

Unsung Heroes

June 9th, 2019

“Chase the Lions – Benaiah’s Story”

This is one of my favorite character studies in all of the Bible – the story of Benaiah. It is fascinating to read about him even though we just have this really small passage that tells his story. We read it today from 1 Chronicles, and the exact same story is also told in 2 Samuel 23 – almost word for word. One of the reasons that I love this little story about a relatively unknown person is because it seems like he was fearless.

LIN HAO STORY

Here we have a guy, Benaiah, doing all of these heroic deeds and they are all mentioned sort of “matter of fact”-ly in both passages. It was like it was no big deal to the writer, everybody seemed to know Benaiah was a fearless warrior with all of these amazing feats.

I don’t know about all of you, but I am not as fearless as he seems to have been. Who here in this room has a fear of something? We should all be raising our hands; there is something that all of us fear even if we don’t want to admit it. A couple of recent surveys revealed some of the things that Americans fear the most:

- Terrorism (slide)
- Running out of money (slide)
- Loved ones dying (slide)
- Spiders (slide)
- Heights (slide)
- Clowns (slide)

Maybe one of these things fits for you and maybe your fear isn’t on this list, but whether we showed yours this morning or not we all have something that we fear. Unlike the way the writer describes Benaiah, most of us aren’t able to just face down these lions in our lives without fear. We are constantly under spiritual attacks that makes us anxious and fearful.

We all have things in life that we fear; these things are our lions.

The short passage we read in scripture this morning from 1 Peter talks about those fears coming into our lives like a roaring lion just looking for somebody to eat. In the scriptures lions are often used as an analogy to represent something that is ruthless. The devil is described that way here, just relentless in his attacks to make you fearful. When people wanted to ensure that somebody would be brutally and ruthlessly killed they’d thrown them in a pit with lions (Daniel). Lions are described in various scriptures as being strong and mighty and something that humans should run away from - scared if they ever saw one. I know that if I saw one coming I would run as fast as I could the other way!

Now, most of us aren't likely to have a wild lion come and chase us down our street after work on Tuesday, but we do have fears that chase us, don't we? There are things in our lives that we run away from because they are big and scary and we just don't want to face them, or we don't think that we can face them. They are bigger than we are, they are scary and we don't think that we stand a chance coming up against them – surely they will eat us if we let them. So they chase us and we keep running.

Benaiah gives us an interesting way of facing our fears. Now, the scripture talks about his feats like they were no big deal, but I think that just might be the way that we read it. He was a great warrior, don't get me wrong, but he was also human. I have little doubt that he had some fears along the way, but he chose to face those fears. He showed that he wasn't afraid because he came from a line of people that faced problems and led people.

We don't have books and books about Benaiah and his family, but we do know a couple of things about his dad and his grandfather. We know that his grandfather, who isn't named when he is mentioned, was an early leader in the city of Kabzeel. We know a little bit about his dad, Jehoida, who was a chief priest and led 3,700 troops in a battle to help support King David. We also know that his history can be traced all the way back to Aaron, the first high priest who stood up to the king for his people. Benaiah came from a long line of people who looked fear in the eye and moved forward to face it.

We are all like Benaiah in this way – we come from a long line of people that God has helped overcome their fears. We can read in scripture story after story about how God was calling somebody to do something and they were scared to death to do it. They fought God about doing it, explained to God why they couldn't do it and some of them even tried to run and hide from God so that He didn't make them do it. Sound familiar to any of us? How many of us have been there before? I know that I have!

In almost every one of these cases God eventually won out (He has a tendency to do that) and He empowered them to face their fears and overcome them. Moses faced his fears and led his people out of bondage. Daniel faced his fears and went into the lions den. Esther faced her fears and approached the king to demand freedom for her people. Even Jesus asked God the night of His crucifixion if there was another way this could be done and was so scared he sweat blood – but He overcame that fear and went to the cross for us. Just like God helped these people to face their fears and overcome them, He can help us to face ours too.

