

The Sixth Sunday Of Easter - Mother's Day

May 9, 2010

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

2 Kings 6:8-17

"Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, 'I will set up my camp in such and such a place.' The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: 'Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.' So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, 'Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?' 'None of us, my lord the king,' said one of his officers, 'but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.'" "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (NIV)

Happy mother's day! If the Lord blessed you with a faithful mother, like I am blessed with, many thankful thoughts come to mind today. But of all the things mothers do perhaps it is a mom's protecting care that sticks out the most. Think of how a mother protects her children. People say not to mess with a bear cub because the momma bear usually isn't far behind. I used to work in a steel factory and shortly after I left there were several kids hurt in serious accidents. When my mom got word of the news, she told me how when I worked there she said a prayer for me every time she heard the front door being closed and locked around 5:30 each morning. Then there is a mother's care. While even growing up I have always had more in common with my dad, when I was sick or hurt, the choice was easy of whom I wanted taking care of me - mom! She always seemed to have a knack - whether it was her chicken soup or wet cloth to the head or gentle way - of making me feel a little better.

I googled some quotes about mothers and found many people think the same as me. There are more quotes about moms than I had time to read. Here is just a sampling. "A mother's love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no laws, no pity, it dares all things and crushes down remorselessly all that stands in its path." - Agatha Christie Victor Hugo wrote "A mother's arms are made of tenderness and children sleep soundly in them." This is the way Emily Dickenson described a mother: "A mother is one to whom you hurry when you are troubled." What could be better than a mother's love! What could make us more secure or bring us more comfort than our mom close by with her care! Who could possibly be more fit to guard and keep us than our own moms?

On this mother's day, we are reminded of a love even greater, a protection more secure, a care that offers us even more comfort than the best mom could give. Today, may our eyes be opened to see our all-powerful, ever-loving God, who provides us blessings even: **Better than A Mom's Protecting Care!**

This account does not get the attention or recognition of familiar Sunday school lessons such as David and Goliath or Daniel in the lion's den, but it is one of my personal favorites. During the time of the prophet Elisha, which places us somewhere around 850-800B.C., we are told the **"king of Aram was at war with Israel."** This northeast neighbor was lurking around trying to harm God's people with a surprise attack. But they kept failing and we are told why. The man of God kept giving the king of Israel insider information. Every time this king of Aram, most likely Ben-Hadad II made plans, Elisha told the king of Israel, most likely Joram, exactly where these enemies were camping. So Israel was able to avoid these attacks and guard themselves against any surprise ambushes.

This did not make the king of Aram very happy to say the least. He was enraged and called in his officers and demanded answers. He was certain they had a spy - a traitor among them. **"Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"** he said. But then one of his officers tells this king exactly what had been happening. **"Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."** This is quite a truth, isn't it? The one true God was giving Israel the insider information through His prophet. The Lord knew even what they spoke about in secret - even the words this enemy king spoke in his bedroom.

This truth reminds me of what David writes about God in Psalm 139: **"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."**

What a God we have! Better than a mom's protecting care? Absolutely! While many moms just seem to always know when we are up to something, we have a God who truly does always know. God knows everything. He knows even the secret things. He always is aware of what our enemies are up to. God sees every danger we face even before we do. Not a single thing can ever happen to us, not a hair can fall off of our heads, without the knowledge of God. God knows and controls all things. And there is no doubt the Lord cares for and protects His children.

We are given some very comforting evidence of this as our lesson continues. Now that the king of Aram is told that he is at odds with the prophet of God he doesn't give up. In fact, he finds out where Elisha is at and makes plans to capture him. When he gets information that Elisha is in Dothan, a city about 12 miles north of Samaria, this king sends horses and chariots and a strong force there to make sure this man of God has no way to escape. When Elisha's servant wakes up the next day, he realizes that they are completely surrounded. He sees the Aram army, the horses, the chariots, the strong forces, and he goes to Elisha and cries out: **"Oh, my lord, what shall we do?"**

Ever been there? Ever felt that way as trouble surrounds you on all sides? Our health worsens, the bills keep stacking up, and our enemies seem to be getting the best of us. How do we react? Don't we many times foolishly and sinfully act like this servant?

We throw up our hands and ask *“what shall we do?”* We worry and fret. Or on the opposite side we have too much confidence in ourselves and what we can do. We get proud of our success, and our power, and our strength. Too often we place the emphasis in the wrong place - on us. *“What shall we do?”* We forget that without God we would be nothing, we would have nothing, we would not be able to even breath. Apart from God we can do nothing. God is our strength and our life and our all. Our confidence is too be in God alone for with God on our side who can be against us. I pray we never forget this lesson Elisha’s servant was about to learn.

Did you catch the answer God’s prophet gives to this trembling servant? *“Don't be afraid.”...“Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*” Elisha knows why we call our God the Lord of hosts. The Lord’s many, many powerful angels are at his beck and call. Elisha prays for his servant’s eyes to be opened to the truth and what a miraculous sight! While to human eyes it looked as though Elisha and his servant were surrounded, in reality it was the enemies of God’s people that were surrounded. God’s angels stood all around them. Not a hair on Elisha’s head could be touched if God doesn’t allow it and Elisha understood that. Now so did his servant! His eyes were opened. After opening his eyes, God shut the eyes of the armies of Aram with blindness so Elisha and his servant could leave unharmed. Having God on their side is even better than a mom’s protecting care!

Are our eyes opened to this truth? If not, I pray the same prayer as Elisha. Not that we might visibly see God’s angels as this servant did, but I pray that we see by faith. I pray we trust God’s promises such as His angels guarding over us and protecting us in all our ways. As the writer of Hebrews puts it: *“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”* I pray by faith we see that this doesn’t mean that troubles and bad things will never happen to us, but that when they do we are not alone, that our God will work even those things out for our good, that we are always in the protecting care of a loving God who knows us and what we need even more than we do.

After all, look at what God gave us in His Son. God knows everything about us, even our secret sins, and still He sent Jesus to earth for us. He sent Jesus to live a life of perfect trust to replace our sinful lives, filled with far too much worry and self reliance. He sent His Son Jesus to take the punishment for our pride and our worry on the cross. Jesus suffered and He died for all the times we say: *“What shall we do?”* Jesus shed His own blood to wash those sins, and all of our other sins, away forever. We don’t have to ever worry because God has already removed from us our biggest problem - sin. The empty grave reminds us that all of our worst enemies are not just surrounded, but they are soundly defeated! So Jesus turns to us and He does to His disciples in our Gospel this morning and says: *“Peace be with you; my peace I give you...Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

What comfort it is to have such a God on our side! Our Lord is here for us and always will be in our greatest moments of need. He is truly only a prayer away and at our side with His Word and promises. May our eyes be opened to see His love, His power, and His goodness to us which, yes, is even better than a mom’s protecting care! Amen.

