

Sermon Text for November 5, 2023

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Esther 4:12-14, I John 3:18-24 *“Action”*

This is our final sermon on the theme of Prayer, Scripture and Action. That doesn't mean that we have finished our emphasis, actually as Tricia explained we are continuing and emphasizing it even more as we go along. I wanted to check in with you today to see how you are doing. Do you find yourself in prayer more now than when we began this at the end of the summer. I have encouraged you to pray every day for 5 minutes, how is that going. If you are feeling guilty now because you haven't done it, the purpose of this is not to make people feel guilty, but to motivate you to have a closer walk with Jesus. Get into it now and begin today when you get home with just five minutes of prayer.

Have you been reading Scripture more as a result of our effort to bring the importance of Scripture to light in your lives. If you haven't jumped on board the read through the Bible train we still have brochures you can pick up and just jump in on today's date. It really isn't too late. Today we focus on action, and honestly as a church our call to action is pretty much every day and every week and the way in which we put the Word of God into action is objectively pretty powerful. We don't have much of a lack of doing around here. It is just a matter of how you want to get plugged in and what types of action you want to get involved in here at the church.

If you wanted to put your faith into action with youth and children, well, we always need Sunday School teachers and nursery workers and people to help with our Wednesday evening program. If you wanted to do more hands on with those in need we have teams of people who help out at Waterstreet, we have a whole gaggle of people helping with foodbank, we still have the CIC at work giving our funds to people in need. There are ways to get involved in action in this church, it just takes, well, action on your part to get involved.

Both of our Scriptures today call us to love in a way that clearly demonstrates action. Let's go ahead and read.

READ

Many of you now the story of Esther. A young Jewish girl who was chosen by a gentile king to be his king. One of his advisors who hates the Jews makes a law which forces the Jews to bow down to the king which they simply cannot do and so they are on the verge of being wiped out. Her uncle comes to her and tells her that if she doesn't speak to the king then the

Jewish race would be exterminated. She says there is nothing I can do, I can't approach the king unless he asks me to approach him. So I'm sorry, but I'll send you my thoughts and my prayers.

Sometimes, actually all the time, thoughts and prayers are an excuse to not reach out in a more concrete form of action. On the list of least favorite phrases within the English language thoughts and prayers are right below it is what it is. Instead of saying thoughts and prayers why not call the person and pray with them. Instead of thoughts and prayers why not write them an email and tell them how much they mean to you and how you are going to actively care for them during this time.

The uncle made it clear that silence was against God's will, not approaching the King was against God's will, but don't be mistaken, God's will is always done, but it just won't be done by you. And don't think that because you are a child of God that you and your family will somehow be spared. You can't enjoy the perks of being a child of God without working for the kingdom of God, without acting on behalf of the kingdom of God. Ultimately in life, as a good friend of mine who was preacher in Palatka with me at Mt. Tabor Baptism Church, he would say, you are either part of the solution, or a part of the problem. There is no middle road.

This is true for all of us where we would like to stay neutral in all of the major topics within our society today. This basically means that we approach all of the hot topics by zeroing out our call to be disciples of Jesus Christ. With immigration we would rather build a higher wall and focus on security rather than trust Scripture that tells us that we have to treat each immigrant as one of us. With abortion we would rather give people a choice than view Scripture that tells us to choose life and that every single life is sacred born and unborn.

When we are faced with the war in the Middle East that is constantly before us and we are shocked with slaughter and violence and children and babies being destroyed as if they were not one of the little ones that Jesus loves, we think first of vengeance, and violence and again our security over righteousness. None of these realities that are a part of our life do we stop and ask what does the Lord require of us? We jump on the side that better suits us and rarely realize that maybe, just maybe, for such a time as this God has put you in a conversation at work, or in your family, or at church, or at school so that you can be His representative.

For such a time as this we were all born and God has placed us here and now not by chance, but to actually do His will and to act on his behalf. That is true of every single one of us. None of us has a free pass because of our life situations or where we find ourselves. God has called us to act on His behalf always.

John had a way of telling us this as well. The author of I John says in vs.18...this is our call for today. The author was the disciple John the son of Zebedee, the one whom Jesus loved, the one that Jesus trusted as he gave his mother to him so that he would take care of her while he was on the cross. We are called to love in action based upon not our alliances here on earth, but based upon our alliance in heaven. John later writes in chapter 4:7 beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. But what does this love look like in our own lives? We aren't policy makers, we're just trying to understand how to raise a family and how to retire with dignity.

Love is not just a special way of feeling, it is an orientation of life and action. This is what Scripture tells us. When you send thoughts and prayers you aren't loving anyone because you aren't taking any action. The way in which we love is as important as its existence and quality. Love is to be active, not theoretical. Love in general is of far less benefit than love in action. Remember what we read in Matthew back when we were in the Gospel of Righteousness. Look at Matthew 7:12 which is called the golden rule, we looked at this before, In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.

This is not a stand alone Scripture we read that Esther was called to action even at the risk of her own life. That is required of us at times as well. In Deuteronomy 15:7 we read do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. This is a call to action. James 1:22 tells us "but be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves, and then again James 2:15, and if a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily bread and one of you says to them, God in peace, keep warm and eat your fill, my thoughts and prayers are with you, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

We don't serve a passive God so certainly God doesn't want us to be passive. How do we know that we don't serve a passive God? The greatest action ever taken is seen in Romans 5:8: "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." Yes, God does require obedience. And the God who commands, accepts obedience to his commands as testimony to our belonging to the truth.

I find that often it is the Christian who seeks righteousness the most in our midst who feels the most guilty and feels the most inadequate. It is not the careless Christian, but more often then carefully conscientious one, who is plagued with a sense of guilt and inadequacy. We definitely see that in the church. The most profound faithful people are those who feel the

strongest emotional and spiritual pull to not only do the right thing but to believe the right thing and to do what they believe in all things.

Jesus calls us to action according to the will of God. Amen.