GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

2 Chronicles 20:1-30

Key Verse 21

“Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.”

**Introduction**

 We are facing an unprecedented crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While overseers gathered one night and were praying together, we came to know that now is the high time to give thanks to the Lord. Nothing is more important than fixing your eyes on Jesus and giving praise and thanks to God, even before you receive anything tangible in our hands? Today let’s set aside all seemingly urgent problems including the pandemic disaster and give thanks by faith and praise in advance, to God for what he has not yet done. Then we will experience God’s intervention and see His glory through this time. May the Lord help us to give thanks and put trust in Him!

1. Read verses 1-13. What urgent problem did Judah’s king face? (1-2) What did King Jehoshaphat resolve to do? (3) What did the people of Judah do? (4) Describe the prayer of king Jehoshaphat and what we can learn from him? (5-12) How were the people united in prayer? (13)

1-1, Read verses 1-13.

 After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites[a] came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. 2 Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom,[b] from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). 3 Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. 4 The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. 5 Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard 6 and said: “Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. 7 Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? 8 They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, 9 ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’ 10 “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. 11 See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. 12 Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 13 All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.

1-2, What urgent problem did Judah’s king face? (1-2)

***After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites[a] came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. 2 Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom,[b] from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi).***

* He was the great-great-great-great grandson of King David and reigned in Judah from 853 to 848 B.C..
* Historical enemies of Israel, joined forces to make war on Judah. They were a vast army.
* When Jehoshaphat heard about it, they were already marching against Judah. The news struck fear in the hearts of the people.

1-3, What did King Jehoshaphat resolve to do? (3)

***3 Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.***

* The king could have panicked and done nothing but despair. But he chose God’s way, resolving to inquire of the Lord. He went extra miles to rely on God through fasting. From God’s eyes, prayer and fasting was the best strategy.

1-4, What did the people of Judah do? (4)

***4 The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.***

* We are always tempted to seek human ways to solve our problems. When viruses hit one nation after another, people seek tangible solutions such as magical medicine, medical equipment, and political leaders.
* But the people of Judah set a good example in terms of coming together to seek help from the Lord first.

1-5, Describe the prayer of king Jehoshaphat and what we can learn from him? (5-12)

 ***Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard 6 and said: “Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. 7 Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? 8 They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, 9 ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’ 10 “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. 11 See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. 12 Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”***

* The king knew who God was. (6) The more you know God in person, the more powerful a prayer becomes.
* He remembers the promise of God from Genesis. (7) Abraham received the land according to God’s word.
* He remembers that God always answered prayers at the temple. (8, 9) God knows injustice. (10-12, Deut 2:4-6, Num 20:14-21) So he put trust in the Lord in everything.

1-6, How were the people united in prayer? (13)

***13 All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.***

* May the Lord raise up house churches, families of faith across America, where children and parents come together before God and the father may resume his leadership to lead worship service. ALL THE MEN OF JUDAH STOOD...

2. Read verses 14-21. What were God’s words to Jehoshaphat and all the people of Judah through Jahaziel? (14-17) How did the king and the people, including some Levites, respond? (18-19) What did King Jehoshaphat do to encourage his people? (20) What else did he do to praise God? (21) Why do you think it is important to give thanks?

2-1, Read verses 14-21.

 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. 15 He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. 16 Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. 17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.’” 18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord. 19 Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. 20 Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.” 21 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his[c] holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.”

2-2, What were God’s words to Jehoshaphat and all the people of Judah through Jahaziel? (14-17)

***14 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. 15 He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. 16 Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. 17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.’”***

* God must have moved by the humble and unified prayers of his people and he quickly answered them through Jahaziel, a little known Levite.
* God said that they should not be afraid, because the battle is God’s. When we commit ourselves to God, God commits Himself to us.
* In verses 16 and 17, God commanded them to march without fear and stand firm by obedience. Just see how God would deliver them. The Lord is with them!

Ephesians 6:12-18 reads,

 *12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.*

Isaiah 7:9 reads,

*If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.’”*

2-3, How did the king and the people, including some Levites, respond? (18-19)

***18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord. 19 Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.***

* From to to bottom, all people truly believed God’s word of promise and had a tremendous celebration. Some fell down and others stood up. They praised God.
* We naturally give thanks after we have won the battle. But before getting tangible results, giving thanks to God is great victory itself.

1 John 5:14-15 reads,

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*

2-4, What did King Jehoshaphat do to encourage his people? (20)

***20 Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.”***

* “Early in the morning they left” shows that they obeyed positively. The king encouraged the people to have faith in their God.
* They must have overcome all inner fears of the enemies in the battle fields. They fixed their eyes on their God and trusted their leader.

2-5, What else did he do to praise God? (21)

***21 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his[c] holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.”***

* God’s holiness and love seems to be irrelevant in the physical battle field. But their song of praise stemmed from their personal experience in the Lord, especially his holiness and love.
* The king even appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army.
* They must have overcome all inner anxiety and fear at the battle field by praising God with all their hearts and vividly remembered who God is.

2-6, Why do you think it is important to give thanks?

* As a matter of fact, we have countless thanks topics in the midst of the pandemic. First, God gave us His words of promise.
* We are passing by this transient life on the earth. We are reminded of the fact that we are looking forward to the new Heaven. Thank God for renewing us with the eternal hope to be with Jesus.
* We also give thanks to the Lord our God who helps us to pray and praise more than ever before at this crisis as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
* We give thanks to the Lord who makes Him known to all the nations through this time so that the people may know and fear Him.
* We give thanks to God in that many health workers and sacrificial leaders devote themselves to save others by risking their lives.
* We give thanks to God who gave us the opportunity to have worship among family members more than ever before through stay in home order.
* We give thanks to God who helps us to promote online meetings and live stream worship so that we may reach more people through savvy technology.
* Thank God who gives us to stand firm with prayer and Bible study more so that we may be purified and grow to be Bible teachers and prayer warriors. Amen!

3. Read verses 22-30. What did God do for his people, and how did they enjoy God’s blessing? (22-30) What influence did this have on the surrounding nations? What can we learn from this passage as we face the Coronavirus pandemic?

3-1, Read verses 22-30.

 As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. 23 The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. 24 When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. 25 So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing[d] and also articles of value—more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. 26 On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berakah, where they praised the Lord. This is why it is called the Valley of Berakah[e] to this day. 27 Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the Lord had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. 28 They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lyres and trumpets. 29 The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

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3-3, What influence did this have on the surrounding nations? (29-30)

***29 The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.***

3-4, What can we learn from this passage as we face the Coronavirus pandemic?

* Nothing is a more blessed gift of God than joy, thanks and peace. May the Lord help us to live a life of absolute faith thin or thick.
* Especially in this Covid-19 pandemic, may the Lord help us to grow in our personal faith and learn of how to give thanks to God with all our hearts like the people of Judah.
* May the Lord raise up many servants like Jehoshaphat and the Levites and the servants of praise so that America may be a kingdom of priests.

**One word: Give thanks to the Lord!**