

Sermon Text for October 12, 2014

by Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Revelation 21:1-4, I Chronicles 29:10-13

“An Almighty God”

Today we are in week 2 of the Apostles’ Creed sermon. The sanctuary is still resonating with the sound of breaking glass. We learned that it isn’t about us last week. We started with the first two words, simple words really, I believe. What do you believe? We begin today where the Apostles’ Creed begins. I believe in an Almighty God.

When we were serving in Florida I was looking around outside our house in the yard and we found an old bomb shelter right outside our basement. It was small, but it was perfectly sealed with electricity, water, and it reminded me of an age when the threats of war and destruction on our soil were very real. It is something that my generation never felt directly growing up and only now is beginning to feel the insecurity of living in a nation where maybe you aren’t untouchable. ISIS frightens us militarily and Ebola scares us especially if we are a person of color. We live today in an age of vulnerability. That is where we find ourselves, and in this age of vulnerability we need an Almighty, protective God.

Our goal for today is to find in our God, through Jesus Christ, a security that cannot be penetrated, that cannot be shaken loose. When we say we believe in an Almighty God we are going to focus on safety and security. Today we will exchange vulnerability for security, not by force, but by the knowledge that we serve an Almighty God so whom shall I fear? We need to leave today so secure in Christ that not even a sealed bomb shelter, or a homeland defense system can be able to come even close to providing us with the certainty that we can find in Jesus. We will learn about a God who is our Father, and so provides this security, about a God who is Almighty and so will protect us and keep us.

In the second phrase of the Apostles’ Creed and in I Chronicles and Revelation we hear about a God whose security is so complete that even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we do not need to fear evil. In a time when our sense of security is at an all-time low, we hear a word from Scripture that tells us to be strong and courageous.

We had a wonderful church picnic this past Sunday. Close to 100 of us gathered to eat, play corn hole, then we went home and watched our favorite football teams win.

Life was good in Strasburg last week for Presbyterians. In the Philippines on Wednesday during the mid-week worship two grenades were thrown into a sanctuary and believers died. It was one of our partner churches and it was the week of World Communion. I don't think I need to set the stage too much to help us understand about the reality of the times in which we live even if we do live in an ideal setting.

We live in the country where our military is the best and composed of the brightest. And yet the enemy today we are told is unseen and unknown and can strike at any time. That breeds constant insecurity and feelings of vulnerability. Even here at First Presbyterian we talk of alarm systems and cameras and locking things up and that seems to drive the discussion. We live even here with a fear that has the danger of shaping our policies and our programs.

But our security doesn't just lie in our physical safety. Our financial security lately is being shaken and rocked even as the economy rebounds the stock market is all over the map. Security and vulnerability are the watch words today.

But our vulnerabilities aren't just seen in our safety and in our economic health, our insecurities are seen around us in the failing families, the obsessive individualism, the insecurities that lead to gossip. We live in a country that values security and stability above all other values. As a result instability and vulnerability are rampant. If you don't believe me take a trip to Ferguson whose insecurities are being played out daily. We are living in a time when security is probably our most precious and even our rarest commodity.

In I Chronicles we find verses that I call diamonds in the rough, hidden gems or treasures. These verses are so inspiring because they describe in perfect terms a God who provides complete security. It is hard to talk about God at times because we are so limited in our vocabulary. Even the Apostles' Creed uses terms that we can't always relate to like Holy Ghost, Catholic Church, quick and the dead. Anything we try to say or any metaphor we try to use falls so short in light of who God really is. Inevitably any words we try to use will be so weak, but David in I Chronicles captures who God is in such a way that it provides us with the security we need.

In I Chronicles David attempts to describe who God has been for him in his final words as he is about to hand the kingdom over to his son Solomon. This transition of power from David to Solomon was a very tricky endeavor. Any time that there was a

change in power there were always threats of violence and assassinations. That doesn't ring true in America like in most countries it does. This was especially true in this time because many people felt that Solomon did not deserve the throne. In the midst of these insecure times God gave David a vision of what the future would hold.

If you follow along in the Scripture in I Chronicles you will see verse by verse this vision that God provides David that gives him the utmost security and combated any vulnerability he may have felt. He gave David a vision of security, Solomon will rule, he gave David a vision of glory and great things, your kingdom will prosper. He gave David his lifelong dream, Solomon will build my temple. David's life was now fulfilled and our Scripture reflects David's reaction to this vision of security that God has given him. It is a vision that covers his lifetime and the life of his children and his kingdom.

David describes God's greatness and power, which have been a constant source of his security: Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory and the majesty. David recognizes that all that is and everything that takes place comes directly from God: all that is in heaven and in earth are yours O Lord.

Finally David recognizes that over his life he was not a self-made man, but rather God is the one who made him. It wasn't about him, so he says: In your hand are power and might, it is in your hand to make great and to give strength, to all. He wasn't great by his own might, but by God's. It takes a certain leader to recognize that their security is not found in their own power, but in God's. David's security came directly from God's power and Almightyness. David's security was found in an Almighty God.

In Revelation we find the clearest and most powerful verses on security. Here the author, John, is also living in a time when being a Christian meant living a life of constant fear of death, losing your property, etc. But in this reality John is given a vision by God of the future. This vision is much like the one David had. It was a vision that provided everlasting security. His vision was that of a completely new heaven and earth. He saw a future where God's Almighty power was manifested in such a way that God would transform life as we would know it. God would become so intimate with us that he would be our father who would dwell with us, wipe every tear from our eyes, eliminate death, make sure there is no more mourning and crying and pain, imagine no more pain.

Can you picture that, no more pain. On Monday I broke apart our cement sidewalk in the back of the house and transported all of it to a big pile in my driveway. I woke up every day this past week with a different pain in places that I did not know existed. But what about the pain of a wayward child, or a spouse that is completely unresponsive to your needs? What about the pain of a cancer victim and the pain of a country at war? Can God's presence be strong enough, secure enough to cover even that type of pain, a pain that is far deeper and more significant? Do you see the vision, the security, the power of God in this vision?

We say every Sunday that we believe, we believe in God the Father Almighty. What does this mean? What does it really mean to you individually when you say you believe in an Almighty God? It means that we believe in the God of David who gave David complete security in his life because he was able to rely upon God for all things. It means we believe in the God of the early Christians as recorded by John in Revelation whose love and compassion and power is so great that God will mightily transform our earth and be our Father through all times.

Today we could choose to focus on the uncertainties around us, and there are plenty to go around. Or we can choose to go along with David and John whose vulnerabilities were life and death and say that we believe in an Almighty God who has the power to give and take. So blessed be His name. Our faith and action in the name of Jesus Christ allows us to live our lives with the security that only our God, who is an awesome God, who is a loving Father, who sent his only Son Jesus Christ to die for us so that our future would be secure, is able to provide.

Know that you are taking part in that which has provided Christians a security, a peace that passes all understanding, a glimpse of the future that God offers to all who trust in him. Amen.