

THREE MIGHTY MEN
May 7, 2017 Morning Service
II Samuel 23:13-17

Tonight around the world three billion people will go to bed hungry. This same night four billion people around our globe will go to bed discouraged, no one having said to them “I love you. I care for you.” Wouldn’t it be a sad night if one of those was your spouse, your child, your parent, your friend? You see, discouragement is part of life. It is for all of us. We need a good word spoken into us. That’s why this morning when I arose I sent a text to both of my children. “I love you.” I didn’t want to get under conviction at my own preaching today. I said to my wife when I walked in, “I love you.” Everyone needs a good word. David in II Samuel 23, the narrative in II Samuel 23 beginning in verse 13:

Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. David had a craving and said [Now listen to it. You can hear him sigh when he says this], “Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!” [Bethlehem’s his home. He’s not thirsty. If a king wants water, he gets water. He just says, “Somebody get it,” and they do. David was longing for home at the end of his life. He’s discouraged. He’s been fighting the fight. “Oh that somebody would bring me a drink of water from the wall at Bethlehem by the gate.] So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord; and he said, “Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?” Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.¹

David is discouraged. The three – hear it. David’s got 30 men that are around him always, leaders, but three of those heard and they went through the troop of the Philistines down to the well, got it in a receptacle, a gourd, a bucket of some kind and brought the drink back to David and David said, “My Lord and my God, they’ve risked their lives. I can’t drink it.” He poured it out. You see, he wasn’t thirsty. He was dry in his soul. He was weary. These three brought a drink to a discouraged leader. Paul was like that. Friend, everybody gets discouraged. Everyone has those days when they need a good word. Paul said in II Corinthians chapter 7 and verse number 5: *For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest [He’s burning the candle at both ends. Our flesh had no rest. He’s weary], but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.*

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Paul said, "We were so stressed. We were running with our tongues hanging out and there was just conflict all around us on the outside and there were fears gripping us on the inside." He was weary. He was discouraged. God sent David three mighty men. Now if you've still got your Bible open to the 23rd chapter, you get in verse 18 and it says that Abishai who was Joab's brother – it was David's general – he went and swung his spear against 300 and he killed 300 men. He had a name as well as the three but verse 19 says while he was honored among the 30, he did not attain to the three water fetchers. You mean killing 300? It was surpassed by getting a bucket of water.

Then you get in verse 20 and you hear about Benaiah. He's a valiant man. The Bible says he did mighty deeds. He killed two sons of Ariel of Moab. He went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day. That's a man's man, isn't it? You think it's cold in here. Just hang on. When we get new refrigeration it only has one gear, on and off, so just be patient. We'll get it fixed.

He killed an Egyptian who was an impressive man. He went down and snatched a spear out of his hand and killed him with his own spear. These were the things that Benaiah did but he didn't attain to the standing of the three. You mean fetching water overshadowed killing a lion on a snowy day in a pit? Yeah in this text. You see, these three men are honored because they've come with a word of encouragement to a discouraged leader. All of us leaders and followers get discouraged and we need that good word. These men, these three men are men of action. They're men of anonymity. We don't know who they are. We just know what they did.

You see, when you become that kind of servant it doesn't matter that you get any kind of recognition. God takes care of that. He brought these three mighty men into the life of David. Who were these mighty men? We don't know but what did they do? That's what I want to talk about. You should be a mighty man, a mighty woman, a mighty young person. You should be a mighty man. How does that happen? Three things we find about these men.

First of all, these were men of unquestioned submission. Unquestioned. They loved the king. They were in submission to the king. If you're going to be a mighty man or woman in the kingdom of God, you must be in unquestioned submission to Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. How do you do that? You begin first of all as you heard Kevin say, he fell on his knees in that cell and said, "Lord." When he said Lord, he'd come to submission. God saved him and Jesus stepped out of heaven and into a jail cell and saved him, wrote his name in the Lamb's book of life, or found where it had been written there since the foundation of the world according to Ephesians. If you've never been saved, I'm telling you, what God did for this man He'll do for you today. If you've never called on the name of Jesus you ought to call on Him today. You ought to come in submission to Him today. Amen.

The first step of submission is salvation. Can you take me to a place and tell me of a time? Do you know that you know the Lord today? Are you a saved man or

woman? The second step of submission is baptism. Kevin was baptized in a jail. I talked to his chaplain. He told me about that. Tonight we're going to have a great baptismal service at Olive. We're going to have several people be baptized at the beginning of the service and some other people will come and we'll baptize at the end of the service. You ought to come join us tonight. If you've never been baptized, you ought to come. There was a young lady who came this morning and she signed up to be baptized tonight.

