

2 Kings 21:1-15

Pentecost 20; October 22 & 23, 2017

Out of all the people sitting here this morning, who would you say is the most stubborn person you know? You may not want to answer that question out loud. But I can see from your looks, you have someone in mind. Perhaps that person that you have in mind is you. Stubbornness – that unwillingness to change, that unwillingness to budge from your opinion or position no matter what anyone else may say – is not usually a compliment, is it? Rarely, is stubbornness thought of as a positive trait. Today – let us take a look at the words of our text and see God’s Stubborn Grace.

King Manasseh was stubborn. His father, King Hezekiah had been one great kings of Judah. Hezekiah had seen how stubborn the people of Judah had become. They did not want to follow God. Hezekiah changed everything. He once again helped the Israelites to follow God.

However, Manasseh didn’t care about what his father had done. When he took over ruling the kingdom at the age of 12, he inherited a thriving kingdom. It was a kingdom that was blessed by God on account of the rule of his father. Manasseh would take idolatry to a new low. As you read the account of Manasseh here in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, you can see how stubborn he became about following God. Manasseh wasn’t only stubborn, he was evil! He would be one of the worst kings that Judah would see. He was an idol worshipper and Baal worship. He worshiped the stars and planets. He had little regard for life. He would sacrifice his own sons to these false gods. He practiced black magic. Basically, Manasseh stubbornly refused to follow God. He turned his back on his God, and didn’t care at all.

God wanted to be close to Manasseh, and Manasseh would have nothing of it. **“The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.”** (2nd Chronicles 33:10) Manasseh’s heart had become too much pride, he was too arrogant, too stubborn and he refused to listen to God. When you look at this account of stubborn Manasseh, you see a man that wasn’t just slapping God in the face, he was punching him in the nose. He paid no attention. He was about as far from God as you can be.

I don’t think that most of us here today would consider ourselves as being as stubborn as Manasseh was in following God. But we do have that same stubborn streak of sin running through us. There are times that we know what God says, and what he wants, and we just say *“no!”* There are times that we just simply choose to ignore God’s Word. There are times that we don’t like what God has to say to us. We come up with all kinds of excuses. We blame others. We have too much pride. We are too set in our ways to give in. Our God wants to be close to us, and we pull away from him.

This account of King Manasseh is not a familiar account. Yet, it is one of the coolest pictures of stubbornness in the pages of Scripture. Because as stubborn as Manasseh was, God was even more stubborn than him. God never gave up on King Manasseh. He tried to help Manasseh to see that what he was doing was wrong. When he wouldn’t listen, God disciplined his child. He sent the Assyrians to attack Judah. King Manasseh would be captured. In 2 Chronicles the Bible tells us: **“So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.”** (2 Chronicles 33)

How could God love a guy like Manasseh? That’s God’s incredible grace! God loved Manasseh. No matter how many awful things that Manasseh had done, no matter how much damage he had caused to God’s people, no matter how stubborn Manasseh had been over the years, God still loved Manasseh. His mind was set. He was going to turn Manasseh’s heart around with the Word of God. He was going to bring Manasseh back to faith. It took a crushing defeat by the Assyrians and a hook through the nose and a time in bronze shackles to get Manasseh’s attention, but in the end God won out.

We read in 2 Chronicles: **“In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.”** (2 Chronicles 33:12-13) It broke God’s heart to see Manasseh turn away from him, that he wanted to restore his heart back to him.

That's grace. That's pure stubborn grace. That's pure stubborn love. If you think about that, it just blows your mind away. How could God love a man like this? That's the beauty of God's grace.

God didn't just love a man like Manasseh. He loved this world. Jesus came into this world to save it. Even though many didn't want to hear him, that didn't stop him from loving this world. Even though many would turn their backs on Jesus, he didn't turn his back on this world. He doesn't turn his back on us. Jesus doesn't even flinch in still loving us. Even though we hurt him by our sins, he still let the nails be pounded through his hands. With his enemies laughing and mocking him, he still shouted out: **"It is Finished!"** Even though it looked like death had defeated Jesus, the grave could not hold Jesus. God was just too stubborn in loving this world.

God loves you like he loved Manasseh. He keeps after us until he gets us back in his arms. No matter what you've done, no matter how often you've done it, no matter what you may do in the future, God is not going to let you go! His love for you does not waver.

Who's the most stubborn person you know? He is your God. This is grace. This is what God is like. His grace is greater than you. His love will not let you go. Amen!