Let's look at one little part of this story for a minute – the part where Benaiah faces a giant with a spear and kills him – with his own spear! When we think about Bible stories of facing giants and defeating them we always think about the obvious one – David and Goliath. We all know that story, we have heard it in church since we were little kids. This story of facing a giant I didn't even realize was a thing until I was in college taking a class on 2 Samuel! We have less details here, but it is such an amazing story in the few sentences that we get.

Let's think about the fact that the average man at that time was about 5' tall. The story tells us that this opponent of Benaiah was 7 ½ feet tall. That is huge! (Matute Bol/Muggsy Bogues slide). This person was 150% of Benaiah – the size of him + another half of him! Imagine you standing in front of somebody who is the size of 1 ½ of you. Now, imagine that he is holding a huge spear while you're holding a little club – and he wants to fight you! Pretty scary right? I can't help but think that Benaiah was a little bit scared, at least. He didn't run away though – he didn't back down. Instead, he knew that he was fighting for David and that God was behind David so he went right into the fight! Despite the odds, God helped him and he won!

Though our fears may seem overwhelming, God can help us overcome them.

Benaiah faced this giant who was not only bigger but had a better weapon and won the fight! Not only did he win the fight, but he was able to take the spear from the giant and kill him with his own weapon! That is pretty bad...well, a word I can't say in church, but you know what I mean 😊. God not only helped him to face this fearful giant and win, but do it in a way that didn't leave any doubt whose side God was on. There is no doubt that he looked up and this huge opponent with better weapons and felt a little overwhelmed, but he knew what he had to do and God helped him to overcome those fears.

What are the fears that we have in our lives that we look up and see and get scared to face? Do we fear that we won't have enough money to take care of ourselves and our families? Are we scared about a health issue that we or a loved one has? Are we scared of the next chapter that God is calling us to in our lives? Is it just the fear of the unknown? Whatever the fears are that we have in our lives, we can rest a little easier knowing that God has a history of coming through for His people and that He can help us face, and often times overcome, our fears.

We might not all defeat the giants in our lives. I think that Benaiah might even be the exception and not the rule. If you fear death, you can lean on God to fight letting that fear ruin the life you have now, but you will eventually die. If you have a fear of heights you can lean on God for comfort as the elevator climbs to the 47th floor, but you aren't likely to all of a sudden go skydiving. ***Overcoming our fears doesn't always mean defeating them, but it means facing them and sometimes that is much more important – God defines winning differently than we do.***

In our lives we will face all sorts of lions at different times. Some of those lions come to us from the devil, like we talked about earlier. Some of those lions come from other people and the decisions that they make that impact our lives. Some of those lions we create ourselves with our own actions and behaviors. When we talk about our fears we should be careful to understand that God doesn't promise us that nothing bad will ever happen if we just face things with confidence, but if we face things with confidence the life we do get to lead will be better. We can shrink if the face of these lions, or we can understand that in the larger scale of life God is bigger than they are. The bigger we see God, the smaller we see the lions.

The bigger God is to you, the smaller the lions will seem.

Let's look at this another way. Benaiah was certainly at least a little bit scared to face the giant – he had to have been, but he faced him anyway. When he faced that giant and come out the winner it gave him confidence. He knew that God had his back, he saw God bring him past that scary opponent and it empowered him as he kept going. We are told that he did “many heroic deeds” after that happened. He saw how big God was and that made his other fears – the other lions in his life – seem small in comparison.

We can get overwhelmed and bogged down with the lions that are in our lives. We can look at them and see them as so big and scary that we just want to run away, but we know that God is bigger than they are. We know that compared to God a lion is nothing; we can choose to look at our lions and be scared of them or look at them and know that our God is bigger than they are and that He will help us face them. Will we win every time? No, we probably won't, but we also won't live a life of fear too scared to do anything that God is calling us to do. Instead of living a life of fear, we can live a life of boldness. With God by our side, we are a lot stronger than we think that we are.

