

Sunday, March 19, 2017
Did You Know?

Can't Be Cursed

Before the character Donkey in Shrek, there already was a talking donkey which belonged to the pagan prophet Balaam. Recently, our Bible reading took us through the book of Numbers where this story is found. However, the talking donkey is not the only thing that makes this story a bit strange. The questions I have are, "How is it that God uses a pagan prophet to speak some of the most profound blessings in all of Scripture?" and "Why doesn't Balaam declare himself crazy when he is actually having a conversation with his donkey?" The talking donkey actually doesn't have much to do with the main point of the story, which is this: no one can curse what God has blessed.

If you remember, King Balaak, out of fear of the Israelites, hires Balaam to utter curses upon Israel, hoping that the curses will weaken them -- making him victorious, but over and over, God tells Balaam to say only what he's told to say, and he complies. Balaam declares four oracles of blessing about God's chosen people. In the first oracle Balaam says, "How can I curse those whom God has not cursed?" In the second oracle he says, "He has blessed, and I cannot change it." The gist of the third oracle is: "May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!" This is a reiteration of the covenant God made with Abraham, a covenant that will unequivocally be kept by Almighty God. As well, in both the 2nd and 3rd oracles, Israel is compared to the strength of a lion (23:24; 24:9). Certainly, this echoes Jacob's blessing on his son Judah where he says, "You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?" (Gen 49:9). This helps us look forward to the one who was also compared to a lion, "See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (Rev. 5:5). In the final oracle Balaam says, "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel." Doesn't that make your heart just ache with longing?! Who, of all people could he be referring to? Balaam, the pagan prophet is announcing the coming of the King, Jesus Christ.

What amazing blessings God has given to his people, blessings that can never be revoked or turned into curses. God made Jesus a curse so that we could be irrevocably blessed. This should garner, in us, greater faith, thanksgiving and worship to God.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Pastor Peter