**Zechariah 9:11-17 “As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. 12Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare *That* I will restore double to you. 13For I have bent Judah, My *bow,* Fitted the bow with Ephraim, And raised up your sons, O Zion, Against your sons, O Greece, And made you like the sword of a mighty man.” 14Then the Lord will be seen over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord God will blow the trumpet, And go with whirlwinds from the south. 15The Lord of hosts will defend them; They shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink *and* roar as if with wine; They shall be filled *with blood like basins,* Like the corners of the altar. 16The Lord their God will save them in that day, As the flock of His people. For they *shall be like* the jewels of a crown, Lifted like a banner over His land—17For how great is its goodness And how great its beauty! Grain shall make the young men thrive, And new wine the young women.**

 It’s good to be back in the evening service. It’s good to be blessed with the opportunity to come and worship. During revival, I heard it said a few times that the saints come out on Sunday night. Now, speaking just for this forgiven sinner standing in the pulpit, I’m not sure that’s true, but I know that more and more churches have deserted the evening services and, quite frankly, Christian’s have deserted the evening services or the church wouldn’t have ever stopped them. I’m glad to be here tonight.

 Tonight, we’re going to start a multipart sermon series called, “Not Very Biblical”. During this pandemic, and honestly long before, I’ve had people give me a saying with the lead in – “Like it says in the Bible”. Then they say it and I think, “No, it doesn’t say that in the Bible. It might be something that sounds like the Bible, but it’s not in the Bible.” So, we’ll be taking a few of these and looking at them. While something might be a great saying, we absolutely do not want to assign man’s wisdom to God’s word.

 Growing up, I heard a saying that was attributed to the Bible that went something like - ***“God Helps Those Who Help Themselves.”*** In a poll conducted by the Barna Group in the 1990’s, it was found that this saying was the most quoted Bible verse among the polled Christians. The problem is, it’s not in the Bible. In fact, the earliest recorded use of this saying was in Greece. Sophocles, in 409 BC, wrote, “No good e'er comes of leisure purposeless; And heaven ne'er helps the men who will not act.” Euripides wrote, in 428 BC, “Try first thyself, and after call in God; For to the worker God himself lends aid.”

 Make no mistake, God commands us to work! We are exhorted to be diligent in our work. Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, Proverbs 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor, 1 Timothy 5:8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Some point to 2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat and James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. In fact, many verses seem to support this statement, but the fact still remains that it is not in the Bible.

 In our scripture tonight, God makes it very clear Who will save – in verse 16 it says – The Lord their God will save them in that day, As the flock of His people. For they *shall be like* the jewels of a crown, Lifted like a banner over His land. The very premise of Grace is that we cannot save ourselves, no matter how we try. We can help ourselves all the way to the gates of Hell and God will not lift a hand until we cry out in Jesus name that we are powerless and lack any hope without His Mercy and Grace. Listen to Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. Doesn’t sound anything like God helps those who help themselves. In fact, time and again, we find Jesus helping those who had no way of helping themselves. Mark 1:30-31 But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. Jesus didn’t stand over her and say, “If you’d help yourself, I’d help you.” This saying is packed with pride and is, in many ways, a direct contradiction of what Jesus offers.

 From our scripture tonight, we must hear – God resists the proud and helps the helpless. James 4:6 God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Psalm 51:17 - The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.

 So, does this mean that we should just passively sit by? No. It means we must be about our Father’s business with a diligence of spirit and a busyness of hands. We must trust that God will take our weak and feeble efforts and multiply them. John 12:35 instructs us - Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

The fulfillment of Zechariah 9 comes in 334 BC at the hands of Alexander the Great, 150 years after Zechariah prophesied. As with so many of God’s promises, this one takes a century a a half to be delivered. God is on His timetable and not on ours. The Jews are in a hopeless situation, all their might, all their wealth, all their wisdom has been brought to nothing by Tyre and Sidon – it seems God has deserted them, but He let them be conquered because of their rejection of Him. Then deliverance comes through God’s Grace in the form of Alexander the Great (verse 13). According to the Jewish historian Josephus, in *The Antiquities of the Jews,*  when the high priest heard that Alexander was sweeping northward toward Jerusalem (verse 14), he told the Jews to offer sacrifices and pray. God told the priest in a dream to open the city gates (doesn’t sound much like helping yourself), dress his fellow priests in white robes and dress himself in his own priestly garments, and to go out to meet Alexander.

This mighty general, who bowed to no one, when he saw this entourage, fell on his knees before the high priest, went into the city, and offered sacrifices to the Lord. The priest showed Alexander the scroll of Daniel, which predicted that he’d be a world conqueror. Alexander’s men were astonished and asked why he bowed before the priest. He replied, “ I didn’t bow before the priest. I bowed before the God who made him high priest. While still in Macedonia, Alexander had a dream. He’d seen this high priest in his robes, and was told in the dream he’d conquer the Persians. While proud, mighty Tyre’s army and walls and waterworks failed, Israel’s God, delivered them from the Alexander the Great.

Let’s hear the end of the matter - Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding. Let’s never stand in our own strength when God instructs us to kneel in our weakness. The Jews were delivered by God, not by their own hand, but His. Salvation comes by the Grace and Mercy of God, not by a single work of our own hand. While we are called to work diligently and purposefully for the Kingdom, we are also instructed to help others based on the trust we have for God and the prompting we follow from the Holy Spirit. Matthew 25:34-40 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **35**for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; **36**I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ **37**“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You,* or thirsty and give *You* drink? **38**When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You?* **39**Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ **40**And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’ It’s not for me to judge whether my brother is helping himself enough. It’s for me to know that God knows, and when He prompts me I must act, and that’s enough to know for me.

2. God Won’t Give You More Than You Can Handle
3. Everything Happens for a Reason
4. Name It and Claim It!