I wrote her a card this week. I've been in her home. I've been praying for her. I wrote her and I said, "Is this your week?" She came today. She said, "It's my day, pastor. I'm ready." You see, baptism. Under the water, the death of Christ. Raised out of the water, the resurrection of Christ. Dead to yourself, alive in the lordship of Jesus. You ought to come at the end of this service in a just a few minutes. In a moment I'm going to have everybody stand and help me with an illustration and you'll know when you stand up, we're halfway done. We're going around the turn, alright? In just a moment you're going to help me do that.

Some of you need to come in submission at the end of this service to say, "I want to trust Christ. I'm coming for baptism." Some of you are coming for lordship. I got saved when I was ten years old. I didn't know much about the lordship of Christ until I turned 17. God put a man in my life, an old man with an eighth grade education, Claude Wheeler. He ran a saw mill for a living. He began to pour Jesus into my life.

The night I surrendered I knelt by my bed and I prayed this prayer. I said, "Lord, I'll go anywhere. I'll do anything. I'll give up anybody. I'll give up anything in order to be in the center of your will." That was my prayer. Now before you think I was doing something big. "Lord, I'll go anywhere." I never had been anywhere. I was ready to get on Delta and take off. "Lord, I'll do anything." I never had done anything. "I'll give up anybody." I'm an only child. I ain't got anybody. "I'll give up anything." I didn't have nothing.

That was 1971. This is 2017. "Lord, I'll go anywhere. I'll leave this church and go where You want me to go. Lord, I'll go where You tell me to go." "Lord, I'll do anything. Wash dishes. Wash feet." That's lordship. "I'll give up anybody." Oh my Lord. You mean I've got to give up my kids, my grandkids if God calls me around the world to do something? Yeah. "I'll give up anybody." "I'll give up anything." I've got something now. This church has been very good to me. I've tried to be frugal and save and do some things, buy a home. I want that. I want some of that. "I've got to take out of that?" Yeah. "It's not yours. Its Mine."

Somebody here needs to crown Him Lord today. You need to begin with your life and then whatever He says do. Go anywhere, do anything, give up anybody, give up anything. It's a little different, Jon, when they're just children at home but when God sends them around the world it's something else, isn't it? You have to release and say, "God, it's not my girl. It's Your girl." Amen.

These were men of unquestioned submission. Saved, baptized, lordship. Where are you today? Is He Lord? Is He Lord? Is He Lord? If not, crown Him king today. These were men of unquestioned submission. Secondly, these were men of unqualified service. They'd do anything. All God asked them to do is go get water. What a menial, a menial task.

I'll never forget it. We got ready to build this new building years ago. After we built it, it was here and I'm standing here one Sunday and a young Navy flyer walked down. You know, when our young pilots get here many times they don't go to work immediately. Sometimes they have a few days or weeks, sometimes even months before the schedule puts them in training so they have some down time. This young man came. He shook my hand one morning. He said, "Pastor, I've been praying and I want to volunteer to clean every toilet this week at Olive Baptist Church." He said that. I said, "Okay," and I put him with our maintenance team. When he walked off I chuckled because he doesn't know what he's volunteered for.

When we built this new building we took a survey. Number one on the survey was not better light. It was not better pews. It was not better sound. It was not better carpet. It was, "Give us bathrooms." Those of you that were with us in the other building, you remember in those three services in the morning, 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00, we stood in line to go to the bathroom. People didn't like that. In the name of Jesus the Nazarene, we put toilets in this building. We put them north, south, east, and west. He came back to me the next Sunday. He said, "You tricked me." I said, "You brought it up. I didn't. I was just serving." Then he looked at me serious and he said, "Pastor, right over here under a commode I met the King." He said, "I'm made to clean toilets in the military but when I got on my hands and knees to serve in my own volition, God did something to me when I was ready to serve."

Unqualified service. Mother Teresa said it this way. I love what that dear, old nun said. She said, "Ask God to use you without consulting you." "Oh, Lord, I'll go over here but let me tell you where I want to go. Lord, I'll serve but, you know, I want to be..." No, no, no. Just ask God to use you without consulting you. Just sign the contract, slide it across heaven's desk and say, "Lord, you fill in the contract. I've already signed my name."

