

Are You in His Hands

by Dennis Kinlaw

The sermon challenges us to trust in God's greater plans and to live boldly in the center of His will.

Duration: 34:36

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11, Zechariah 2:12-13, Malachi 3:1, Matthew 28:18-20, John 6:1-14

Topics: "Security"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares two powerful stories to illustrate the idea that there are no impossibilities when it comes to fulfilling God's will. The first story is about David Livingston, a missionary who faced danger and exhaustion but found strength in the scripture that reminded him of Jesus' authority and presence. The second story is about a student preacher who delivered a sermon on the feeding of the five thousand, emphasizing how Jesus transformed a small amount of food into abundance. The preacher encourages the audience to think beyond ordinary limitations and embrace a vision that aligns with God's will. The sermon concludes with the example of a missionary in China who selflessly serves despite the difficult conditions, highlighting the glory found in fulfilling God's mission.

Transcript

I'm going to ask, since you've been sitting for about 20 minutes, and some of you longer than that, that while I read the Scripture, you stand with me. Those of you that are in the audience, you don't have to do it if it's awkward for you, but those of you, stand while we hear the word of God. The Scripture reading this morning is found in the Old Testament, a little book that most people don't pay a great deal of attention to.

It's next to the last book in the Old Testament. It is the book of Zechariah, reading from the 2nd chapter. I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand.

Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I sayeth the Lord will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

Ho, ho, come forth and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord, for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled

you.

For he that touches you touches the apple of his eye. For behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo, I come, I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.

And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation." Let us remain standing for just a moment of prayer.

Our Father, we come to hear thy words, not the word of any mortal, but the word of the living, the eternal Spirit of God, as he comes in gracious love and holy concern to communicate his truth to our hearts. Give us open hearts, give us receptive minds, and give us obedient spirits as we hear thee speak, in Christ's name. Amen.

The story which is the background for this scripture is a sad one. It is the story of a great people who forgot their high and noble calling and turned their backs upon the will of God. And as a result of that, they came under judgment as inevitably happens.

When a man walks in the center of God's will, it is inevitable that God should bless him. When he steps out of God's will and lives contrary to it, there are certain laws built into life that inexorably move in to bring him under heavy judgment. And so a nation that had known the blessing of God now knew what it meant to have God departed from them and all of the favors that go with his holy presence.

And so they found themselves impotent before their enemies, and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem, conquered the land of Israel, and carried the people captive into Babylon. For seventy years they sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept as they remembered the days of God's blessings. And then there came to them the word of God that said, If you will repent, you can return and God will give you his favor again.

And so they did. And a remnant of that people who had been carried into captivity with their children returned to the city of Jerusalem and began to rebuild it. There were many enemies that were about them, and they were but a remnant of people.

It was a story remarkably like the story that we have seen in the middle of the twentieth century with the return of the Jews to Israel. All around Israel that little remnant that came back to the city of Jerusalem were great powers. The Arabs today do not represent the kind of military power that existed in Egypt in that day or in Iraq or in Iran or in Syria, because in that day the forces that were around Israel were world powers, at least powers of great military superiority to Israel.

They began to rebuild their city with these military forces that were hostile to them, watching. After a little time as they had begun to rebuild, their neighbors protested, and the powers that were in control in that day stopped them. And so there was no progress in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the people of Israel for eighteen years.

And then after eighteen years God did what nobody expected. The answer came in a little preacher and his partner. One's name was Haggai and the other's name was Zechariah.

You will remember that Israel's worship centered around three festivals, and it was interesting that they had not been able to celebrate those festivals for better than seventy years because the city of the Temple had been destroyed or else it had been surrounded by an enemy to keep them from doing it in proper order. It was as if you had gone for seventy years without being able to celebrate Christmas or Easter or Pentecost. And then along came a little preacher whose name was MyFestivalz, and he stood up and said, That's exactly right.

My name is MyFestivalz, and God is going to let us celebrate those festivals again right here. And they said, That can't be because we don't have a temple. And he said, Yes, but you're going to build one.

And they said, But we have all these enemies around us that are hostile who will not let us do God's will. And he said, You do not determine whether you do God's will by your enemies. You determine it by whether it is the will of God or not.

And then Haggai said, Let me introduce you to my partner. They said, Well, we would like to think that there might be this kind of thing, but you see, God has evidently forgotten us. Just look at our enemies.

They have their military might, and we hardly have a police force to protect us. And he said, That's why I want to introduce you to my partner. You see, my partner's name is The Lord Has Remembered, and that's what Zechariah means.

And then Zechariah said, Yes, the Lord has remembered you, and you must forget about the obstacles in your pathway and now return to the full will of God and do all that he wants you to do. And so they said, Good, we will start. So they started immediately to rebuild the city.

