

2 Chronicles 26:16-23

Pentecost 22; October 25 & 26, 2015

It's Good to Be King!

*I'm gonna be a mighty king so enemies beware; I'm gonna be the main event like no king was before,
I'm brushin up, on lookin down, I'm workin' on my ROAR! Oh, I just can't wait to be KING!
No one sayin do this... No one sayin be there... No one sayin stop that... No one sayin see here...
Free to run around all day Free to do it all my way!
Oh I just can't wait to be king! Oh I just can't wait to be king! Oh I just can't waaaaaaait to be KING!*

Recognize the lyrics? They are sung by young Simba in the movie *"The Lion King."* How many of us have ever thought those same words in our lives? Yet, even though being a king would come with a lot of responsibility, wouldn't it be great if we could do things our way? No one saying do this. No one saying be there. No one saying stop this. The King that we find in our text this morning thought this way as well. Uzziah had done many good things for Israel. But after 52 years as being king, it got the best of him. Our text says: **"But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God."** Therefore, let us take a look at the words of our text under the theme: **"It's Good to be King."**

Uzziah's father, Amaziah, had started being king by following the Lord. It wouldn't be long that he fell away from the Lord. Amaziah avenged his father's death. He became conceited. He turned to idols. Finally, his faithless life would end by being assassinated.

Uzziah would now become king at the age of 16. When he became king, the royal treasury was empty. The city walls were in ruin. They were a defeated and discouraged nation. But God would not abandon his people. Uzziah, even though he was young, he would follow the Lord. As he trusted the Lord, God would grant Uzziah success. **"His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful."** (2 Chronicles 26:15) Uzziah's success was given to him by God. He rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. He dug more wells in the desert so that the size of the herds of livestock would grow. He raised a well-trained, well outfitted army and improved their military technology. It seemed that he was successful at everything he did. Uzziah could truly say: *It's good to be king.* Both Uzziah and the people of Judah were blessed. **"As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success."** Uzziah was truly among the rich and famous.

For 52 years, Uzziah reigned as king. Over all those years, he began to believe in his OWN greatness. He thought that he could be as rich and powerful as he was without God's help and without following God's commands. Once again the words of Solomon came true. **"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."** (Proverbs 16:18) Pride can be such a destructive force in the lives of people. It can bring us to think that we know better than those around us. It can lead us to think that we know better than God above us. The proud person is no longer a good listener because he is always looking for the angle that benefits me. Pride would bring down one of the greatest kings of Judah.

¹⁶ **But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.** ¹⁷ **Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the Lord followed him in.** ¹⁸ **They confronted him and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God."** So, Uzziah went where he should not have gone. God had given the children of Israel guideline to follow in their worship of him. Uzziah was no longer content to go to the temple and to meet God there in the prescribed way. Uzziah now wanted to setup his OWN way. He knew full well what he was doing as he walked past the priests to burn incense before the incense altar in the Lord's temple. Only the priests were to do the work of the temple.

You look at this account and say: *How could Uzziah be so proud and arrogant?* For 52 years, he had seen first-hand how much God had blessed him. God has blessed every single one of us here today. Even though we may never get to have the power that Uzziah had as king, we do like to be "king" to those who live around us and work with us. We like being king in our homes and families. Just as pride was the downfall of Uzziah, pride can be a stumbling block for us as well. If

our pride gets the best of us sometimes, we wouldn't be the first person to do. Look what happened to James and John in our Gospel Lesson for today. (Mark 10:35-45) They wanted the personal glory of sitting at his right hand and left hand in heaven. The other disciples were much better. They were mad at James and John because they asked before they did. No one wants to be last. Our sinful nature likes to be the one who is served, rather than the one who serves.

But Uzziah pressed on. In spite of the warning of Azariah and 80 additional priests. The king's response was anger – anger against those who would question his intentions, anger against those who would question his right to do as he saw fit. Uzziah was almost like a 2 or 3 year old throwing a temper tantrum. As he rages on, God took action. ¹⁹ **Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead.** ²⁰ **When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the Lord had afflicted him.**

When Azariah saw God take action against Uzziah by striking him with leprosy, he and the 80 priests quickly ran out from the temple. Humbled and frightened, Uzziah also complied. He recognized the hand of God. A co-regency was immediately was setup between Uzziah and his son. Uzziah left the palace to live out his days in a separate house. He was quarantined until he died.

Yet, the story doesn't end there. There is a Gospel promise within the last verse of our text: **“Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them.”** The phrase: **“rested with his fathers,”** is often a phrase that is used to describe believers in the Old Testament. Uzziah had a change of heart. God called Uzziah to repentance. He also brought Uzziah to realize that the “leprosy” of sin was removed by his coming Savior. Just as the sins of Uzziah were forgiven, God forgives the many sins in our lives. Perhaps, he may even bring us down sometimes, only to bring us up again in Christ. May you and I always trust in Jesus and his forgiveness in our lives. May we say of Jesus: It's Good to be King. Amen.