

Sermon Title: Lessons From the Rape of Nanking

Scripture Reading:

Introduction

As you all likely know our church has three mission trips this summer. Two days ago a team of 13 led by Caleb headed off to Jakarta, Indonesia. Yesterday, a team of 14 led by Lisa left for West Papua, Indonesia. On Monday, a team of 13 led by Megan will leave for multiple cities in China.

New Philadelphia is a church committed to missions and we have sent out multiple teams for every summer and winter except one in the past four and a half years. We have also sent out smaller teams in between seasons for special trips. In just the past few years we have sent teams to India, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, China, Philippines, Indonesia, and even Australia with a few of those countries getting many multiple visits. I've had the privilege of going on three trips with the church... to Indonesia in 2006, to Philippines in 2007, and to Myanmar in 2009 while also going on a vision trip to Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia in 2008. Each trip was powerful for me and I really want to encourage all of you to go on missions with our church as soon as possible.

Praying Over Regions

From early on in my missions experiences even before I came to this church God began revealing to me the need to be aware of the spiritual climate of each region and culture. God showed me Scripture pointing to different strongholds or "strong men" that must be bound in different areas. In the book of Daniel, Daniel has some disturbing and intense visions that led him to fast and pray to God. After twenty-one days an angel appears before him to give him the interpretation. But before he explains, the angel first tells Daniel why he is late...

Daniel 10:13 – The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia.

Obviously no human prince or king could catch an angel sent by God and imprison him. The prince of the kingdom of Persia was likely the chief demon over the Persian empire. Jesus Himself called Satan the "prince of this world" and in Revelation 2:13 Jesus makes it clear that Satan has enthroned Himself in a certain area.

In order for us to be fully effective when we minister we need to learn to discern what the Spirit of God is doing in each area we go. For the Myanmar trip last year we pressed in for the prophetic within our team. Before our trip we spent some extra time praying over every city we would visit. Some of the words members shared matched while other words seemed to conflict. As the leader I had to pray on my own over the words recorded and discern what seemed on and what seemed off. I felt in my Spirit for some of the conflicting words that the negative word would be what would happen if we didn't pray and the positive word would be if we covered the area in prayer.

For example, when praying over one region one team member saw a violent confrontation with things getting dangerous and possibly stopping the ministry. Another team member saw an extremely peaceful, blessed area that God had special plans for. So leading up to our visit to that region we prayed and bound the enemy and disallowed violence and distraction. We claimed the blessings God had store for the area. And sure enough, the heavens opened up

over that region like no other place I've ever ministered before. People were on the ground shaking, crying, and laughing. As we ministered and the fire of God touched people demons did manifest but were not loud or distracting and we were able to quickly bind them and continue to minister. Demons are usually loud and distracting, but I know our prayers had cut off their strength. There were no distractions and God did a mighty work during that visit. He is good!

We also got clear words about idolatry for another city we would visit. The words resonated so strongly in my spirit that I prepared a specific message for this area that would directly condemn idolatry and lead them into repentance. Sure enough, the church we visited in the area was cursed by the idolatry of some of its leaders and we had to confront the pastor afterwards in both love and firmness.

Myanmar was quite a trip. I feel if we hadn't been led by the Spirit most of our messages would have been the same and we would have just done the regular ministering for each region. **Instead we were able to target what God wanted to specifically do and the ministry was so much more powerful.**

When I heard that the China team will be visiting different cities I was immediately reminded of the Myanmar trip. When I heard the cities they will visit, specific memories came to mind of the places I have visited. Among the list of cities, the team will visit Guangzhou, which is near Hong Kong. I visited that city in 2004 on a study abroad trip with my university. I was only there a few days, but it only took a day to see the condition of the city. Huge construction cranes were everywhere. Literally everywhere. Anywhere I turned to look I could see one. The city felt hollow and dark. Turning on the TV in our 4 star hotel room the first channel was pre-set to extremely hardcore porn, as in videos of abusive sex. I immediately turned it off and thought it was just my TV, but when we gathered later everyone else was just as shocked and disturbed, despite only one of the large group being Christian. Prostitutes were in the streets and we heard grisly stories of how foreign groups would come to this city and rent large escort services and have huge orgies. Hopefully the city has improved much since then. Clearly at the time lust and darkness, i.e. the absence or unawareness of God, were strongholds over the area. I think that can be said for a lot of the cities of China. Emptiness.

Another city the team will visit is Nanjing. Nanjing was formerly the capital of China and was originally spelled with a "k," making it "Nanking," just as Beijing was once spelled differently as "Peking." I actually want to give a short message about what happened in this city during World War 2 and what we can learn from it. The title of this sermon is, "Lessons From the Rape of Nanking."

Before I get into it, let me say a word of prayer for us...