And as they did, a man went out and began to draw lines. They got their architects and contractors together and began to see how they would put it together. And as they did, as the prophet sees the man going out with his measuring line over the city, the prophet hears an angel's voice that says, Call him back.

And so the man who was out to measure the city to rebuild it was called back and said, What's the trouble? And the prophet said to him, Forget about that measuring stick you've got, because the Lord is going to build this city infinitely bigger than you ever expected it to be built. You know, there is always a tendency in us when we are not in the will of God to think smaller than God wants us to think. There is something about sin that blinds a man's eyes to his own potential and to the potential of the situation in which he stands.

And so these people who had not been walking with God and thus did not think His thought, when they got ready to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, they decided on the basis of their financial resources, on the basis of their military strength, on the basis of the quality of their political and religious leadership, and they said, We really are not very great, and so we must be very circumspect and wise and build small and build well. And so they got ready to put up the walls, and the Lord said, Take them down, because you've drawn the circle infinitely smaller than I want you to draw it. It will be a city without walls larger than you've ever dreamed.

And you know, I believe that's the way God tends to think. This is one of the things that has always disturbed me when I've rubbed shoulders with real great men of God. They've always exploded my small ideas.

When I was a pastor in North Carolina down in the swamps with four country churches, I used to, for my own spiritual life's sake, take off in the summertime and go to Winona Lake, Indiana, where Youth for Christ was just getting underway. Those were the days of Billy Graham and Jack Shuler and Bob Pierce and Torrey Johnson and men like this, Bob Cook. I remember when I would go, there were certain Asberians in the group that would get me into where I had an opportunity to see things and hear things that otherwise I wouldn't have had the chance to experience.

So one morning I found myself in a six o'clock morning prayer meeting with a group of their leaders, and I listened to them as they talked. They were not churchmen, they were not bishops, they were not ecclesiastical bureaucrats, they were simply a bunch of young men who were concerned about doing the full will of God. And as I listened to them pray that morning, it was sort of like having the walls exploded out in your head.

And after it was over with, Ernie Kilburn, who was an Asbury graduate who was hosting me there, said, Dennis, I want you to meet a friend of mine. And so he took me to the one who was in charge and introduced me to Bob Pierce of World Vision later, then simply a Youth for Christ worker. And as he introduced me to Bob Pierce, Bob turned immediately and looked at me and said, Dennis, where are you from? And I said, well, I'm from North Carolina.

What are you doing? He said, I'm pastoring four-country churches. He said, oh, good. We talked about thirty seconds and he said, let's pray.

And so I said, fine, and he put one arm around me and he put one arm around Ernie Kilburn, pulled our heads together and said, Now, dear Lord, thank you for the chance to meet Dennis. We don't know what your will is for him, but God, please don't let him bury himself in a hole somewhere where he won't count. Get him out on the battle line for you where his life will count for something.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen. Glad to have met you, Dennis.

And he was gone. You know, there's something like that about people that get close to God. When they get close to Him, it's almost as if their minds explode and they begin to think only in categories that are larger than the ordinary.

You know, that was true of John Wesley. Somebody challenged him one day and he said, That's right, the world is my parish. He said, Now, wait a minute.

Just a few years ago you were a failure at thirty-five as an Anglican preacher. He said, I know that, but God has done something in my heart and God has given me a vision. And now, four thousand miles away from where John Wesley said that, we sit in an institution and have young people that have come to us not only from all over the country but from all over the world in fulfillment of a vision that exploded in that little five-foot-two fellow's head as he walked back and forth across little England.

You know, F. B. Meyer, the great Baptist preacher, said, If there's any disappointment in heaven, it's going to be when God shows you the blueprint He intended for your life. And then you see how far short you came from fulfilling what God wanted to do in you and with you. And so the prophet says, Call him back, bring his measuring line with him, because the dimensions of the city that he's going to build are entirely too small to suit me.

I've got big purposes for my people and greater plans than they've conceived. And that's his word for you this morning. If you get close to Christ, you'll think in larger terms than you will ever think under any other circumstances.

Now they started to put the walls up around the city, and as they started to erect them, Zechariah got a heavenly word and said, Call them back. And so the workers that were building the walls came back and he said, Tell them to stop it. And they said, Wait a minute, you see those Samaritans over there? You see those fellows in Jordan across the river? You see those Egyptians down there? You know those Syrians up there? They are ready to wipe us out.

We've got to get our walls up as fast as we can get them up. We don't even have a good police force, and they've got great military strength. And so we must build The Lord said to Zechariah, Tell them.

They don't have to worry about that. I am going to be a wall of fire around them. You see, I am the Lord of hosts, which is the Hebrew expression for I am God of the army.

They don't have to worry about Syria. They don't have to worry about Jordan. They don't have to worry about Egypt.