I want to ask you to help me do something. Would everybody please immediately rise to your feet? Rise to your feet. Lift your right hand. Lift your right hand up. Everybody on your feet, right hand up. Isaiah 6. "Here am I, Lord. Send me." Say those words. "Here am I, Lord. Send me." One more time. "Here am I, Lord. Send me." Now raise your hand way up like you really mean it, like you're a kid on the back row that wants a teacher to see you. Now let's do it again. "Here am I, Lord. Send me. Here am I, Lord. Send me." Listen. We're going to pray that prayer every Sunday for the next five weeks at Olive Baptist Church. Some of you need to say, "Here I am, Lord. Here I am, Lord. Here I am, Lord. Send me." Some of you need to be sent around the world. Some of you need to be sent to the preschool department. Some of you need to be sent to Vacation Bible School to volunteer. Some

of you need to be sent to Warrington to help us replant that church. "Here am I, Lord. Here am I, Lord. Send me."

Every one of those six words is important. Too many people want to say, "Here I am, send me." If you leave out Lord, you'll be in charge. "Here I am, Lord." Submission. "Send me. I'll go anywhere. I'll do anything. I'll give up anybody. I'll give up anything. Lord, I am coming in unqualified service. I do not qualify the service. I'll do what You tell me to do." These were men of unquestioned submission, unqualified service. Number three, these were men of unquenchable sacrifice.

They broke through the lines, went down to the well at Bethlehem where David was born, got that receptacle of water, brought it back. David said, "My Lord, I cannot drink this water. They've risked their blood. They've risked their lives." Oh yes, sacrifice.

In the early 1800's there was a preacher's kid by the name of Adoniram Judson. His father was Adoniram Judson, Sr. He was Adoniram Judson, Jr., a PK we call them, preacher's kids. The congregational church, Judson followed Christ early and then he went off to college and lost his faith because John Eames became his friend. John Eames turned the heart of Adoniram Judson away from Christ. He became what is known as a deist. Eames and Judson lived in a room next to each other. One night Judson heard wailing, like a man dying. When he inquired the next morning, John Eames was dead. Judson said he died in lostness. He said, "He died without God and I did not want to cry those lonely cries." That night Judson fell on his face and surrendered and said, "God, forgive me for turning my back on the faith."

He came home in full surrender. God called him to go to Burma. He married Ann and they went to Burma. He was a Congregationalist when he arrived in Burma but not long. They were teaching the Bible. He got in Bible study and he saw where Jesus was baptized by immersion and then everybody that followed Christ was baptized by immersion and the Congregationalist became a Baptist. They baptized Judson there in Burma. He was brilliant with Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. He translated the New Testament into Burmese, sending the Bible all throughout that land, on fire for God.

He'd been there a few years. As a matter of fact, 12 and had 18 converts. Eighteen. Running eighteen after 12 years but he stayed by the stuff. The war broke out. He was arrested being someone not of that nation. He spent 21 months in a prison cell. They'd hang him by his feet, just resting on his shoulder blades. His wife, Ann, would bring food and slip it to him. Ann would later die. He'd marry again and his second wife would die because of disease. He would finally be released from jail and he became a fire brand for the gospel.

You go back to that area of the world today and you'll find every church that's alive, that has the root of Judson in it. This was a man of unquenchable sacrifice. Let me tell you, sometimes, friends, if you become the encourager and the follower of Christ, it will cost you. Thank God for people that sacrifice to help us, that pay a price.

I've been at Olive for 26 ½ years. Twenty-five and a half of the happiest years of my life. There was 1997. I made a transitional decision about our church. Some people did not like it. Some got angry, a little handful, and left. Many others got angry and stayed and I wanted out. It was 20 years ago this month that this text became alive to me. I was so discouraged. I remember. I wrote it down. I said, "I will go to Toad Suck, Arkansas if You'll let me." That's a real place. It's not a big place but it's a real place. I had a man that gave me a little magnet that you put on your refrigerator, the Toad Suck, Arkansas Festival. They have a roundup. I don't know what they round up but toads, I guess. I don't know.

I just wanted to quit. I really didn't want to quit. I just wanted to quit here. I wanted out. As I often tell preachers, when you're looking for a pulpit committee you can't find one. God had put me on the turntable of the potter's wheel. He had taken me into the room to do work as a stone mason on my life. There are a lot of rough edges on this young preacher and he was knocking those edges off. There were some decisions we had to make but it was more about me. It just was forming and fashioning me and I didn't like it. I got the letters in the mail. "We're going to burn your house down." I've had the police stay at my house while I'm gone. I've feared for the life of my kids. They were empty threats but they were real because they were made. We had the long business meeting and people unloaded and said things. I said, "Dear God, why?"