There is a part of this story that everybody loves when they read it even though it is only one sentence long. We are told that Benaiah, in a snow storm, chased a lion into a pit and killed it! That is a pretty awesome thing to picture, isn't it? For some reason, as it was snowing, he decided that he needed to chase a lion, was able to chase it down and get it into a pit and then was able to kill it. He became a pretty amazing warrior, didn't he? What an awesome story to tell the grandkids one day – “yeah, back in my dad, during a snowstorm I chased a lion uphill both ways and then killed it with my bare hands in a pit” – we know how those stories go, don't we? 😊

Here is why this one sentence story is so fascinating to me – he chases the lion. Do you see the difference here between what we are told to fear about lions and what he is now doing? Lions chase and kill us, but now he is chasing and killing the lion! How incredible is that for us to hear this morning? When you have God on your side and are willing to let Him lead you, you no longer have to consume yourself with fear of the lions in your life chasing you, but instead you can chase those lions down and kill them before they can kill you – and you can even do it in a snowstorm! You are stronger than you think you are, you can do more than you think that you can do and God has something for you in your life that He wants you to do no matter what you're scared of!

We are stronger than we think we are. We can chase down our lions too.

We have these amazing little stories of Benaiah about killing 2 strong men, killing and giant and chasing down and killing a lion on the snow, but why? Why does the Bible take this couple of paragraphs to tell us the story of this little known warrior? Well, when we know who Benaiah is, and we know his background, it makes more sense the only other time he is

mentioned in Scripture. When David is gone and his son Solomon is taking the throne, as God wanted, Solomon faces opposition from his brothers who wanted power. He is under attack and he calls on somebody who his dad told him stories about, somebody who has a reputation of being stronger than you'd think, somebody who has faced down giants and lions in snowstorms – he calls on Benaiah. Benaiah becomes his top general and leads his army into battles and keeps the throne in his hands, as God wanted.

God has something for all of us to do with our lives. For many of us we get bogged down in fears that keep us from being all that God created us to be. These lions can keep us from going places and doing things that God has prepared for us or called on us to do. We don't have to live that way, we don't have to let the lions chase us away – we can chase them! You never know what God is calling you to do, you never know then somebody is going to call on you to help them fulfill God's plan for their life – when Benaiah was facing that giant and chasing that lion he didn't know that years later the king's son would call on him for help in his time of need – but had he not been able to face those things he would not have been able to save the kingdom years later.

You never know when God may call you to do something for His kingdom. He has a great plan for you to do great things – if you let him; if you chase the lions away and face life with Him by your side, with Him fighting on your behalf with Him standing beside you as you face giants. You are stronger than you think you are, you are more powerful than you think you are, with God by your side you can do great things for His kingdom. Chase the lions, don't let them chase you.

Here's the great thing though – you don't have to chase them alone! You are part of this family and we will chase them together. Solomon couldn't face the lions coming for him alone, so he called on Benaiah who he knew had faced them before. Together they face those lions and fought them. You don't have to face your lions alone!

If you are living in fear this morning because of a medical issue and the diagnosis isn't good – you don't have to face that lion alone. If you are living in fear this morning because a loved one is sick and you don't know what you'll do when they're gone – you don't have to face that lion alone. If you are living in fear this morning because you don't know how you're going to make ends meet this month, or your marriage is crumbling, or your kids are struggling, or you can't get the voices in your head to stop beating you down – you don't have to face that lion alone. If you live in fear this morning of facing the pain that you felt from abuse whether recently or decades ago and that fear keeps you up at night – you do not have to face that lion alone. Whatever fear that is chasing you and you keep running away from, you don't have to run any longer – today is a new day and today is the day when all of that can change.

Together, side by side and with God leading us, we will face those lions and chase them down together!

(opportunity to raise hands during prayer if need to face a fear, opportunity to talk to somebody after service)