

When No is the Answer

2 Samuel 7: 1-14 Psalms 23 Pastor Lentz
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Well this sermon comes to you with emotional connections. Of course being told no is something that is an emotional situation. However, this time it was closer to home than that. You see this sermon was all but complete and then it disappeared. Yes, I know that it isn't supposed to be able to disappear on the computer, but it did. After the usual customary frantic looking and searching, I realized that God had said, NO to the idea I was pursuing with the first sermon. So this is almost totally a different sermon. I am being true to the Title but interpreting even the passage somewhat differently.

The truth is that all of us have prayed for something, wanted something, or desperately desired something and the answer was no, whether we credited or blamed God for the answer, it was still no.

I would love to say that I have no problem with being told no and it would be a lie. I am better about it but it is only in comparison. I am learning to deal with no, emotionally even if I agree with the philosophy that I am saying. It is still an emotional thing. I hope that because of this sermon I will be better at it but we will see. Some of our resistance to being told no may at times be right for us to do.

Instead of telling stories about this I am hoping that you will allow yourself to think of your own stories about being told no, while you read this sermon. I don't know how well this approach will work, but it is worth discovering. Even if it doesn't then we will both know better ways for it in the future. I am hoping that by not telling my own stories of no, that you will be freer to think of your own.

When we are told no about something that really matters to us, normally we go through all sorts of gyrations. We may become flustered, angry, dejected, and or sad. Ok, yes, for a while we may even be in denial, disbelief.” What do you mean, it was supposed to happen, why didn’t it?” Most of us have blamed someone or something for the NO we received. It is their fault. They were not looking right when they made that judgement. What is wrong with them? Don’t they know that I am right? Why I can point out all sorts of reasons that they are wrong, and that is just for starters.

It is like a man told me that one of his friends told him when he was complaining about something in his marriage. His friend said to him, “Do you want to be right or do you want to be married? “ The brilliance of that at first escaped me. At first I thought it was just a silly way of blaming a spouse anyway, but offering a better way to deal with what was the argument. Then it occurred to me that it doesn’t have to do with blaming but of accepting that our need to be right is what is often getting in the way of our own happiness. Actually, just the other day I listened to workshop about marital therapy, and the technique demonstrated was to gently help the person complaining to come to a realization that their need to be right is the problem.

It usually takes us a while after being told no before we begin to look for some more useful and practical way of thinking and acting. It may have been our desire to be right and have it our way but when we allow our self to discover what else God has for us then we can begin to really discover how to be blessed. Even though we all know this somehow it is one of those things that we need to remind ourselves of from time to time. Besides once in a while our taking a while to accept no gets us a yes. It doesn’t happen often but once in a while it does. If no always meant no, it might be easier. No sometimes means maybe, or wait a while, it sometimes means think of a different way of going about it.

David was told no and then he was almost immediately told how that God wanted to bless him. I wonder if we accept no more quickly will we notice the blessing more quickly? David was told that his son would follow in his footsteps and would build the Temple. When you think about it, that was a way to bless David, Solomon and all of Israel. Imagine having to follow in David's shoes. It would be very difficult, and it is sometimes difficult for a child to follow in their parents shoes. They have to do something different. By allowing Solomon to build the Temple God was blessing both David and Solomon.

On the one hand of course Solomon was being offered something that was going to make him very famous, it was going to allow him to be proud of what he accomplished. David could also know that his child would be the one who built the Temple. What a blessing to know that. One of the most amazing blessings that any of us receive is seeing a child do well. It feels wonderful to see someone who we care about do well. It may be one of the greatest things that any of us get to experience. Yes, it is wonderful when we accomplish a goal, but when a child who we parented, or that we taught accomplishes a major goal it is wonderful.

So was it a little bit of a shock when thinking about this that it occurred to me that is how God feels about us. Then it occurred to me that the only times that God was angry with the Hebrews was when they took a no from him as if he didn't want their best. That thought led to others, about how that God is always seeking out our best and that when we realize that we get blessed both in the moment and later as well.

When you think about the 23 Psalm that is what it is saying. That God makes us lie down in green pastures. In our human stubbornness we often have to be made to lie down where it is the best for us, because we are not believing that where God has brought us is the best place for us.

There is a knee jerk response to loneliness, hurt, disappointment, sadness, even anger or loss, that a person feels as if they have been told no. It is difficult to embrace something that hurts, and yes, all of us

have to at times embrace something that we didn't want, don't like and would rather not have to deal with. I wonder how it would change if we began to look for the ways that God wants to bless us even when we have those feelings of being told no, and the absence of someone we love, or we have to deal with some other loss, or disappointment. I wonder whether it would begin to make the loss, hurt, or disappointment easier to deal with.

It certainly can when it applies to children. The Bible is clear that each child has to stand on his/her own for their actions. We can celebrate their successes, but it is the child's success. We can even mourn their mistakes but it is their mistake. It is their opportunity to learn and to grow.

Have you ever learned as much from your successes as you have from the mistakes you made? While it is wonderful doing something right. It feels so satisfying doing the right thing and seeing that it was the right thing to do, and it is also feels wonderful when we can switch to looking for how God wants to bless us even when things are not looking that way to us at the moment. It is actually, even better than our accomplishing some major task because it is a major task. Getting in charge of our own fears, ego's and desires to look for how God wants to bless us when everything inside of us and in the moment doesn't look that way is a deeply spiritual thing. Those are the times that God is with us and if we recognize it we will be even more blessed. Almost any time that we wrestle our ego, fear, or desire to the ground and accept that we are more than ok without the yes we wanted, it is as if we suddenly begin to feel that calm, wonderful feeling of being cared about and loved in only the way that God can do it.

Perhaps one of the most satisfying times is when after wrestling our ego to the ground and accepting our situation, we discover that our wrestling changed us, and now from our deeper spiritual side we discover that not only can the answer be yes, but that now we are also free to no longer need it. Sometimes our needing the yes, was the problem in the first place.

The 23rd Psalm says in Hebrew that the Lord leads us with curiosity, and wonder into green pastures, beside still waters. When we have recognized how that God is leading us into a good place it can bring with it the calm of being beside still water. It can bring with it the satisfaction of being so taken care of that we are brought to the best place we could be for us at that time. What if that is occurring when we get a no? What if we are being taken care of when that happens? That does seem to be the meaning in the Bible that God wants us to receive.