

15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked.

16 “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” 17 And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Open Your Eyes: See the Invisible God: Have Peace

There’s been quite a bit of news lately in politics about whether the Trump campaign was spied upon by members of the Obama administration. Do you ever worry that your electronic communications are being monitored by someone? They say that when you type certain words in your emails that your words are read and used as a basis for advertisement on the internet pages you visit. Somebody is probably always watching what you do.

In today’s text, the king of Aram was sure that he was being spied upon by an informant from Israel. Every time he tried to set an ambush in order to attack the Israelite army, Elisha, the prophet of God, warned the king of Israel not to go there. The king of Aram’s servant told him, **“Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.”** God enabled Elisha to spy on the king in order to keep the Israelite armies safe.

When the king found out it was Elisha, he ordered a large amount of soldiers to go to Dothan and surround the small city, because that’s where Elisha was staying. The king thought that if he could shut up Elisha he thought he could get rid of the informant and be able to attack the Israelites. Elisha’s servant woke up the next morning, and he saw the soldiers of Aram outside with the horses and chariots. He knew that they had come for Elisha. **“Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?”**

Have you ever been in one of those moments? A big bill comes in the mail. The car breaks down. You break your arm. The doctor says to you, “You’ve got cancer.” Your spouse dies. “Oh no! Now what am I going to do?!?” **What shall we do?** The servant felt that SOMETHING had to be done. It’s the natural reaction. You weigh your options. Get a second opinion. Try a new treatment. Sell the house. Hold a garage sale. Apply for unemployment. Try a new medicine. Go on a diet and exercise plan.

What shall we do? We are being fed by the media on how we have to do something about just about everything. How do we stop illegal immigration and climate change? How can we fix the bridges here in Bay City? What can we do about the rising drug epidemic? The panic is causing people to march on the streets and constantly post things on Twitter and Facebook in a frantic effort to stop something or do something.

We can try to be active in our communities. We can make a difference, one by one. But there is a limit to it too. There are some things that are beyond our control and we can do absolutely nothing about. Elisha and his servant were in one of those situations.

Yet Elisha was not panicked, because he could see something the servant couldn't see. He saw that God had sent his angels to protect them. **“Don't be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”** Those were the first words of the angels at the empty tomb as well. It is the message of the Gospel. Jesus has taken care of your salvation by dying on the cross for your sins. He already conquered death by rising from the dead. You may not have seen it, but you believe it. He promised you that whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. There's no doubt in his words. **Don't be afraid.** On top of that, all things work out for your good to get you in heaven. Trust that God sends His angels to take care of you as He sees fit. Don't be afraid, because God is in charge and He wants you to be saved. Can't you see it?

Elisha knew that the LORD would take care of the situation. The servant was blessed because he was in the presence of Elisha who was able to talk him off of the ledge. It is good to have a faithful spouse, parent or grandparent in your life: someone that you can turn to in times of trouble, who can say the same thing to you. Don't be afraid.

Sometimes we forget about God's angels because we don't see them and we don't run into danger too often. But they do still exist and they do still work. One of our older members was recently in extended care due to a broken hip. He was about to fall out of bed and the nurse didn't have the power to get him back in. His leg could have gone out of socket and set him back many months. The nurse told him to try and roll back but he couldn't he was too weak and his legs were hanging off the edge. That's when Dick said that his legs were miraculously lifted back onto the bed. There was no other way to explain it, and Dick was ecstatic that the LORD helped him through it. Sometimes we need to hear those kinds of stories.

It is also good to read the Bible and hear stories like this, to remember that God's angels really are present. We need experienced and faithful members to calm younger Christians down when they tend to panic. Parents, you need to share Bible stories like these with your children so they can see and believe that angels really do exist and they are sent to help His children.

Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

What a blessing for the servant, to have heaven cracked open and be able to see God's warriors at work, ready to protect Elisha and his servant. Think about how relieved the servant must have been when he actually saw what Elisha saw. Elisha prayed for him. We can pray too. Pray for those who tend to worry. Ask the LORD to open their eyes at least to the Word of God, so they can see how you have worked through the centuries. Ask the LORD to open your eyes too!

