

## **Defeated by Success**

A sermon by Rev. Lee Yates, Covina Community Church (UCC), Covina, CA  
2 Samuel 5:1-5

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### Defeated by Success –

#### **First Half of a Basketball Game**

A basketball player that has never been a good shooter from distance makes 2 Three Pointers  
That player is the best rebounder on the team, but is so excited they can make Three Pointers.  
That player takes 4 more shots from deep in the second half – Misses them ALL.  
The team gets out-scored and OUT-REBOUNDED, because he was not in position.  
Ultimately, the TEAM was DEFEATED by one player's SUCCESS.

### Defeated by Success –

#### **A Painter has gotten really good at EDGING**

He has developed a steady hand in corners and no longer bothers taping off room.  
He can finish jobs so much faster since he doesn't have all the prep-work.  
That is, until the day he was PAINTING and an Earthquake Shook his LADDER.  
He left a streak across a ceiling.  
He spilled paint down a wall.  
He ended up loosing the next two clients whose jobs he couldn't get to.  
Ultimately, the PAINTER was DEFEATED by his SUCCESS.

### Defeated by Success –

#### **A boy named DAVID turns out to be a GREAT shepherd.**

He is so good with a slingshot, David can kill wild animals.  
DAVID practices playing music while he sites in the fields.

He is so good with a harp, he can sooth the mind of a troubled KING!  
Along the way, DAVID decides that GOD has BLESSED and PROTECTS him.  
When DAVID kills a GIANT named GOLIATH, he is even more CONVINCED.  
Once he is KING...

DAVID takes a soldier's WIFE as his own, he never QUESTIONED himself.  
DAVID had the soldier moved to the FRONT LINES to eliminate him... Still, nothing.  
When a PROPHET comes and CONFRONTS David, suddenly, he REALIZES...  
He had been DEFEATED by his SUCCESS.

## Defeated by Success –

ISRAEL has grown so much!

ISRAEL has become so SUCCESSFUL and POWERFUL!

ISRAEL has decided that all of it's SUCCESS is because GOD protects them.

\*Prophets RISE UP and warn them otherwise.

\*Priests BEG the KINGS to be FAITHFUL in their LEADERSHIP.

But in the end, the KINGDOM gets DIVIDED

\*North and South

## **Eventually, the NORTH gets defeated and**

so many sent into “EXILE” that those “Tribes”

have been described as “lost” in Israel’s history.

## **Eventually, the SOUTH – Jerusalem – and the TEMPLE -- FALL**

25% of the Leaders,

Educators,

And main Priests are taken into EXILE.

They were WARNED

They were THREATENED by PROPHETS with the exact EVENTS that UNFOLDED

ISRAEL ASSUMED it was too POWERFUL to FALL

ISRAEL ASSUMED it was too BELOVED to FAIL

Ultimately, they were DEFEATED by their SUCCESS.

## **In SCRIPTURE, this is the BEGINNING of a new ERA**

\*It comes with lots of well-known NAMES

\*It comes with much lesser-known HISTORY.

Ironically -- the Sams, Davids, Jeremiahs, Isaiahs, Zeeks,, Joel’s, and Jonathans of the world,

\*Take their NAMES from a section of SCRIPTURE that is often UNDER-READ.

\*They get their NAMES from CHARACTERS that are UNDER-STUDIED.

And we NEED to read these STOIRES

**We NEED to understand the LESSONS** forged in these DIFFICULT times.

**Because we have ALREADY started REPEATING the same MISTAKES.**

**Many years ago, a small group of CHRISTIANS fled for a NEW WORLD.**

- They were seeking RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
- They believed that GOD had set them APART
- They believed that GOD has PROTECTED and GUIDED them.

**Those early PILGRIMS found their PROMISED LAND... and...**

- Much like the HEWBRE people – someone else was LIVING in it.

At first, the two managed to Co-EXIST --- **but that is not TODAY's STORY.**

**-You see...**

WITHIN the CHRISTIAN UTOPIA, there was TROUBLE.

- SOME believed that they KNEW better than the rest.
- SOME believe their SUCCESS as LEADERS was ORDAINED by GOD.
- SOME believed that EVERYONE had to THINK like them.
  - PRAY like them.
  - BELIEVE like them.
  - BEHAVE like them.
- all in the name of the RELIGIOUS FREEDOM!

**NEW Colonies were formed** – by those BANISHED

By those who LEFT on their OWN.

By others FLEEING the DOGMA of EUROPEAN CHURCH and STATE

**OF COURSE, they all came together to THROW off the YOLK of IMPERIALISM.**

- \*They came together to declare INDEPENDENCE
- \*They came together to be a group of “UNITED STATES”

- Some were THANKFUL that their FAITH sustained them through it STRUGGLE.

**Others....**

- Believed our SUCCESS was ORDAINED by GOD.
- Believed that their LEADERSHIP was ORDAINED by GOD.
- Believed that EVERYONE had to THINK like them.

PRAY like...

well, you know the DRILL.

**Till the FREEDOM they FOUGHT for became CONTINGENT on personal PIETY.**

Till the SEPERATION of CHURCH and STATE they DESIGNED became BYPASSED.

WOMEN and CHILDREN were treated as LESSER people.

SLAVES from AFRICA were treated as LESS than HUMAN.

And

**DIFFERENT was determined to be a THREAT to the REPUBLIC.**

Here is the IRONY ---

\*Diversity is a FOUNDATION of CREATION.

\*Diversity is part of our FAITH STORY.

\*Diversity is the PRIMARY DISCRIPTOR for PENTECOST!

-the Beings of the CHURCH!

**But those who have BLENDED the CHURCH and the NATION's identity**

Call it a THREAT!

Call it a threat.

**We have DOUBLED DOWN on this a couple times in U.S. History.**

-After the CIVIL WAR there was a MOVEMENT towards SAMENESS:

\*Communities started passing Jim CROW laws to DIVIDE us.

\*It also laid the foundation for the MASS INCARCERATION of BLACKS

-After the CIVIL WAR:

\*CHURCHES changed their THEOLOGICAL focus.

\*Moved from COMMUNAL salvation to PERONAL salvation.

-we stopped preaching about our loving our NEIGHBOR as much.

-we focused on PERSONAL HELL insurance.

**\*EVERYONE was called to BEHAVE and BELIEVE the SAME WAY.**

-After WW2 there was a MOVEMENT towards SAMENESS

\*Black Soldiers returning from war were not provided the same opportunities

-for education

-for home purchasing

\*1946 – Bible first uses the word HOMOSEXUALITY

**In both INSTANCES – it is fair to say, “We were DEFEATED by our SUCCESS.”**

Now --- TODAY ---

Things are MUCH different! RIGHT?!

Our NATION has grown so much!

Our ECONOMY has grown so much!

Our SOCIETY has grown so much!

Of COURSE... other things have GROWN...

the GAP between the RICHEST and POOREST

the GAP in EDUCATION and HEALTHCARE

the HATE spewed in the name of JESUS.

**PROSPERITY GOSPEL PREACHERS tell rich people...**

\*If you BELIEVE the RIGHT THINGS

\*If you BEHAVE the RIGHT WAY

-Good things will happen.

-Money will appear in your life

-You will have an attractive hetero-normative partner with good hair!

\*If you BELIEVE the RIGHT THINGS

\*If you BEHAVE the RIGHT WAY

-Good things will happen

-You will be HEALTHY

-You will be RESPECTED and LOVED!

**NONE of this nonsense is SCRIPURAL but it is DISCRIBED as both: FAITHFUL  
and AMERICAN!**

**PURITY PREACHERS have been spreading their stuff too...**

\*IF you BELIEVE the RIGHT THINGS

\*IF you BEHAVE the RIGHT WAYS

-You will be PERSONALLY rewarded with ETERNAL LIFE.

-You will be SAVED from HELL – but NO one else.

-You will be RESCUED from the VENGEANCE of our LOVING God.

\*IF you BELIEVE the RIGHT THINGS

-which includes JUDGING OTHERS as GOD asked us NOT to do.

\*IF you BEHAVE the RIGHT WAYS

-which includes SHUNNING, BANISHING, and HATE

Well, then, you have a FIRST-CLASS ticket to HEAVEN!

**ALL of this goes against JESUS' TEACHING but is DISCRIBED as both: FAITHFUL  
and AMERICAN!**

**And as the AMERICAN Church grew...**

\*As new BUILDINGS were ERECTED

\*As new FAMILY CENTERS were CONSTRUCTED

\*As COFFEE SHOPS and BOWLING LANES were ADDED ON...

This was all PROOF that GOD had BLESSED our WORK

This was all PROOF that GOD had LOVED us the MOST.

This was all taken as an ECONOMIC and CULTURAL "MANIFEST DESITY"

**And the GOSPEL of JESUS was DEFEATED by the CHURCH's SUCCESS.**

**So, where do we go from here?**

Christian Nationalist symbols were all over the CAPITAL BUILDING on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

People are denying elections and the rights of their neighbors in the name of God.

And small congregations across America are CLOSING their DOORS each day.

Of course they are CLOSING --- We BOUGHT the LIE.

Or We LISTENED to the LIE in SILENCE

Of course, Churches are Closing: We made our NEIGHBOR into a THREAT.

Or We allowed the Church next door to get AWAY with it.

Of Course, Churches are Closing: We told people how BAD they were.  
We told people their kind were not WELCOME.

Of Course, they STOPPED COMING! **We TOLD them to!**

**The Church DEMANDED that EVERYONE be the SAME to fit in, but..**

- GOD's people are DIVERSE!
- GOD's people don't all think the SAME.
- GOD's people have ONE SPIRIT but MANY GIFTS!

How do we KNOW?! THE BIBLE tells us so!!!

We have—for TOO LONG --- been DEFEATED by our SUCCESS.

No more --- No more ---

**It's time for the CHURCH to speak the TRUTH and tell the WORLD:**

- People are not "HOMELESS" -- they are our NEIGHBORS: \*HOUSE THEM!
- People are not "ADDICTS" -- they are our FAMILY: \*LOVE THEM!
- People are not "CONVICTS" - they are HURTING: \*HEAL THEM!
- People are not "HEARTLESS" - they are trapped by SHAME and FEAR: \*FORGIVE THEM!

**It's time for the CHURCH to speak the TRUTH and tell the WORLD:**

Confessing that we were DEFEATED by our SUCCESS –

***But that***

CHRIST invites us to RISE AGAIN -- and AGAIN --- and **GOD is not DONE with us YET!**