

WD October 28, 2024

“A Time to Be Careful”

As I get started today I first want to announce that I am a grandpa again. My youngest son and his wife just had their first baby this week. Super happy. Everyone is healthy and we are very grateful. The day after he was born my wife quickly warned me not to pull the “pastor card” to go and see them at the hospital before she got a chance to see him. Nana gets dibs before G-Dubs.

I want to bounce off of a really good devotion from back on August 27, 2024 from Lutheran Church Charities which puts out devotions regularly. It was titled “A Time to Be Careful.” The subtitle was from the 1 Corinthians 10:12. “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!” The author argues that the most dangerous period for remaining faithful is when your guard is down. This is the time to watch for overconfidence, dulled reactions, and faulty judgement. (Lutheran Church Charities)

I really like Tim Hetzner's observation of King David in 2 Samuel 11:2-4. The article says, *Remember King David's story? 'In the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle...David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened...he saw a woman bathing...Then David sent messengers, and took her' (2 Samuel 11:1-2, 4). Pay particular attention to the phrase, 'Then it happened.'* David chose to stay home rather than go to battle. Who knows why? Maybe his impressive record of successes made him soft, or he got careless, or arrogant? It was only a brief affair, but it changed everything. His peace vanished, his character was ruined, and his family life was destroyed.

Don't fall prey to the perils of past victories! Remember your H.A.L.T. sign. When you're Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired, you're in a vulnerable place and need to be extra careful. Resting on your laurels is synonymous with flirting with disaster.

It's not just David. The Israelites in general couldn't seem to handle blessings. In the wilderness, free from the Egyptians, they complained about everything, blamed Moses for all of their problems, and fell to idolatry. How often have we heard of Christian youth who go off to college only to let their guard down as well—buying into the bombardment of false teaching that surrounds them. How often have good marriages fallen to one impulsive decision not so unlike David's. How many lottery winners go broke faster than average, struggling people. How quick are believers to believe that because they have a good job, a nice house, a steady income, a great family, and life is good may surprise themselves at how fast they stumble, seemingly sabotaging themselves.

Truth is, modern Christians are not so different from David. We justify too much distance from the Lord when things are good. This happens for a mountain for reasons each uniquely built around our individual

lifestyles. Life got real complicated for David after he sinned. Much damage was done to his family and to the kingdom itself. This same David who wrote Psalm 22 and 23 somehow in a calm evening at home allowed himself to become dull in the Word. Maybe we too have become a victim of too much success. Look how big our TVs are getting. Look at how critical the colors on our walls and elaborate our vacations. Think of how much we do for pets. Some of the fattest dogs I've ever seen live with our shut-ins. How much entertainment do we really need? How many things do our kids have to be involved with? We are not as carefully planned or scheduled in Jesus stuff, the Word or Worship, as we should be.

Remember the Rich Farmer in Luke 12. He had a great crop. He was already well off but then when he received a good crop decided to hoard his wealth, build bigger barns, and then eat, drink, and take it easy for the rest of his days. Turns out the day he has this thought was his last day. But notice when he experienced an abundance of blessing he becomes very selfish with it. Not a single thought went towards generosity to others or to thanksgiving to the Lord. Success makes it so easy to be selfish. And I would agree this is a more dangerous place spiritually than when one may be hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. These four things can make one desperate and stupid but not as much as where David was or where we may be in the midst of so many blessing in this country.

What's more, we see what's playing out in our culture as well. Things have been good for a long time in the U.S. Complacency and entitlement thinking has entrenched itself. Today we fight over pronouns, bathrooms, we have lawsuits over cakes, we can't define what a woman is, aborting a baby has become a "reproductive right," 35 trillion in debt doesn't seem to have anyone worried, and of all things the biggest concern spoken about most is the cost of groceries. Welcome to ancient Israel in the days of Jeremiah.

If we think we are standing firm be careful that you do not fall and take others with you when you do. Are you where you should be spiritually? If not why not? If you are, what makes you think so? A genuine love for Jesus combined with knowing the Word of God combined with living out that Word makes life good even when we are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. This combination is where we truly stand firm even when the ground beneath us becomes unstable. A holy perspective like this is one we can use more of. Now is not a time to sit in the castle, eyeing the neighbor, but a time to be where we should be on the battlefield of faith.

Pastor Matt Woods

John 3:30