It's interesting how this ended, because that wasn't the end of the story. The angels struck the soldiers and their commander with a strange kind of blindness. It was a blindness of perception. They saw, but they couldn't see what was really going on. (It reminds me of how people see this world. They see all of the things that God gives them, but they don't see who it is from or use those things the way God designed.) The soldiers didn't know where they were and they were kept from seeing who Elisha was. Instead of leading them into Dothan, he led them straight to the capital of northern Israel and right into the midst of the king's army. Then Elisha asked for their eyes to be opened again. They were captured! The king asked if he should kill them, but instead Elisha said,

“Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.”

So that’s what they did. The Bible says that they were fed a **“great feast”!** And what happened as a result? **The bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.**

Proverbs 25 says,

**If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.**

**In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the Lord will reward you.**

By nature we think this is the most foolish thing in the world to do, but this is how God changes people’s hearts! You would think that God would want to get revenge on the people that killed His only Son and had Him crucified. Who would think that this death was actually the way through which God would love us and forgive us! When we see what we’ve done and how He responds, it is meant to fill you with peace. You don’t have a God who wants to get vengeance on you, but a God who wants to be at peace with people: who died to be at peace with people.

This is how God works - by grace. It’s so different from any other religion or faith. Think about what a terrible doctrine Karma is. It is the belief that when you do bad stuff then bad stuff happens to you. Then whenever anything bad happens, you somehow believe that was heaven’s way of getting you back. That’s the way some people think. The heavens just bide their time until they can strike you back. How would you feel when you had a heart attack or were diagnosed with cancer? It’s no wonder that people are so mad at God. They think He enjoys it when people suffer and die and says to them, “This is what you get!”

There ARE times that God allows people to suffer, not as a punishment for what they’ve done, but in order to wake them up from their foolishness and unbelief, or sometimes just to have them cling to Jesus all the more. But there are many other times that God works completely differently. He feeds the people that came to kill his prophet. He baptizes the man who came to arrest His children. With Peter, he takes the very man who denied him and gives him another chance to spread the Gospel.

Have you ever had something really good happen to you and say to yourself, “I don’t deserve this.” A young woman is brought up in the church but then has a relationship with a rebel of a man. She gets involved with drugs. She heads down the pathway to hell. But then she becomes pregnant. She holds the baby’s hand for the first time, and then she says to herself, “This is a gift of God! I don’t want to blow it with this child! I need to get back with Jesus!” She has to leave an abusive relationship, but through all the pain and heartache, she finds peace and blessings in Jesus. Another young man has been drinking and decides to drive home. He gets in a terrible accident and his car is totaled. Yet he doesn’t have a scratch on his body. It shakes him to his core. He says to himself, “Thank you LORD for sparing my life! I can’t do this anymore!” It is as Paul writes in Romans 2:4, **“God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance.”** Sometimes God feeds those who live as His enemies, and sometimes it changes them into friends.

Is there somebody that you know, who has been an enemy, that you could feed a meal to? Is there someone you could extend a kindness to? There’s a reason they like to make your life miserable. They’ve been blinded by a false view of God or of life. You never know how the LORD might work through you to open the eyes of the

blind. You never know what an act of kindness might do for them and what kind of peace you might be able to bring.

If you yourself have been blinded by anger or hatred, or if you've been misled to think that God somehow has it out for you and enjoys punishing you, think again about what God did for these enemies from Aram. Think too about the cross. Why would Jesus go through hell on the cross only to punish you more? That's not how God works. He doesn't want to punish anyone. He doesn't want to damn anyone either. He loves you. He died for you. He wants you to be at peace. Instead of thinking that you have to do something to get right with God, open your eyes and see that Jesus has already done everything right to make you right with Him.

Two different people woke up in the morning. One saw an army that had come to bring imprisonment and death, and he panicked. The other woke up and saw another army, a greater army, that had come to protect them. He didn't panic. He simply prayed for the one who was panicking, and God brought him peace.

Which one are you? Sometimes you might be the servant. At other times you might be Elijah. Or maybe you're in between. The reason we come here on Sunday mornings is to look at the hidden things, to remember the God who we can't see, the angels we can't see, the salvation and heaven that is ours. Why? So we don't panic so much when we are surrounded by enemies or facing insurmountable odds. So that we can have this thing that Jesus talks about in the Gospel, this thing that is called peace. Open your eyes. See the invisible God and what He has done for you: how He cares for you: how you are forgiven and loved and protected: and have peace. Amen.