Pray

Background to the Rape

While most of the world is aware of Hitler and the Holocaust and the millions of lives exterminated in the concentration camps, few are aware of the atrocities that happened in other parts of the world. Stalin killed far more in the Soviet Union through his own prison camps. The Japanese murdered, raped, and did chemical testing on so many innocent civilians that 65 years later China and South Korea are still scarred and wanting retribution.

I'm going to focus on what the Japanese did in one Chinese city during the war. Nanking was the capital of China and is a little further inland in the country from Shanghai. The Japanese came into China well trained, well equipped, and with an ethnocentric mindset that they were a better race than China or any other people group they would invade. To their surprise, the battle of Shanghai took much longer and was much more difficult than they expected. This created frustration among them. How could a lesser people hold them back for so long?

When Shanghai finally fell the Chinese army retreated in disarray. They fled back to Nanking. There in Nanking, their top general and his officers were ordered to flee the city. As the leaders ordered a retreat for their troops, panic struck the army and the refugees. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers were left in the city without any clear authority figure and felt no hope of victory. Many of the soldiers began looting stores for clothes and even stripping refugees of their own. The soldiers tried to dress as civilians to avoid capture. Desperation and defeat marked the people. The city originally had over 1 million residents, but by the time the Japanese arrived only an estimated 500,000 remained, perhaps much less.

When the Japanese arrived they were told that about 300,000 Chinese troops were ready to surrender in defeat. These Chinese troops laid down their weapons in front of the Japanese. The Japanese soldiers then received a command from the top to "Kill all captives." Later one of the reasons given by the Japanese for this command is that 300,000 were far too many to provide food and care for. The Japanese chose not to slaughter the men right away. The truth was, there were far more Chinese soldiers than Japanese soldiers present and if the Chinese organized themselves they could easily fight back. So instead, the Japanese promised the soldiers food but did not bring it to them. After a couple days the Chinese soldiers were weak and near exhaustion. It was at this time that the Japanese systematically took groups of Chinese soldiers away to execute them. They did target practice, bayonet practice, buried soldiers alive, beheaded many, or killed them in other ways. And they did not just kill soldiers, they also executed many of the civilians in the same manner. The Chinese people were both so exhausted from lack of food and so filled with fear from the blood and corpses all around them that few of them tried to fight back. They would be lined up with piles of corpses laying behind them and would wait as a Japanese soldier would go down the line killing the Chinese men and women one by one.

As the Japanese took the city, any sense of morality faded from them. They raped young girls and old grandmothers. They brutally murdered whole families and made sport of it. New Japanese army recruits reported coming to the city and being extremely frightened by the soldiers already there. One soldier said, "They had evil eyes. They weren't human eyes, but the eyes of leopards or tigers." These new recruits were taught how to behead prisoners. Soon killing became easy and they no longer saw the evil eyes around them. The same soldier admitted that soon the killing became routine for him. He stated, "Human beings turned into murdering demons. Everyone became a demon within three months."

Another Japanese soldier confessed later, "They gang-raped women from the ages of 12 to 80 and then killed them when they could no longer satisfy sexual requirements. I beheaded people, starved them to death, burned them, and buried them alive, over two hundred in all. It is terrible that I could turn into an animal and do these things. There are really no words to explain what I was doing. I was truly a devil."

Even a non-Christian people could recognize the demonic work in those around them. This has been the same for Rwanda and most other massacres... secular reporters and eyewitnesses saying that the perpetrators had an inhuman look in their eyes.

The death toll has been fiercely debated between the Chinese and the Japanese. Most estimates put the number around 300,000 total soldiers and civilians massacred during the rape of Nanking. The number likely would have been much higher but a group of foreigners in the city worked hard at establishing a safety zone for the people of Nanking. This very small group of foreigners tried their best to accommodate the thousands upon thousands of fearful and traumatized Chinese.

I'm going to show a short clip from the trailer of a documentary on the Rape of Nanking. You'll hear a Chinese woman who was 8 years old during the invasion share some of her story. Then you'll hear a part of a journal entry from one of the foreign workers in the city at the beginning of the invasion. If you're listening on podcast, the clip is two minutes and can be found on youtube under "Documentary Rape of Nanking."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJUm2lACQfQ>

The Need For Awareness

Why am I sharing all this with you guys? Well, for one, the world is getting much darker. In the 20th century alone more people were massacred than all of history combined, and that doesn't include abortion. The stories I just shared about Nanking are similar in Rwanda, Cambodia, and other countries where regimes have encouraged ethnic cleansing. While we as followers of Christ are growing in God's glory with each day, the world around us is becoming darker and darker. Sadly such atrocities will happen again. Ignoring history only allows for it to repeat itself. We as the church, as God's light here on earth, need to be aware of the times and ready to pray down such moves of the enemy. I believe if prayer ceases for North Korea that millions more will die from famine and concentration camps. Our eyes need to be opened more to the realities around us. Justice and righteousness need to be the true foundation of the church. We must be aware. We must pray and act.