Liz and Rachel were gone somewhere and I took Bennett home. He was just a little tike. I drove into my driveway over in Scenic Hills North where we lived at the time. We drove and there was a car sitting in front of my house by the mailbox. I said, "My God, they've come to get me." I drove in and put Bennett to bed and I turned the light on and the car was still there.

I walked down the steps to find three of the dearest friends I've ever had in the world sitting on the curb. I said, "What are you guys doing?" They said, "Well, pastor, we just came to be a little encouragement tonight." I said, "Whose car is this?" They said, "Well we rented that car this morning." I said, "Where have you been?" They said, "Well we left here at 5:30 and we drove to Pisgah, your hometown. Pastor, have you ever read II Samuel 23?" I said, "I've read the whole Bible more than once but I don't have it memorized. You're going to have to help me a little bit."

They said, "David's in the cave at Adullam." I said, "Oh yeah, the three guys went through and they got the water at Bethlehem." They said, "You used to tell us at Pisgah there's an artesian well." I said, "Yeah, it feeds the whole town. It would bubble out of the ground. You'd ride your bicycle as a little boy and you'd just stick your head down in that water and drink and cool off." I said, "Yeah." They said, "We drove and met with your momma and daddy. They didn't know we were coming." They reached over in the back of the car and they handed me a quart fruit jar. They said, "We've brought you a drink of water from your well in your Bethlehem." I didn't know what to do with that but I was so encouraged.

They said, "We've got something else we want to give you." I said, "What?" They reached over and they said, "You told us when you were 17 God called you to preach and you'd go out there on the gorge at Pisgah." Pisgah means in Hebrew a high, rocky ridge. It's like where Moses was at Pisgah looking over into Canaan. It's a high, rocky ridge. The same thing in north Alabama. You don't find Pisgah in the desert. You only find it in the mountains. It's a high, rocky ridge like the Mount Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina. I said, "Yeah, I used to lie down on a big rock and read my Bible and see that river run."

They said, "We asked your father to take us out there. We took a hammer and we broke off two pieces of a big rock. We think it's close to where you used to pray and we wanted you to have this rock and we want you to know that God will be your foundation stone. He'll see you through if you'll stand on a solid rock and if you'll remain where God called you, God'll sustain you." I was so encouraged.

They then reached over in the back of the car and they got out a two pound Maxwell House coffee can, one of those big metal cans. You remember they had the key that would go around it. You could cut your finger off if you got it in there. You remember? They'd cut rhododendron off the side of the mountain, the flowers that grow in north Alabama, and put gravel and water and stuff. I immediately said, "Did you not see the signs?" They said, "Yes, we saw it. \$100 fine for cutting rhododendron." They said, "You've taught us it's easier to get forgiveness than permission so we just cut it off." They said, "Pastor, we wanted to bring you that because it was in bloom here in the spring in Alabama. We know that you used to camp in those areas and Jesus will be the Lily of your valley, the fresh flower of your soul. He'll be the rose of your Sharon if you'll trust Him all the days of your life."

My Lord. I was so encouraged. Then one of them – and I've never told who these three men are except one and I can only tell that because he is deceased. The other two who remain alive I've never spoken their name. I've preached this sermon scores of times. These are men of anonymity, men of action. One of those men came and put his hand up toward my face and said, "Pastor, would you just be quiet for a minute? We want to tell you something." I said, "Yeah." They said, "We've been talking. We drove 350 miles, spent some time with your momma and daddy, and drove 350 miles back and we've been sitting here waiting on you to get home and we've got one thing we want to tell you. The three of us, we want to tell you, not because you're something special or something super-duper. That's not it. We believe God called you to be the pastor of Olive Baptist Church and we want you to know we three are willing to die for you. If anybody comes after you they'll have to come through us." I tried to speak and they said, "Please just be quiet. Hear us."

"We just want you to know, we're here for you." They gave me their names. They wrote them down, their phone numbers. They said, "Keep these in your wallet." I now have them in my phone. They said, "If you're ever in trouble anywhere in the

planet you call one of us. We'll call the other two and we will come unquestioned to help you wherever you are. We'll help you. Whatever.

