

God Helps Us Overcome Any Circumstance

God's Absolute Truths Week #2

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Sunday, July 19, 2020

7th Sunday of Kingdomtide

Jesus said on the last night of his life to his disciples, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

This is one of the absolute truths that God's kingdom is grounded in. Last week, I told you that Jesus used parables to attract people to his lesson about life. The passage of scripture I used last week was in the middle of the parable we've heard today.

So, let's back up and review what's happening here. Jesus is on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and a crowd has gathered around him. He to build relationships with these people, but needs creative, caring ways to build trust. So, the parables are colorful illustrations of God's absolute truths. The parables speak the truth with love.

If Jesus had just stood up before the crowd and said something like, "God helps us overcome all of the hard circumstances in life," and then just sat down, that's not going to build relationships.

This particular lesson Jesus is teaching is actually more focused for his disciples than for the crowd at large. At this point in their life with Christ, the disciples are seeing him attract large crowds and yet, the people are slow to pledge their loyalty to Jesus. His disciples have probably wondered why there aren't more followers by now. This parable explains to them what has been happening to the people in the crowds.

Christ is teaching the disciples the truth with love about the crowds of people. All of the various types of soils illustrate the variety of challenges they are facing in helping people to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus is making sure the disciples understand that they are "good soil" and will reap much for the kingdom of God.

One thing Jesus doesn't tell his disciples is that they were to give up on these people in all of these circumstances. He didn't move the parable into salvation and damnation imagery. He never told the disciples to give up trying to pass the faith onto those in the challenging categories. Instead, he just clearly states the situation and trusts that the lessons will bear fruit.

In today's day and age, the soil where the seeds are gobbled up by birds maybe geared to those who have access or freedom to explore or develop their faith but choose not to bother. The rocky soil could symbolize those who are cynical or have defeatist attitudes or are very self-centered and self-serving. The weedy thorny soil still describes those who get tangled up in worldly values and ways of life.

Today, I come before you telling you that God helps us overcome any circumstance. There have been times in my life, where I have felt like my life and relationship with God could have illustrated any of these types of soils. But I'm grateful that our God is gracious and is truly interested in helping us to trust him with our lives and decisions.

Dale and I had experienced God helping us overcome a dire situation in the early days of our commitments to Christ and his church.

We were living in Peru, NY. We had been learning how to live life trusting God to care for us, especially with regards to being good stewards of God's blessings. We had purchased a home in the small town of Peru and were very happy living there. But the BRAC had decided that Plattsburg AFB needed to close, so Dale was going to be moved to a new assignment. We were worried about being able to sell our home and pay off the mortgage. With the base closing the real estate market was flooded with lots of homes to sell and not many people to buy them.

As we prepared to sell our home, we felt the need to ensure that we were advertising honestly about the kind of well we had, so we started doing research. The previous owners told their realtor that we had a drilled well. But we questioned this after living there for four years and learning more about wells. We discovered that we didn't have a drilled well. In fact we had a dug well that was only 16 feet deep. We had been using "stink" water for over four years. We were shocked and angry that the previous owners had lied to us and their realtor about this very important element of the house.

We realized that we were naïve first time home-buyers and learned a valuable lesson about getting things checked more thoroughly before ever buying a home. But that didn't change the fact that we were trying to sell a home with a dug well, in a very tough market and not end up bankrupt in the process.

We worried to say the least. Yet, as young believers, we'd learned that it's important to turn these kinds of situations over to God to help us and so we did. God stepped in.

Dale had orders to Scott AFB for the end of January 1994. We had put our house on the market in October, for sale by owner. Though we had shown it a few times, we weren't

getting much interest. After we discovered the situation with the well, word got around town. The owner of the real estate company found out what happened and called us. It was now early January. Not a prime time to sell a home in upstate New York. He offered to sell our home for a reduced commission. God was at work.

We had started working with a drilling company to drill a real well for the house and when he discovered that we'd been running our household on 1.5 gallon per minute flow rate, he didn't charge us for the initial site inspection. God was at work.

The realtor put the house on the market and by the end of the first weekend, we had a buyer willing to pay the asking price on the house. It would be enough money to pay off our mortgage. God was at work.

The well drilling company drilled the well in late February. Our neighbors' wells were all at 200ft or lower. The longer the drill, the more expensive the well. The well driller broke through bedrock at 125ft and we had a beautiful flow rate of over 10 gallons a minute. We could pay off that well in less than a year. God was at work.

We had to trust God for weeks and then months to help us get through this very difficult situation. But through it all we truly sensed God's guidance and experienced God's grace.

We revealed our trust in God through that season in a variety of ways:

We continued to give our weekly pledged offering to the church.

We tightened our belts and really focused on identifying needs verses wants.

We continued to attend worship at our church through a very hectic season of preparing and then marketing our home for sale.

We gave thanks for the support and encouragement that our church family and neighbors and the real estate company gave to us through this time.

In the early days of our adult lives, Dale and I would have definitely fallen into the soil where the seed were eaten up and choked out from worldly values and ways of life. Yet God was able to transform our soils into good soil. God is willing to do this for anyone who is serious about their relationship with God.

I am hoping that this story helps you see one way that God helps people through very challenging situations. I encourage you to look back over a time in your life and consider God's hand in what happened. If you've been through a tough season and didn't experience God's help, is there a reason you may not have been open to receiving his help?

It is my prayer that this message sustains and nurtures your faith in our living God. Amen.