Lessons From the Rape

Much can be learned from the stories from Nanking. As I have studied history while asking the Spirit to grant me revelation, it's amazing how much we can see Satan's tactics and learn how to recognize them. It's the same as praying over cities and regions. As our eyes are opened to the spiritual realm, we can easily recognize and fight the enemy. **But if we are only focused on the physical realm then we are blind in our battle.** I'm going to briefly cover a few lessons from the rape of Nanking. Perhaps you already caught onto these as I gave you the background and summary of the massacre.

Lack of Authority Kills Us

The first lesson that is clear from Nanking is that lack of clear authority leaves us wide open for the enemy.

Matthew 26:31 – I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

The Chinese actually outnumbered the Japanese greatly, but at the sight of their leaders leaving them they lost all hope and fell into despair. Sadly, this is the picture of a lot of the Christian church. There are approximately 2 – 3 billion Christians in the world today. Far more than any other religion. You would think with such number we would have great

influence and would spread quickly. But instead most churches have no true leaders within them. Many leaders in the Christian faith are aware of a growing lack of true leaders in the church today. Most churches would collapse if their leader suddenly left. Sadly this is happening in many churches and it is leaving many Christians disenchanting. The orphan spirit is marking more and more young Christians and causing them to go church to church and never settle, thus never allowing for accountability or discipleship in their lives.

This means two things for us. For one, we need to pray, support, and protect our leaders, especially Pastor Christian. Satan knows the Scripture as well as any of us so Pastor Christian will always be his number one target for our church. But there is also a positive to this. While the church may struggle if Pastor Christian begins to pull back, the church will thrive as he is strengthened.

The other lesson from this is that we need more leaders to rise up in the church to shepherd the billions of Christians already saved! A lie that has invaded much of the growing church is that everything depends on the top leader. The truth is that if a church is truly healthy, then even if the top leader suddenly leaves, the church will still be okay. Listening to the lie that everything depends on the top leader creates a slave like mentality in the church. "Leader tells us what to do, we do it. The end." Slaves never get promoted. Slaves just do what they are told. But if we have the mentality of sons, then we will learn what pleases God and what pleases the leadership. We understand that as we humble ourselves and serve that God will lift us up in due time. **And we must be promoted at some point or else the family suffers.**

My Grandfather started a family business called "Becker Electric." He had my dad and my uncles work there as helpers when they were young. Helpers served the electricians and were paid minimally. Soon my dad and uncles learned the trade and some of them became certified electricians. My uncles soon took over the business from my grandfather and my dad serves as the treasurer of the company. When my grandfather passed away earlier this year my dad and my uncles fully inherited the company and it is continuing to grow. But imagine if my dad and my uncles had never progressed beyond serving as helpers? Imagine if they relied on my grandfather so much that they had no ambition of their own and just did what they were told? My dad and my uncles would have never become leaders in the company. And it would have dissolved after my grandfather passed away.

I'm pleased that more than half of our church is serving in leadership. But to be honest, it should be even more than that. With the work God has been doing in our church I feel it should be our responsibility to prepare for at least one church plant each year now. I feel it is an injustice to Korea for our church to have so many anointed people of God but keep us all in one area.

Most of the church is scattered and many jaded Christians are backsliding. We need to rise up in leadership and then go out and shepherd God's sheep and turn the tide of the battle. The church needs to realize that we will be victorious over the enemy if we simply rise up. But for the church to realize this leaders are needed. Rise up New Philly!

Starving the Soldiers

Another clear lesson from the rape of Nanking is the enemy's tactic of **starving a people into submission**. Throughout the invasion Japanese planes dropped leaflets around the city that told the people if they welcome the Japanese that the Japanese will feed them and take good care of them. This caused hope to rise up in the Chinese, so they waited on the Japanese and expected food and provision to eventually come. But the Japanese only gave them promises

and never fulfilled them. And by the time the Chinese were exhausted, the Japanese easily exterminated them.

This is the same way Satan works. Satan promises rest and nourishment through ways of this world. For the person easily tempted, Satan will offer sex or alcohol or other addictive things to trap the person. For others, Satan will use seemingly harmless things like TV, movies, video games, or even sleep to keep a person from God. It's not that TV or movies or sleep are bad things, it's when they are the substitute for time with God that they become traps of the enemy. The lie will come in, "You need to rest. This will give you a good time and satisfy you." And the less time you spend with God, the less protected you are from the enemy. Soon your spiritual strength is sapped and Satan can easily bombard you with negative thoughts, temptations, and unhealthy emotions.

When we were in Myanmar last summer there were a lot of unexpected changes. Our first day of ministry was nearly completely wiped out because of sudden changes to our flights. Then the next day we suddenly found ourselves doing ministry at places we hadn't prepared for. Then we had to visit a church overrun by idolatry that was filled with oppressive spirits. Team members kept getting weird illnesses like stomach aches, back aches, or headaches. The schedule continued to change. But amidst all this, the team kept positive and filled with God's joy. We "prayed it through." Every morning we would gather and pray together. We emphasized sharing with one another so we could encourage and strengthen one another. After every service we would pray for each other and at night we would have another prayer meeting before going to sleep. Even in the airplanes and car rides we were constantly praying or worshipping God. The team was focused. And we discovered that all those stomach aches, back aches, and headaches were quickly healed each time we prayed for one another. The enemy couldn't get through. We were strong and alert.

I really believe if we hadn't prayed it through that we would have been wiped out by the enemy. Team members could have easily grown disgruntled and found my leadership overbearing. I could have easily been discouraged by the schedule changes and twists and turns during the trip. We could have easily stopped pressing in and missed all the blessings God had for us.

Satan wants to starve you. He wants to talk sweet with you and give you a bunch of empty promises. He wants you to keep your hope set in him or in things of this world and ignore your true source of strength. Be alert church and keep yourself fed in prayer, in the Word, in praise, and in fellowship.

Desensitizing

Another lesson that we need to take from the rape of Nanking is the power of desensitizing. What happened in Nanking has been happening all around the world throughout history. Whenever love is removed, Satan can completely have his way.

Japanese soldiers had to go through crazy intense training before the war. Discipline was harsh among them and often they would be slapped or beaten by an officer for no apparent reason. Sometimes the only explanation for the beatings they would receive from their officers was, "I beat you because I love you." It taught a warped law of honor. It planted seeds of bitterness, anger, and hate. Many of these soldiers vowed they would never treat others in the same way, but then found themselves doing the same thing to those below them.

When new recruits arrived at Nanking they were at first appalled by the massacre and the behavior of their fellow soldiers. But as they were forced to join the killing, it soon consumed them and all guilt and sensitivity left them. The murderous spirits had taken control.

Most victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect from their parents vow that they will never repeat such behavior with their own children. But statistics clearly show that this often ends up being the case. The abuse and neglect had become seeds in them as children. And with no true healing happening in their lives, the seeds began to develop and soon bore fruit in their conduct to their own children. This can be compared to any disease that is passed down to children. A person who received a disease from their parents can vow all they want that they won't pass it down to their children, but if they don't get the disease treated and healed then all their vows are in vain.

Nearly all the Japanese soldiers recognized at some point that the training or the behavior in war was wrong. But as they endured it themselves they soon became desensitized to the injustices happening through them. Sadly this happens to people from all walks of life. The more we endure injustice, the more we become desensitized to it and just accept it. And soon we find ourselves committing the same wrongs without catching ourselves until after the fact. The only way for true healing and deliverance is by taking our burdens to the Lord.

Corrie Ten Boom, a survivor of the concentration camps during World War 2, stated that most victims of the camps and of the war **were only able to begin rehabilitation when they were able to share what happened to them and forgive their perpetrators.** Until then, bitterness and trauma marked their lives. Confession and forgiveness are critical for healing.

Another way to break through the ice and numbness Satan can try and plant in us is to pray and ask God for His heart for those who have affected us and for those we are ministering to. We love because God first loved us (1John 4:19) and apart from God we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is as we experience His heart, the same heart that said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34)," that we can in turn forgive and bless those around us. If the Japanese had experienced God's heart in any way towards the Chinese there is no way they would have committed such wrongs against them. Amidst times of darkness we must ask for God's light to shine and lead us through.

Conclusion

I know that I tend to speak on grave topics. For some of my last Friday Fire sermons I've covered abortion, North Korea, and Liberia. And now I've covered the Rape of Nanking. As I read about the massacre I felt that more than the lessons God was revealing to me, the stories need to be shared. People need to hear about these things. The blood of the innocent cry out from the ground to God. We cannot ignore their cries.

I was oblivious to North Korea until I finally read about it and saw the videos. I had no idea about the genocide in Cambodia until I visited the country. I didn't know of the struggles of the church in Indonesia until I read books and then later visited the country and met the leaders and visited different ministries.

These are the words of God about Abraham, the father of our faith...

Genesis 18:19 – For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord **by doing righteousness and justice**, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

The church cannot fight for justice if we are unaware of the needs around us. And the church cannot defend others from evil if we are oblivious to Satan's schemes.

Pray

Reference

Chang, Iris. The Rape of Nanking. USA: Penguin Books. 1997.