Well this went on for an hour and a half. We danced and prayed and cried and blew our nose and wept and prayed and wept and prayed. They got in the car. They started down the road about – they didn't go ten feet and the lights came on and Dennis Wilson, those of you that knew him, had the biggest head God ever made. Travis Fryman tried to buy him a baseball cap one time. You can't find one to fit him. You have to get it tailor-made. It's huge.

Dennis rolled the window down. He kind of stuck his head out around. He said, "Oh yeah, one more thing we forgot to tell you. If you ever sleep with the wrong woman or become a liberal, we three will kill you." I believed them. In Jesus' name, I did.

I was so encouraged. My troubles didn't go away but I knew I was going to make it because of encouragers. I've got hundreds of those. There was a man that walked up to me after the early service. He's 6'6" if he's an inch. He said, "Pastor, put two more on the list." I said, "What?" He said, "I'm big enough for two. Put two more on the list." I was so encouraged. Scores of men came around me to hold up my hands like Aaron and Hur. I didn't deserve it but God called us here. He wanted to sustain us here.

You say, "Preacher, why do you preach this sermon?" Because, number one, it's the 20th anniversary of this anniversary. It was 20 years ago this month. The 19th of May is when it happened. I couldn't do it next week. It's Mother's Day. The week after that we're doing seniors in high school. I didn't want to preach this sermon. I argued with God all week. I share this to remind you of our history, that God has a plan and a purpose for this fellowship and it takes all of us. We have to encourage one another and it matters not if anybody knows our name. Oh I never call these men's names. I did send to both of them a text this morning that are alive. I said, "I'm preaching II Samuel 23 today. I love you." I got texts back. "Amen." The second one said, "Pastor, I wept again this morning as I remembered the time of God's refreshment in our church."

There are others. Tommy Cushing, oh he stood in a deacon's meeting for me one night. He's home bedfast, sick. Stan and I went by to see him the other day and laid hands on him. He wasn't one of these three but he made the statement in a meeting one night. He said, "If you can't back the pastor come outside, get on the bus, and I'll drive the bus. I'll take you to the edge of town. You can walk wherever God leads you to go." I've called him the bus driver ever since. Dave Talley. Bobby Taylor.

There are hundreds, hundreds of mighty men in this church. We've not always agreed but we've agreed to walk in the same direction. I could spend all day calling names and telling stories but it would embarrass those men and I've had some of them tell me, "Don't ever mention my name in regard to this." They were serious. There's one man who walked with me through this and it was harder on him probably than me.

Some ten years after and I've never mentioned his name. I wouldn't mention it now but I saw him one Sunday in the hall here and I just grabbed his hand and held on. He looked at me. I looked at him and we understood.

If you've ever had an encourager in your life, you know what I'm talking about. I just simply share so you understand our history that the church has gone through these turns. They don't happen often but there are gigantic moments that cause a family, a church family to gather around the lordship of Christ and go forward together. Thank God. How did that happen? It happened because of John 7:38. "Anybody that is thirsty, let him come and drink and if he believes in Me, as the scripture has said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."

That's what happened with those men that day. There was a river because the reservoir of Christ is in them, the living water, and it flows and that's what happens in you. You come to surrender and out of your innermost being, flows a river and people get wet. When they get wet they get refreshed because you've encouraged one another. God put His hands over my children and protected them through all of that. God protected my sweet wife. He protected me. David had mighty men. Paul had mighty men. Olive has mighty men. Men walking in submission and service, making a sacrifice when need be.

In a moment when we sing this song, if you're here without Christ, you need to come. If you're here today and you need to sign up to be baptized as some did this morning, you need to come. Come to join this church, then come. Jon's getting ready to play. When we sing, take up the cross and follow me and you'll hear the Master say, He's asking us to surrender your all today. It's lordship. Lordship. Mighty men. God's looking for mighty men. Mighty women. He's looking for a teenager. He's looking for a college student. He's looking for a Navy flyer that will clean toilets. He's looking for someone to say, "I surrender all to you." Then you just let the water flow.

You say, "How'd those three guys come up with that idea of going to do that?" I've asked them. They just talked and one of them said, "We were reading this passage and we thought" and they said, "That's the craziest thing I've ever heard." They couldn't get away from it and God led them to do something they thought was foolish but I cannot tell you the times I've preached this message.

I didn't want to preach it here. It's hard to preach it at home. I preach it all over America but it's hard to preach it here because there's so many preachers that hurt in our churches that are being crushed and abused but I just want to remind us. We have what we have because of those that have gone before us. Not just those three but 300 and 3,000 before and we must then pass forward what God's given us as we encourage one another.