All they have to worry about is being in the center of my will, and I will be a wall of fire round about them, impenetrable to any foe and destructive to anyone that tries. You know, we tend to build defensively. You see, they looked at what they had and said, We have to protect what we've got, and we will have to very quickly move and do that.

And if you think in terms of your resources, you'll do the same thing. But you see, God does not want us to think in terms of our resources. He wants us to think in terms of his resources, as far as power and strength and safety and security is concerned.

And that means that a man can stick his neck out a good bit farther than he would otherwise, because the one who is with him is greater than he that is with his foes, if he is in the center of God's will. And you know, that's the reason Christians, when they've gotten close to God, have always been gamblers. Whether it's a C.T. Studd who inherited a quarter of a million dollars and gave it all away, and his brother who was the Lord Mayor of London said, Charlie, you're a fool.

I put mine in the Bank of England and I'll get a due return on it. Charlie said, You know, I thought about that. But he said, You know, banks can go broke down here, so I put mine in the one up there that never will go broke and whose dividends never stop.

There are about 1,200 people scattered around the world today in the name of Charlie Studd, bringing the gospel of Christ to a whirl. And his brother is a name in the annals of the City of London. You see, when a man begins to think, you know, that was the way with Livingston.

I am sure that Livingston must have driven some people up the wall. He wasn't too bright, some of his friends said. He was very shy, very diffident, not too expressive.

And when he left Scotland, they sent him to be an assistant to a pastor in England, and at the end of the year the man for whom he worked said to the mission board, For goodness sakes, don't send this fellow to the mission field, he'll never make it. And that promising failure began to look out at the world and didn't settle for a church to pastor, great as that is, or a village or town to lead, or a city or a state to conquer, or

a nation to be concerned about. He looked at one of the continents of the earth, and the blackest one, and said, Lord, that's the one we want.

And he went after it. You know, we need some people like that today. There are no impossibilities today any greater than the one he faced.

You remember that day when all day long he had been fleeing from the savages that wanted to destroy him? And at sunset he stopped, and after sunset at dark he stopped and built a fire and fixed him some food. He couldn't go any farther. And as he was fixing his food, he stopped to read the scripture, and he came to the end.

His reading that day brought him to the end of the gospel of Matthew 28, and he read, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

And old David Livingston wrote in his journal that day, In the light of this, should the light of me flee? No, I will stay, take my measurements for longitude and latitude, and camp for the night. And he did. You see, when you are in the center of God's will, there are walls about, a fire.

Now, he said, You know, it's not only going to be larger and safer, it's going to be more glorious than you thought. They said, Now wait a minute, that's impossible. You know, the temple that we are replacing was built by Solomon.

And when Solomon ruled over Israel, it was the richest day that Israel ever knew. They said if you walked down the street and kicked a stone, it was liable to be either a precious stone or a piece of gold. That was the hyperbole of the day.

And you will remember that when they built that temple, they covered a good chunk of it with gold. They used the best wood that the world had to offer in that day, the cedars of Lebanon. They had the finest Phoenician artists to help them and to guide them in the construction of it and in making it an object of absolute beauty, so that the Jews for centuries came when they would come over the brow of the hill where then Jerusalem would come into view.

There was the glory of Israel, the temple, in all of its glamor and gloriousness, over the place where Abraham reputed to have offered Isaac. And the Hebrews called it the navel of the earth. Right there where that temple was, was where heaven's umbilical cord came down.

And Solomon built the temple to match the significance of the spot. And now there were a bunch of refugees that had come out of Babylon with what they could carry in their hands and in their suitcases. They no longer had the mines of the ancient Near East at their fingertips to build with.

They had the rubble of the city of Jerusalem. And they said as they built, they wept when they remembered the glory of a former day and said, We will never know again a day like this. No, he said, You're going to know a better day.

And they said, How can that be? We will never have the gold of that day, and we will never have the cedar of that day. We will never have the artisans of that day and the beauty. And he said, No, but you're building a temple for something better.

You see, the glory that was here was one thing, but you're building a temple that we hope the Messiah will come to. And I am going to be in the midst, and that glory will be better than anything that you have known. You know, that's the only explanation of Christians.

You see, there is a glory in the center of God's will that beats anything that can be found anywhere else in all the world. Missionary binding up the broken bodies in China when the Japanese were demolishing the Chinese nation. An American businessman watched that missionary as she worked with those bodies and as she worked in the stench and in all the need and filth.

And he looked at her and said, I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world. And she said, I wouldn't either. I want to tell you something.

You will never know what God wants for you until you find that glory, which is Jesus in the midst. Bruce Olsen, 19, halfway through university, left to go to the jungles of the Amazon. And I said, Bruce, you're not supposed to do that kind of thing.

