

THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD

*We do not know what to do,
but our eyes are on you.*

– 2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV

Anniversary message by
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Senior Pastor of the
**Wheeler Avenue Baptist
Church,** Houston, Texas

14
Years

Celebrating
Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
"PASTOR & PEOPLE"



SEPTEMBER 24/25

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
301 SOUTH ALFRED ST. • ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314



Date: September 23/24, 2022

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Cosby
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Sermon Title: “Their Eyes Were Watching God”

Scripture: II Chronicles 20:12b

We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. (NIV)

SERMON SUMMARY:

The 20th chapter of II Chronicles presents a picture of God’s people in trouble. Word has reached King Jehoshaphat that three separate armies are coming against him; the army of Moab, Ammon, and Mt. Seir. Aware of the danger this multi-pronged attack presents, King Jehoshaphat gathers all of the men, women, and children in front of the Temple of the Lord. There he declares to God before the people, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

Dr. Cosby shares this scene for our spiritual nurture and points out three reasons why even amid the impending attack, the people of Judah and Jerusalem did, and you and I can keep our eyes on God. The three reasons are:

- God’s past participation with the people.
- God’s present partnership among the people.
- God’s pending promises for the people.

Regarding God’s past participation with the people, King Jehoshaphat remembers God's faithfulness to Judah’s ancestors. The King believes that the same God who delivered in the past will deliver now. The present partnership of God makes itself clear when, in II Chronicles 20:13, the people stand still before the Lord, waiting on the Lord to move first. The implication is that the people will partner with a God who partners with them and follow the lead of God. Finally, the pending promises of God made clear beginning in verse 17, assure the people that God will fight their battles, be with them, uphold them, and succeed.

The story that comes to us from 2 Chronicles 20 is good news. If we keep our eyes on God, God will hear us when we pray, fight our battles, and handle our enemies, and in the end, victory will be ours.

KEY POINTS:

1. The fortunes of God's people seemed to shift quickly. The seasons of our lives can also change without warning, going from good to challenging.
2. The King was vulnerable before the people, telling them the truth about his lack of a strategic plan. This King stands before the people in prayer, acknowledging his need and professing before God that the eyes of the people are on God.
3. King Jehoshaphat looks back, looks at his current circumstance, and looks to the future to gain a proper perspective on what to do.
 1. Retrospectively, Dr. Cosby reminds us that we, just like King Jehoshaphat, can keep our eyes on God because of God's past engagement in the deliverance of our ancestors.
 2. Our current circumstances teach us that when we partner with the God who desires to partner with us, we gain strength and wisdom for today's battles.
 3. Finally, there is a future view of God's willingness to keep pending promises of presence, protection, and victory.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS:

1. Dr. Cosby tells the story of a Fisk College administrator who encourages the first-year students to "keep your eyes on God." Is there a teacher who, at any grade or point in your life spoke something into your spirit that helped you keep your eyes on God? Who were they, and what did they share with you?
2. Have there been times when you felt like you had trouble on every side? If so, what prayer(s) did you pray to give you peace?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. In Isaiah 40:31, we read, "*They that wait upon the Lord.*" The Hebrew word used for *wait* is, *qava* (*Strong's H6960*), which means to wait, to look for, hope, or expect. This is not a passive type of waiting. This is a waiting that leans into expectation. How does this understanding of the word "wait" shift your reading of Isaiah 40:31?
2. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*" This text provides three steps to come before God to overcome our anxiety; prayer, supplications (i.e., asking for what you need), and thanksgiving. Why might each of these steps be important in our conversation with God?

*Village Members and Facilitators,
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions. We ask the facilitators to
choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.*

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. We have never seen God; we cannot prove God is. Knowing this, how do we know we can trust in the promises of this God, as Dr. Cosby suggests? Do you genuinely believe that your help comes from the Lord, our creator? If so, why do you believe this?

2. Dr. Cosby suggests there are times in our lives when we will throw up our hands in frustration because we do not see how we will overcome the challenges we face. Sometimes we even wonder if God will show up. When life meets us with mayhem, how do we push through to the next scene of our lives and make progress? How do we avoid becoming stuck in our present situation?

3. This sermon reminds us that there are problems in our lives that we cannot handle by ourselves. Yet, our culture promotes the notions of individualism and independence. These cultural mindsets can make it difficult to ask for help. Are there barriers in your life that make it challenging to ask for help? What are they? How might this sermon speak to those barriers?

4. In 2 Chronicles 20:14, Jahaziel, the Levite, speaks to the King and all the people of Jerusalem and Judah. The text tells us he speaks only after the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him. Because of his anointing, the King and people listen. Have there been anointed people in your life who have spoken words of truth to you in challenging situations? What did you learn from them?

5. King Jehoshaphat is one of the good kings in the annals of the people of God. He obeyed God and worked to establish the ways of God among the people. However, calamity comes chasing him in the form of three armies converging at once. What happens to your faith when you have been obedient to God and calamity still falls on your household?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS:

1. In the story of King Jehoshaphat, we find God’s people gathering together for corporate prayer. Do you think individual churches have moved away from prayer meetings and other forms of corporate prayer? What differences would it make if the church participated in a regular routine of corporate prayer?

