

“GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE” (Daniel)

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Unshakable Hope Chapter 6

Pastor Heather

God’s Promise: God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.
I Peter 5:5 NKJV

My Promise: I will pursue humility.

Christie Lake is a treasure in a clay jar.

Listen to those words from 2 Corinthians 4: 6-7 NRSV:

For it is the God who said,
“Let the light shine out of darkness”,
who has shone in our hearts to give the light
of knowledge of the glory of God in the face
of Jesus Christ. But we have this TREASURE
in CLAY JARS so that it may be made clean
that this extraordinary power belongs to God
and does not come from us.”

Our lives are like clay jars that have been molded by God’s presence. Each individual is shaped differently, but around them flows the journey of life with its brokenness, life changing experiences and healing. Max Lucado in the chapter we are sharing today, asks us to think about people in our lives who we feel demonstrated humility. A I prayed on that request, the name God gave to me was Christie Lake! It is fitting to share some of her story on the day before her 97th birthday.

When I called to ask her when Jesus was most real to her she told me that happened when she was 8 years old. Christie was the middle child in a family of 9 - only one still survives - her youngest brother. Her mother took the children to a revival meeting and pressured her to go forward at the altar call, telling her that God wanted her to go forward - like so many were doing. Christie admits she was stubborn then, as she is now, so she told her mother: “Jesus is already my friend. He’s here with me now, so I don’t need to go forward.” She told me she’s always felt Jesus was “on her shoulder”.

She has always been humble and submitted to God’s plan - even when it was absolutely what she did not want - but she trusted God through it all. When her daughter Beth died and other tragedies struck, she admits she was devastated. At age 82, she learned to live alone and a few years later became the church secretary here at Calvary. (says it was best job she ever had!)

With her 5 children, she learned early on to accept their differences. Her faith and raising kids in the faith was very important to her. She is still there for all of them, when they ask her for advice. Her daughter-in-law Nancy says she is more “a mother than mother-in-law.”

Christie starts everyday with devotions and is always there for people. She feels blessed to have been given the life she has.

Nelson’s Bible Dictionary describes “Grace” as a favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person deserves. Grace is one of the key attributes of God - associated with mercy, love, compassion and patience as the source of help and with deliverance from distress. That description truly describes Christie, she learned the lesson early on that it took Nebuchadnezzar many years to learn.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of the neo-Babylonian Empire and ruled 605 - 562 B.C. He captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and carried the people of Judah into captivity in Babylon.

His policies of resetting conquered peoples and transporting them to other provinces of his empire provided him with slave labor for conducting his extensive building projects. He rebuilt many sanctuaries and built the great wall around Babylon.

The famous “hanging gardens” which was one of the “7 wonders of the ancient world” was built by Nebuchadnezzar on the plains of Babylon to cheer his wife who was homesick for her native Median hills.

Nebuchadnezzar made an arrogant boast about all he had achieved in Daniel 4: 30 “Isn’t this Babylon the magnificent city that I built as the royal house by my own mighty strength and for my majestic glory?”

But he was stricken at the height of his power and pride by God’ judgment. Nebuchadnezzar was eventually driven out of office, living with the beasts of the field and eating grass like an ox. (Daniel 4: 32)

Daniel urged Nebuchadnezzar to change his ways and do what is right as he interprets his dream. Nebuchadnezzar’s sin is unfounded pride in his own accomplishments. He failed to admit his proper place under God’s dominion.

God gives him time to repent - 12 months - yet in spite of the clear warning, he remains obsessed with his own power. Therefore God acts to destroy his pride. The Proverbs “Pride cometh before the fall” applies to Nebuchadnezzar. Max Lucado talks about it in his book “Pride not only prevents reconciliation with God; it prevents reconciliation with people.” How true that statement is. Max asks “how many marriages have collapsed beneath the weight of foolish pride?”

When I do marriage counseling or premarital counseling I often ask: “Are you willing to say I’m sorry first?” Often there is a silence - a long pause and then a scrambling to offer what conditions would have to be in place for that to happen. Pride can be a large hurdle to overcome.

Pride comes at a high price. Max encourages us to choose instead to stand on the offer of grace. Remember God’s promise for today “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (I Peter 5: 5 NKJV)

Did Nebuchadnezzar change after Daniel urged him to repent? There were 3 messages from God he ignored. The 1st was one you may remember - the story of 3 men in the fiery furnace: Shadrach, Meshach and Abendnego. Jehovah God is greater than fire. Then there was his dream where he saw himself as a large tree that was cut down. The message Daniel interpreted was that today’s massive tree is tomorrow’s ugly stump. Then the 3rd message was Daniel asking him to humble himself before it was too late. Nebuchadnezzar refused to listen. So he faced harsh consequences.

But our God is a God of Grace and sometimes it takes people longer to return and humble themselves before God - when Nebuchadnezzar, after 7 long years of estrangement, returned to thinking about God, praising God for God’s greatness, God restored him and gave him more than he ever had before.

Max at the end of this chapter talks about “those who walk in pride God is able to humble” like (Nebuchadnezzar). But those who walk in humility (like Christie) God is able to use. King Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson - the hard way and it took those 7 years to get the point. We are encouraged to humble ourselves rather than waiting for God to do it for us.

Then we be willing to say the words of Christie’s favorite hymn - “It Is Well With My Soul”.

1 When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

2 Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control:
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has shed his own blood for my soul.

It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

Hymn # 377

May it be so in our lives.