Why did you go and give up what you had? He said, I was afraid I would lose that intimacy with Jesus, because I thought he wanted me there. And I knew that if he wanted me there and I was not there, I would lose that glorious intimacy with Christ. Do you know that? That's the true glory.

That's better than anything the world has to offer. And the man who finds that will live in these terms of the larger. Now, he said, it's not only going to be larger than you dream, safer and better, it's going to be far more influential.

I am sure that when Zechariah stood up that Sunday morning and said, Boys, one of these days the nations are going to be joined to the Lord, all the Gentiles. He said, one of these days, Sadat is going to come up from Egypt and say, Could I go in the temple and worship? And Hussein is coming over from Jordan and the leaders from Syria, and they're going to make Jerusalem their home. But it's not going to be simply these.

The islands of the world are going to send their delegates. I am going to shake my hands over the nations, and they are going to come to this place. They said, Zechariah, that's impossible.

Even their religion seemed to deny that. They were the chosen people and nobody else much was going to make it. And Zechariah said, Yes, but a light is going from this place that will drive back the darkness in which people are confined and break the shackles in which they are bound.

And they are going to see the truth, and all the nations of the earth are going to come to Jerusalem to worship me. You see, they had been thinking in terms of Jews and Jewishness, and God was thinking in terms of his divine love and the last, least remnant of mankind. And he's still thinking that way.

He's still thinking that way. You'll notice on the corner of this building a quotation that talks about full salvation from all sin and free salvation for all men. When you get in the center of God's will, you can't think in any shorter term.

His will includes the last, least man you will ever meet. His will is for you. You say, How under the sun can God think in those terms? He can't think in those terms for me.

I know me. I want to tell you who the leaders were here. There were two men.

One of them's name was Joshua, and the other's name was Zerubbabel. Joshua was a backslidden preacher and he was the bishop. He was the head.

Zechariah stood up one morning in church and said, I had a dream about the pastor last night. I dreamed he stood before the Lord and he was dressed in filthy garments because of his sin. He said, I saw the preacher for all that he really is.

I saw him exposed last night. And the devil stood to accuse him and said, Look at him, we will destroy him because, look, he's a fake and a hypocrite. And the Lord said, No, I'm going to take old sinful Joshua and cleanse him and put new robes on him and make him clean and make him what he's supposed to be.

And about that time, Zechariah said, Yes, and put a new hat on his head. That was the religious leaders. The political leader's name was Zerubbabel, which means Seed of Babylon.

So that when anybody said, Who's our new leader? They said, His very name is a symbol of our shame. And God said, That's right. But he said, You know, the thing I like to do is take weakness and match it with my strength, take sinfulness and match it with my holiness, take impotence and match it with my power, and then go do the job.

And you know, that's what he still likes to do. If there's sin in your heart that needs to be forgiven, he still likes to come to forgive and make you stand clean, free before God. If there's uncleanness within your heart that divides you so that you are not singly, exclusively devoted to the will of God, he's got a cleansing power from his Holy Spirit that can come and purge you and unite you to where you have one will, and that's the will of God.

Then he can take a person whose life is synonymous with failure and bring him to the truth of that text, not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord, and put his Holy Spirit in him and send him out to stand against the forces of the world and to stand in terms of the larger, the safer, the better and the longer. And that's what he's calling you to. One of the greatest sermons I ever heard, I heard preached when I was a student here at Asbury College by another student.

Some of the greatest sermons ever preached here have been preached by students. He preached on feeding the five thousand. He told about how Jesus had had those people all day and they were all hungry, and there was no food.

He sent his disciples out and said, Surely you can find something. They finally came back and said, Yeah, we found a little fellow who's been fishing all day. He's caught two sunfish.

He's got five rolls left from what his mother gave him this morning. They're stuffed in his brown jacket over a can of worms. Jesus said, Bring them here.

And he took the two sunfish, and he took the five barley rolls, and he began to break them. You see, it's not what's in the hands of Jesus that's important, it's the hands of Jesus. It's whose hands they're in.

And that student went on to say, You may not be worth five barley loaves and two sunfish. But he said, You see, if you're in his hands, he can take you and feed a multitude. And that's right.

And if you're out of his hands, your life will be sterile and ultimately useless. Are you in the center of his will? If you aren't, you ought not to leave this campus today until you are. Shall we bow our heads together

for prayer? Father, you looked at a young man one day who was rich.

When you told him what your will was and you loved him, you loved him even when he turned his back and went away, sad and grieved. Human history might have been different if he had turned the other way and followed you. You're looking at 1,100 young people today, 1,200, and you're speaking to them about what your will is for them, and you love them even when they turn away.

If they turn away, their lives will be futile and useless and ultimately lost. Don't let them do that. Help them today to see where the true glory is, and to turn and put their hands in yours and go that way, a way that's safer, better, far longer outreach and impact.

Do it just now. In Jesus' name, amen.

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