2. Dr. Cosby suggested that if we keep our eyes on God, we will have victory. However, we can identify circumstances where people died, the wrong was not corrected, and the victory did not come. How do you hold the difficulties of life and the hope preached in the sermon together? What do you think about the assurance of victory?

ACTIVITY:

Whether you have children or not, you will one day be somebody's ancestor. If you could speak to those generations you will never meet (e.g., your great, great, great, great, grandchildren, god-children, play nieces and nephews, neighbor's child), what wisdom do you want to pass on to them? What life lesson do you believe is essential for them to know? Share among your Village partners the wisdom you wish to pass down through the generations.

SPIRIT WORK:

Explore a few "Wait on God" scriptures and journal about opportunities to exercise waiting on God in the coming week. (Please see the Resource Section).

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village, there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions designed for the groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.

For Married Couples:

1. Dr. Cosby suggests that the outcome of our circumstances would improve if we waited on God more often. Is there a time when you and your spouse did not wait on God? What led you to move before God spoke to you?
2. This sermon reminds us to look back and remember what God has done for the generations before us. Please name a move of God that blessed your ancestors and still blesses you. What would you say to that ancestor if you could speak to them now?

For Young Adults:

1. Where do you face your fiercest struggle to keep your eyes on God? Is it in the area of finances, relationships, career, etc.?
2. We are reminded in this sermon that we should not be anxious. But, as humans, we do experience anxious moments. What do you do when anxiety rises? How do you trust in God and be anxious for nothing?
3. Pastor Cosby talks about our ancestors and elders bringing us to Christ. Who introduced you to Christ?

For Parents:

1. This sermon reminds us to look back and remember what God has done for the generations before us. Please name a move of God that blessed your ancestors that you wish to pass on to your children. Why is this story important to pass on? What do you hope they learn as they listen?
2. Because we live in a world whose mantra is faster, sooner, and bigger, how do you encourage your children to keep their eyes on God and wait?
3. Dr. Cosby notes that life has its ups and downs, its peaks and valleys, and yet, we are called to trust the **pending** promises of God. How might you teach your children to trust something that is pending? How do you teach your children the difference between a promise that has not yet come and one that is broken?

For Seniors:

1. In both last week's sermon and this week's, we hear the adage, "If it ain't one thing, it's another." When many challenges have arisen throughout your life, what skills of resilience and perseverance have you brought to the battle? How has your faith in God played a part in addressing your challenges?

2. The writer of Psalms 71:18-19 says, *Now that I am old and my hair is gray, don't leave me, God. I must tell the next generation about your power and greatness. God, your goodness reaches far above the skies. You have done wonderful things. God, there is no one like you.* As you read this text, what does it say about fighting your battles and speaking into the lives of the next generations?

For Women:

1. Recall a moment when you were scared, aggravated, or unsure about how things would turn out. Even amid this uncertainty, did God show up for you? How did God show up?
2. The sermon encourages us to keep our eyes on God. What are some of the practical ways that you can do this? In your everyday life, what are the ways you can intentionally keep your eyes on God?

For Men:

1. Western culture often depicts men as rescuers and heroes, always showing up to save the day. This way of thinking can lead men to believe the world's weight is on their shoulders, alone! *However, this sermon reminds us that when challenges arise we must*

 - a. Based on this sermon, how would you finish the preceding sentence? What lessons did this sermon offer you for the next time you do not know what to do?
2. The sermon encourages us to keep our eyes on God. What are some of the practical ways that you can do this in your everyday life?

For Returning Citizens:

1. Dr. Cosby quotes Psalm 90:1, “Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.” The first verse of Psalm 90 says that God has been a present safe space for God’s people throughout time. When you were incarcerated, did you experience God as a safe space? Was God present for you? If so, please share how you experienced God as this dwelling place during that time in your life.
2. In Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18 the spokesperson for God declares that God is sending him to do many things, including setting the captives free. This seems to be a promise from God. Have you experienced God setting you free from something? If so, how has that impacted your present life? Is there a testimony in your heart because of God’s past participation, present partnership, and or pending promises? If so, what is that testimony?

For Differently-Abled Person/People:

1. How does knowing that you have a God who will fight your battles help you with your struggles?
2. Dr. Cosby suggests that when God’s people call on God from an authentic place of prayer, God will answer. But sometimes, God’s answers take a long time to arrive. Sometimes they are not what we want to hear. And, sometimes, it seems as if God’s answer is silence. How have you experienced God’s various ways of answering prayer? How do you wait on God to answer your prayer?

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

A selection of scripture that reference waiting.

- **Psalm 27:14:** Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!
- **Psalm 37:7:** Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!
- **Psalm 130:5:** I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word, I hope.
- **Isaiah 30:18:** Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.
- **Isaiah 40:31:** But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
- **Lamentations 3:25:** The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.
- **Lamentations 3:26:** It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

- **Habakkuk 2:3:** For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.
- **Luke 2:25:** Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.
- **Acts 1:4:** And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me.”
- **Galatians 6:9:** And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.
- **James 5:7:** Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.