by their own fleshly and foolish choice, they had turned away from God. There was no one to blame but themselves. God chooses no one to be evil. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Josiah became committed to the Lord. He was committed to act *contrary* to his father's and forefathers' errors. He got rid of the worship that his ancestors had set up. Worship is a very personal item. People like to stick with what they have been taught—they learned it from their parents! But what's more important?--sticking with what one's beloved parents have done or taught or believed, or sticking with what the Lord says? Josiah served the Lord. Jesus says, "Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37). Pay attention to what the Lord wants.

Likely Josiah's reform actions and ousting of the idolatry was not popular with all the people either. But it did not deter him. He was committed to the Lord God, who in His mercy through the promised Savior had forgiven King David his sins, as well as Adam and Eve, and everyone else. Josiah likewise was clinging to this Lord and the Lord's love, by faith.

No wonder Josiah tore his clothes when the re-discovered Book of the Law was read to him. His forefathers and his people had not been attentive to the Word of God! Do you see how much more weight the message of God carried when presented directly to Josiah than just some report? Let the Word of God, with its rules and demands and condemnation for sin, and with its mercy, forgiveness, comfort, and salvation in Jesus, speak directly to your heart. Pay attention to the Bible. Do not let it get lost in your life. Read it, learn it, make sure your pastor is preaching from it and not just from popular ideas of the day, or from thoughts that please your egos.

Josiah sought help. He sent a delegation to the prophetess Huldah. Nearly 100% of the time the Bible speaks of male leaders of the people and male prophets leading them. But on occasion, the leadership falls to the ladies. Why? At the time of Deborah the Judge, the men were reluctant to take the responsibility God had given them. Barak the leader of the army was afraid and would not go out to battle unless she went with him. Here, likely being a prophet of God was not a popular role to fill. Perhaps men had shied away from it. We do know the mighty prophet Jeremiah comes on the scene very soon.. Jeremiah himself says that when the Lord first called him, he was young. Perhaps at this point he had not yet entered into public life.

At any rate, Huldah told Josiah the straight facts. Indeed the Lord was angry and His patience at an end. Here, the Lord would bring upon His people the warnings and curses long ago expressed to them (see Deuteronomy 28:15 and following). They had not been attentive to His Word and would be cast out by Him. The Lord's patience does run out, you know. Come Judgment Day, He will strike down those who have insisted in turning away from Him and from His Son their Savior.

Josiah learned that the Lord would continue to be merciful to him. Not because Josiah's life was so special in and of itself. See how Josiah had rent (torn) not just his garments, but also his heart (see Joel 2:13). Josiah was grieved and stricken for the disregard and lack of attention his people had given to the Lord and His Word. Josiah repented and sought God's mercy and forgiveness. And the Lord granted him forgiveness and would also grant him a peaceful death in faith.

That is the gift God also gives to you. Through Christ—THE King—a descendant of King David and also Josiah—forgiveness, peace, rest, eternal life. This is the great message of God's Word! How can you not pay attention to it! Without it, you face only destruction. But with it and the crucified and risen Jesus, your Savior, whom it presents to you, you have forgiveness, peace, resurrection from the grave, and life in heaven.

How many generations does it take for the Word of the Lord to be Lost? ONE. If you give no heed to the Word, your children will easily follow suit.

Do you remember Martin Luther's What Does This Mean to the third commandment? : "Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy? What Does This Mean? We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it." Pay attention to God's Word.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach --