

Faithful: The Life of Josiah

Now Is the Time to be Faithful • Message 1

Bryan Jones

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A. Introduction

We are going to spend 7 weeks on the Old Testament character of Josiah. So today, what I want to do is give you a little history, but more than that I want to tell you WHY I felt led to spend 7 weeks on this obscure character. I want to talk to you about why our whole church is rallying around this from kids, students, and here. I think some of the lessons we will learn from Josiah are not just good lessons but they are essentials for the cultural moment we find ourselves in...

Now is the time to take the truths of this story and apply them to our lives. Now is the time to step up. Now is the time to take action. Now is the time to seek God. Now is the time for our church to be the men and women God has called us to be...

The title of today's message is **Now Is the Time...** because you will see Josiah didn't wait to put God at the center; and we can't wait... In fact, I've said this before but one of the greatest threats to our faith is one day... Now is the time...

So today I want to show you some truths from Josiah. And the first truth I want to show you from Josiah is this...

B. Now is the time...

1. To put our **HOPE** in the right thing.

(Judges 21:25; 2 Kings 21:20-23; 2 Kings 22:8; 2 Chronicles 33:4-17; Acts 2:17-18)

Do you know how old Josiah was when he took over as king... 8!

My son is 9 years old, and honestly, I just hope he lifts up the toilet seat because, I love that boy, but he has some of the worst aim of anyone on planet earth... I'm not looking for him to bring sweeping reform to our world... people wouldn't have had a ton of hope in Josiah at his age...

One thing that would have been scarce in Josiah's day was hope...

Northern Kingdom	Southern Kingdom
Israel	Judah
10 Tribes	2 Tribes
19 Leaders	17 Leaders
All Evil	8 Good

So this is important to understanding the Old Testament...

- Under Saul, David, and Solomon there was one kingdom.
- Then, after Solomon, the kingdom splits into two kingdoms: north and south.
- The Northern kingdom, referred to as Israel, didn't have one good king...

In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25 (KJV)

(It doesn't mean there was no king, there was no godly king.)

- There were 8 good kings in the southern kingdom, known as Judah...
(Here you have biblical proof God loves the South more, amen! Listen, I lived in Chicago for 11 years, a cold place, a land absent of sunlight, sweet tea, and joy... and now I'm back!)
- Israel has already been overtaken by the Assyrian empire during the reign of Josiah. Years later, the kingdom of Judah would be overtaken by Babylonian empire...

If you know this, it helps you understand the Bible... because when you read a book like Kings. It's jumping from the southern kingdom called Judah to the northern kingdom called Israel... and you have to understand this.

Now I want you to understand the culture moment Josiah was in... and why there was so little hope...

- **Political corruption.**

Notice in the chart, the previous king was Josiah's dad, Amon... do you know why Josiah was king at 8? Because his dad a wicked king, was killed.

He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as his father, Manasseh, had done. He followed the example of his father, worshiping the same idols his father had worshiped. He abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors, and he refused to follow the LORD's ways. Then Amon's own officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace.

2 Kings 21:20-23 (NLT)

His own officials have him killed. There isn't a whole lot of confidence in the political parties reigning... there is tension and division... sound familiar? 😊

Too often, we put our hope in people instead of God. Listen if all your hope is in me, I will let you down at some point... Listen, I know I'm a wise, discerning, intelligent, charming, loveable, brave, courageous person... but I make a lot of mistakes...

I'll never forget, one time, in student ministry, I sat down with a high school kid to chat... and at the end of our conversation, he said, *you just seem more fun on stage...*

Don't put your trust in me... and church, don't put your trust in a presidential candidate...

Sure, vote... and I tell people there are three reasons people decide who to vote for:

- 1.) Their character
- 2.) Their policies
- 3.) Capabilities...

Vote... but don't put the White House above God's house. Your allegiance isn't to a donkey or an elephant; it's to a slain lamb. Remember that...

Don't put your hope in me; don't put your hope in your parents, or a boss, or a president but the living God!

- **The Word of God was absent.**

Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD'S Temple!" ...

2 Kings 22:8a (NLT)

Notice, they found it because Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, would have removed it from the people and the temple... so the Word of God was nowhere to be found. It wasn't a part of their lives.

The Bible is the top-selling book in the world today, but it seems to be strangely absent from families, from schools, from culture, and, honestly, even the church...

- **Worshipping multiple Gods.**

He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing His anger.

2 Chronicles 33:4-6 (NIV)

The culture of Josiah was a very polytheistic culture, meaning they worship multiple Gods.

Years ago, my wife and I went to Rome... and what I learned is they had thousands of gods. They had a god for roads, a god for water. They even had a god for sewage...

So, it's important to note in Josiah's time, there were multiple gods that were worshipped.

One of the gods they worshipped was the goddess Asherah... there are 40 references to Asherah poles, and later on, we will see Josiah destroy them...

- Asherah poles probably refer to trees that had their limbs cut and became altars.
- The reason a tree was probably used is because Asherah was considered the mother of 70 gods, so she was the tree of life.
- One of her most famous children you read about was Baal, who was the god of animals, crops, and fertility.
- There were illicit sexual practices, and it was dark, twisted worship.

In verse 6, it talks about Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh sacrificing children. This was to the deity known as Molech...

How did the Molech work in the valley of Ben-Hinnom? It was built outside of Jerusalem. It was an idol with the face of a calf and open hands like someone who wants to take something from another. They would light this idol on fire until his hands were scorching. There were seven chambers before him and according to the quality of the sacrifice that is how close one could come to him. If one came with a bird, then chamber one; goat, chamber two; sheep, chamber three; calf, chamber four; cow, chamber five; and ox, chamber six. He who brought his child, the priests would say that he is offering the greatest sacrifice. He would enter the innermost chamber and go kiss the Molech . . . The priests would then take the child and place it near the Molech. They would then bang with drums to drown out the cries.

Dark twisted stuff... In the final days of his life Manasseh tried to turn back to the Lord you can read about that in 2 Chronicles 33... but listened to what the people did...

However, the people still sacrificed at the pagan shrines, though only to the LORD their God.

2 Chronicles 33:17 (NLT)

There was a darkness in the land a people... and hope wasn't around...

When Josiah stepped onto the scene to lead do you know what they would have a shortage of... ? Hope? This is one of the darkest times in all the Old Testament...

When things are the darkest, God seems to pour out His love and power in new ways.. now is the time for an awakening. Yes, things are dark... but I remind you that light shines brightest in the darkness...

And really, this book that we are going to be looking at is a blueprint for biblical revival, so let's trust God and run after Him...

Listen, things are dark. Can we agree on that... but too many people just stop there... things are dark... yes, that's true, but did you know there is a promise in the dark days...

"In the last days, God says, 'I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.'"

Acts 2:17-18 (NLT)

In the last days, God will be doing a new thing... He will be pouring His Spirit in ways we haven't seen... when you chose to be faithful and put your hope in the right thing... I believe God will pour out His Spirit. Let's trust Him!

B. Now is the time...

2. To choose FAITHFULNESS in whatever season you are in.

(2 Kings 23:25)

Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since.

2 Kings 23:24 (NLT)

See I think there is a big difference between faithfulness and success. There are only four chapters on this man in the whole Bible (2 Kings and 2 Chronicles).

Let's test your Bible knowledge...

What is the shortest book in the Bible... 3 John with a little over 200 words.

What is the shortest verse in the Bible... Jesus wept (John 11:35)

What's the longest book in Bible... (In English, it's Psalms, but in Hebrew, the longest manuscript was actually 1 Kings and 2 Kings because before it was translated, it used to be one scroll.)

Think about this: one of the longest original books of the Bible includes the story of Josiah, and it's only two chapters... in fact, the story of Josiah represents around a half of a percent... not even 1%...

I told someone over the summer that I was going preach on Josiah. They said, *oh for a week*, and I said *no, 6...* and they looked at me said, *there is no way you can preach on that for 6 weeks. You'd be lucky to find 2 weeks of content....* And the next day after that comment I decided to preach for 7 weeks on this topic. I'm not sure if it's the Spirit or the flesh. We will find out...

But to some degree they are right... listen I couldn't find any books written on Josiah, to this day I don't know of any church that has done a whole series on Josiah. There isn't a whole lot of commentary... again less than 0.52 percent of the Bible is on him.

That's it... about the person the Bible says was the most faithful king of the entire Old Testament... Some of you probably weren't even aware of that... has so little written on him...

if you look at it through a success lens, this isn't great, especially for a king who was unlike any other kings... but the Bible isn't focused on success, position, or title.... It's focused on faithfulness... He was great in God's eyes because he was faithful!

And sometimes, being faithful means you are noticed, but a lot of times, there is a hiddenness to those who are faithful... they aren't the front page, or the most noticed, or the most celebrated... And for those who have a big ego, this is problematic.

But know this... it is the faithful followers of Jesus who have captured the attention of heaven.

Our culture trains us to go after success not faithfulness... think about it...

Do you know I've never heard anyone say that what they want in their life is to be faithful to God, faithful in their job, faithful with their resources, faithful to their kids...

But I have heard countless people say in some way, *I want to be successful for God, or I want a successful marriage, or I want my kids to be successful, or I want to be successful in my career...*

Please hear me say this: there is nothing wrong with being successful. God loves our ambitions and drives when they are pointed at the right thing but often they aren't...

Okay, moment of full transparency... most of the time, I don't walk away thinking, *oh that was a great talk... oh that was a great point...* most of the time, I'm thinking about what I would have done different... In fact, we have a 24-hour rule in my house... no feedback from the message for 24 hours... for 24 hours, lying is permitted, then after that, I'm like, *bring it on...*

I say that to say, about 4 years ago... I was preaching at a church and I was in the flow... and I don't know how to say it other than God was working... I mean it was such a good talk I almost got saved again... alright... but I mean I walked off and felt great....

Fast forward, the next week I'm getting ready to preach, and this thought entered my mind... *I don't think this is a great talk, and I can't do what I did last week, I don't think this is a homerun. This feels more like a sacrifice bunt...* during worship my mind is racing.. and then God put this thought in my mind... it was transformative to me...

Today, you must pick what's more important... Today, do you want to be a preacher more or a son...

And He said this... *If you are preacher first, then you need a great talk today...*

If you're a son, then you just need to be faithful to Me... (and so I said to God, *can't I be both*☺.) No, I didn't say that... I said *I chose to be Your son who happens to be preaching today...* and the freedom I felt was overwhelming.

Don't chase after the spotlight chase after the light of God... The spotlight can't satisfy the deep parts of your soul

Faithfulness is the heart of the Kingdom. See the kindest thing God could do is give some people success and show how empty it is...

And let me just say this for those who are chasing after success versus being faithful to God...

You know what I found when you people chose faithfulness over success...

- 1.) You will find more joy (listen, I love you guys... one of the greatest joys of my life is being a pastor here, but crowds are fickle you know... One second, the crowd cheered for Jesus, and the next, they wanted Him crucified. I hope you never shout that to me, but I have one job as this pastor, and that's to be faithful to God, not anyone else. And that creates a joy.)
- 2.) Consistent in work... if you are going after success and that's your fuel when you aren't winning people lose steam and energy, but faithfulness is a different fuel entirely.
- 3.) You often find more success.

I became better at leading, preaching being a parent, when I stopped putting so much pressure on myself...