

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

II Kings 17:6-23 (selected verses)**BECAUSE OF THE PARTING, JESUS WAS TRANSFIGURED**

6-7) *In the ninth year of Hoshea [king of Israel], the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria. . . . For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods.*

16-18) *They left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger. Therefore, the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight. There was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.*

22-23) *The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did. They did not depart from them until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.*

Whether it's "parting" your hair, or Moses "parting" the Red Sea, the meaning of parting is very clear—two sides each going their own way. There is a "parting of the ways" in the text above. Israel had parted from the Lord, and the Lord, then, parted them from their homeland, never to return. Such parting is not pleasant.

How had it all started? What was the bigger picture here? Remember some Old Testament history. God had chosen Abraham to be the forefather of a great nation, from whom the Savior would come. It was an act of God's kindness and mercy. Abraham's son was Isaac, Isaac's son was Jacob—later known as Israel. Jacob had twelve sons. God blessed these sons so that they became the twelve tribes of Israel, God's chosen nation. God's chosen people were rescued by the Lord from slavery in Egypt. He gave them His commands and His covenants of the Savior to come, at Mt. Sinai through Moses. He settled them safely in the land of Canaan which He had promised to Abraham and his family. They were one nation. They lived under one king, first Saul, then David, then Solomon—and Solomon in all his glory! But the devil worked to destroy this blessedness, because he wanted to destroy God's promise of the Savior who would come from Abraham's family.

The devil had big success with King Solomon. Solomon with all his wealth, luxury, and power became a polygamist of the worst kind. He married hundreds (yes, hundreds) of wives. Many were foreign ungodly wives who turned his heart to their idols. Here was the *beginning of* the "parting" in our text. Solomon parted from God, and God parted Solomon's kingdom from him, dividing it into two parts—one, a kingdom of Ten Tribes ruled by someone else, and another, a kingdom of Two Tribes ruled by Solomon's heirs. Sad.

Division is difficult within a nation, within an extended family, between husband and wife, etc. Division in one way or another comes as the result of sin, a separating from God. The arguments you've had with your brothers and sisters, or with your parents, or with your children, or with your spouse always have their root in sin, whether it's sin on one side or the other, or likely both. Sin bears harsh fruit. It's the devil's game.

To correct and to end Solomon's wayward direction, God divided his kingdom into two parts with two different kings never to merge again. The kingdom of Ten Tribes was called Israel, the kingdom of Two Tribes was called Judah. The Savior would be born from the people of the Two Tribes called Judah.

This text is talking about the Ten Tribes. The devil had a hay day with them. Their first king was Jeroboam. God had given Jeroboam this kingly position as a gift and promised to be with him and bless him. What could be better than that? But Jeroboam was afraid that his people would leave him and join with the other Two Tribes—even though God had promised otherwise! Jeroboam thought he had to help out God. To prevent his Ten Tribes, or "Israel," from going back to the Two Tribes or Judah, he said No More Going to Jerusalem (in Judah) to Worship! He built two calves of gold and told his people to worship them! Jeroboam!

Trying to help God out is never helpful and never wise and always sinful. “Lord, I have a better idea. If I work and work and work, and never get rich, why don’t I get rich by getting into something a little shady or a lot shady or just plain wrong. I’ll help You take care me and my family.” “Lord I *have to* sin for this to work out right.” Really? And you name the sin. Fear and lack of trust in the Lord, and in His love, wisdom, and might gets one nowhere. Helping out God only gets one further away from God, from His mercy and forgiveness in Christ, who gave His life for yours.

During the entire span of this Ten Tribe nation “Israel”—which endured about 210 years—the leaders and the people continued to part from the Lord and worship the two calves of gold. Talk about shooting yourself in the foot! It doesn’t work.

However, things got worse. Ruling families that came and went. Assassinations of kings became common place. The political scene was chaos. For a time, the family of Ahab came to power. Ahab married Jezebel a non-Israelite. She brought the idol Baal into Israel, and together Ahab and Jezebel served Baal big-time. The people followed Baal in droves. Likely they said, “Well, the king and the queen say it’s ok. The king and the queen do it too.” Understand, just because leaders or the government of the day, say something is ok, doesn’t make it ok. It is going on right now. Our government says it’s ok for a woman to marry a woman and a man to marry a man. Our government says it’s ok, to abort babies before they are born. Our government says it’s right for children to choose their own gender. In other words, let’s make room for all these things in our hearts and in our actions, right? Wrong, wrong, wrong. If God says it’s wrong in the Bible, it’s wrong, no matter what. The Ten Tribes didn’t get it. Do we?

To say the least, spiritual life in the nation of the Ten Tribes slid evermore downhill. The people stashed God in a corner and forgot about Him. Amazingly, God in His mercy continued to reach out to them. God is patient and loving. He sent them prophets to warn them, to call them to repentance, to win them back to His promise of life and forgiveness in the Savior to come. Among others, God sent them two mighty prophets Elijah and Elisha. They proclaimed the Lord’s wrath and the Lord’s covenant of mercy. They worked mighty miracles during the time of Ahab and the kings from Ahab’s family, and during the time of Jehu and the kings from Jehu’s family. They each raised a dead boy back to life, Elijah humiliated 450 prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel when the Lord answered by fire, Elisha healed leprous Naaman with muddy Jordan River water. Elisha floated a borrowed and sunken ax-head, made unfit water good. Even though it looked like all was lost in this nation that was parting from God, God’s Word worked invisibly in hearts. God told Elijah there were still 7000 faithful who needed strengthening and nourishing. The work of preaching the Gospel never ends, no matter how much of a loss it looks to be. Do not give up! You have brothers and sisters in Christ who need the message you have, just as you need them.

But things never much changed in the nation of Israel. Kings were assassinated, the people worshiped the calves of gold (Baal worship was shut-down), and they committed every other abominable thing, even child sacrifice and witchcraft. God’s patience finally ran out. God’s patience does have an end, you know. He sent the mighty nation Assyria to defeat Israel and take the people into captivity, never to return. Done. End. That day will come for every unbeliever and for this world as well. Done. End. A day of no turning back, whether it’s at our own death, or at the End of all things. Do not squander your time of grace!

God’s grace is why Jesus came. This is why we see Him in all His glory—for a brief glimpse—at the Transfiguration. Christ came and laid aside His ease and honor; He came to take the “whooping” for you and for all. Yet all the while He was the glorious and all-powerful Lord! He came to save you before God in heaven. The glory that He displayed at His Transfiguration, is the glory that He will share with you. Instead of your parting of the ways from God, Jesus has come to part you from the devil, from death, from the consequences of sin, from hell and being cast out by God. The glorious Jesus who died but rose again has come to restore you to the Father with full forgiveness, so you will enjoy God’s gifts and God’s grace forever.

And by God’s grace even some descendants from the Ten Tribes were God’s children. There was Hannah at the temple when Jesus was forty days old. Hannah was from the tribe of Asshur, one of the Ten (Luke 2). There were Samaritans who trusted Jesus—the woman at the well (John 4), the one thankful leper (Luke 17) and others. The Samaritans were the offspring of the poor and undesirable of Israel, left behind by Assyria, and mixed with other peoples and other religions. Plus, who knows how many others, descended from those absorbed into the nations of exile, later returned to faith as “Gentiles.” Perhaps you are in that group. God’ grace.

God’s grace in Christ reaches out to you, who part from Him. In fact “Now is the time! Now is the day of salvation!” (II Corinthians 6:2). Cling to Jesus. Do not squander your day of grace. Jesus came to undo the parting you have done..

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach ----