

Jehovah Tsidkenu: The LORD our righteousness

Numbers 23:16-23 ¹⁶ Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak." ¹⁷ So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?" ¹⁸ Then he took up his oracle and said: "Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor! ¹⁹ "God *is* not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? ²⁰ Behold, I have received *a command* to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. ²¹ "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God *is* with him, And the shout of a King *is* among them. ²² God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox. ²³ "For *there is* no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'

In the three advent Sundays we have had so far, we have examined the names that men gave to the altars they built to the Lord. These names express what the Lord is and means to them. Jehovah Jireh, The Lord sees me and provides. Jehovah Nissi, the Lord is my banner leading and blessing me. Jehovah Shalom, the Lord gives me peace, the fullness of His blessings.

Today it is not an altar built by man but by God. More than altar, God builds a temple and gives it a name. That temple is His people. It is not a name by which we describe God but a name by which God describes us. Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness

Jeremiah 33:15-16 ¹⁵ 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this *is the name* by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

Jeremiah the prophet of the Lord was imprisoned. He was imprisoned because the people would not listen to God's word. The people were destroyed and scattered among the nations because of their rebellion against God. Nevertheless, the Lord promises that one will come who will restore the people of Israel, gather them together and through Him, God's people will receive the name: Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord our righteousness.

The situation in our text is very similar. The people do not deserve the Lord's blessings. Despite that the Lord gives them the name of righteousness.

Think of our text as a courtroom. God sits as judge. Israel is the defendant, the one accused. The Devil is the prosecutor. That is what the word Devil means, the one who accuses.

Satan brings out all the evidence against Israel. They would not listen to Moses. They complained and whined from the first day that He brought them out of Egypt. A month after hearing the Ten Commandments they made a golden calf and worshiped it. They refused to go up and attack the Canaanites when God told them to. Then when God told them not to, they insisted on going up. They even had an orgy in the wilderness as a tribute to the false god Baal.

God the judge sits and listen as the accuser presents all this evidence.

And then God the judge declares, "I see no evidence against Israel. I observe no guilt in them. They are righteous, innocent, free."

Satan the prosecutor pulls his hair out in frustration. "How can you a righteous judge say such a thing? How can you ignore all this evidence?"

"Because" responds the Lord, "Jesus has already accepted the guilt for all these things and any other accusations you can bring against Israel or any of my people."

Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord is Our Righteousness. This is the name that God gives to Israel despite all their sins. This is the name the Lord gives to us as well.

This Righteousness of God means that all things are in perfect alignment.

The basic of Idea of righteousness is that everything is in perfect alignment, perfectly balanced.

Leviticus 19:36 36 `You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Most of us probably know the frustration of trying to find perfect balance. When I was young I remember a cartoon of a guy trying to trim his hedges. He tried to cut straight across the top, but the right side ended up a little higher. So he cut a little off that right side, but now the left side was a little higher. He cut a little off that side, back and forth back and forth until there was nothing left of the bush.

Just the other day I was trying to rehang our TV. There is a metal plate the TV attaches to. That metal plate has four bolts you can lose to adjust it. I loosened the four bolts and got the level out. I made the metal plate nice and level, then tried to tighten the bolts again. As soon as I tightened the bolts the plate shifts. It was not perfectly level anymore. Loose the bolts adjust, try again.

It can be frustrating to try and make something perfectly level. Yet this is what the Lord expects not just of our TV and bushes but of our life. This is righteousness, that which is perfectly straight, perfectly balanced, perfectly aligned.

One of the bible's favorite words for sin emphasizes this. Iniquity means that which is crooked, misaligned, out of balance. It is the opposite of righteousness.

It is impossible for us to achieve such leveling in our lives but the Lord promises to do it for us. He promises to give us His balance. Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord is Our Righteousness.

How can you measure such levelness?

You cannot measure the accuracy of a level against itself. You cannot say I know this level is level because it is level when I put it on the floor, and I know the floor is level because when I put this level on the floor it measures level. That is circular thinking.

However, our unevenness is seen even when we are measured against ourself. Measure yourself against yourself, your actions based on your promises, your deeds based on your words. Have you done all that you said you would? Have you fulfilled all that you promise? You will certainly come up lacking. When you scold or discipline your children, does your life live up to the standard you set for them? God needs nothing other than our own words to reveal that our lives are out of balance, misaligned, unrighteous. If you criticize or complain about others, how will yourself measure against those same criticisms and complaints?

Jesus reminds us:

Mark 4:24 With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given

Whenever we speak of others we need to consider carefully how well we stand up to our own criticism. We are like Belshazzar. We have been weighed and measured by our own words and are found wanting. If you measure God's deed against his words, God's fulfillment against his promises, God's judgement against His life, He does not come up lacking.

Look at our text:

Numbers 23:19 19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

The righteousness of God is seen when He is measured against Himself. What He has said He will do. What He has promised He will fulfill. What He has commanded others He himself has obeyed.

God sent John to baptize and when Jesus came to John, He himself was baptized, "to fulfill all righteousness." What God told others to do, He himself does.

The righteousness of God demands that He fulfill His promise to give to us the name: Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness.

This Righteousness is something that God will accomplish through the sending of His own Son.

Isaiah 51:1-3 "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. 2 Look to

Abraham your father, And to Sarah who bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him." 3 For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Seeking righteousness sounds like a good thing to do. But of course, the problem is that they seek it in the wrong place, in a place where it is impossible to find.

God tells them instead to look to the rock from which they were hewn. In other words to look back to their ancestor Abraham

Genesis 15:6 ⁶ And [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Abraham found righteousness through faith in the promises of God. Righteousness is a thing which God himself accomplishes and give to us:

Isaiah 62:1-2 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns. 2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name.

Therefore, it is the Lord's righteousness which He gives to us. Jehovah Tsidkenu: the LORD is our righteousness

Conclusion

Normally if you want to win it is better to play your game, on your home turf, according to your rules. If Michael Jordan were to play against Bobby Fischer, I'm sure Michael would prefer basketball and Bobby would prefer chess. Which game they played would determine who would win.

But with God the opposite is true. If we play our game, if we are judged by our rules of fairness and justice, if our actions our measured against our words, we will certainly lose.

On the other hand, if we play His game we cannot lose.

These are the rules for playing God's game.

1. God is righteous. What he says he will do. What He speaks is truth.
2. God speaks thus, "Jehovah Tsidkenu." Through faith in Jesus the Lord has given us righteousness.

For this reason, David declares "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His names sake."

He does not lead me into salvation because of who I am but because of who Jesus is, not because of my name but because of the name of Jesus. "He has spoken and will not relent, YOU are a priest forever," for the sake of His son Jesus Christ.

This is the name which God has given to you Jehovah Tsidkenu: The LORD our righteousness. Amen