



Small Group Notes – 2 Kings 22:14-20

Some groups may find the following suggested questions a helpful starting point. Don't feel bound by them, rather work at understanding God's word for yourselves, praying that God will help you live in the light of it.

Introduction

Our current series focuses on the Lord's grace in three episodes from the life of Josiah, king of Judah. These verses come at the end of 2 Kings, a book full of idolatry, rebellion and judgement. The people of God have followed other gods and broken the covenant, so the Lord breaks up the kingdom. But He also shows endless grace in sending them prophets and faithful kings to turn them back to the Lord. Josiah is the final king who serves the Lord. After him, things go from bad to worse.

Sunday's sermon started with the question 'How do you respond when you are shown to be in the wrong?'

You might like to share some personal reflections briefly.

Read 2 Kings 22:11-20 (extra verses at the beginning for context)

The prophetess Huldah's reply comes in two parts:

Part 1 – hear the words of judgment against idolatry (v17)

How might we think about our 'idolatry' in terms of *loyalty to* and *dependence on* things other than God?

Some extracts from Tim Keller's book *Counterfeit Gods*:

'What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.

An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, "If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure." There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is worship.'

1. Where are you most prone to idolatry?
2. What are the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' effects of idolatry?*
3. Which influences in our lives encourage idolatry? How can we be more alert to these?
4. How can we as individuals re-orientate our lives? How can we help each other to do this?

* In Josiah's day the 'horizontal' effects of idolatry were mostly local – injustice was the result in the nation of Judah. Today the horizontal effects of our idolatry (esp. greed, comfort, pleasure) are both local and global – there is much unseen injustice. For example, consider the effects of 'fast fashion' on the countries where the clothes are made (rivers like Bangladesh's Buriganga), or the countries where the clothes end up (like Ghana). Another example is food waste, partly because of the vast choice of fresh food available, as highlighted in a recent newspaper article ('Each year 1.3bn tonnes of food, about a third of all that is produced, is wasted, including about 45% of all fruit and vegetables, 35% of fish and seafood, 30% of cereals, 20% of dairy products and 20% of meat'). This wastes valuable agricultural land in countries where it is desperately needed and also brings with it a vast carbon footprint (with knock-on effects). The injustice caused by our idolatry is global. The climate emergency is not just about our future but injustice against people around the world right now.

Of course, idolatry is also damaging much closer to home in our families and friendships and, crucially, in wasted devotion that should rightly be given 'vertically' to God.

Part 2 – allow God to show us how we are in the wrong and have a humble and responsive heart

5. What prevents us from responding like Josiah as God's word speaks to us? (see v19)

(An optional, but powerful, cross-reference is Jeremiah 36:1-26. Don't get too bogged down in all the details and names but notice the emphasis on who the descendants are in v1, 9, 10. This is essentially a re-run of 2 Kings 22 a generation later but with a very different royal response!)

6. Personal change is 'hard won'. How can we open ourselves to let the Spirit write God's law on our hearts?

Conclusion

Although written thousands of years ago, 2 Kings 22 has much to say to us today. As Christian believers we live now in the age of the Spirit which strengthens us to love God with our heart, soul mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

7. Decide what 'one thing' you will most take away from this study.

Spend time praying for each other in response to God's word.