

With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies. (NIV84)

Theme: God Graciously Gives

1. He gives us everything we need for our daily lives
2. He gives us the victory over the devil.

This past week around 25 kids learned about God at our Vacation Bible School under the theme, “Champions in Jesus.” All week long our teachers taught the children that through Christ we are all champions. We are champions not because we accomplished some great feat, rather we are champions only through the work of Christ—he is the one who gives us the victory. In fact, we see today that God graciously gives us all things. He gives us everything we have in this life and he gives us the victory over the devil.

In our gospel for today, a large crowd had followed Jesus and his disciples to a secluded place. It was getting late and they were too far away to go get enough food to feed everyone, and it inconceivable for them to send everyone home. So Jesus had his disciples distribute five small loaves of bread and two fall fish. They started handing out the food until everyone had enough, and collected the leftovers. With seven items Jesus feed 5000 men, not counting women and children. And they had 12 basketfuls left over.

In the first lesson we saw Elisha. He told his servant to give 100 men 20 loaves of bread to eat along with some heads of grain. The servant was doubtful that this would be able to satisfy 100 men. But he obeyed Elisha’s command anyway. And everyone ate and had their fill. Once again God provided for his creation. In both instances he used a miracle to do it.

He also provides for us. He may not use miracles to provide for us today, but he does use natural means. There is enough food grown in the world and enough water on the earth for all people to have their fill. Even when much of the country is in the middle of a drought, we will still have plenty of food. There will still be plenty of corn and other crops to feed the world many times over. There are enough trees or other resources to make shelters. There are plants or animals to

make clothes to cloth everyone. Through natural means God provides for us. And not only for us, but for all people.

And God gives to us richly. Maybe not by the standards of our society today, but by most people’s standards, we are rich. We all have more than enough food and water. We all have a roof over our heads at night, and clothes to wear. God richly provides for us. Just think of all the things that we take for granted today, that by the standards of the rest of the world today, or in past ages make us rich. We own multiple cars, have extra money to go on vacation, or simply go out for a bite to eat. Just think of all the things we own just to keep us entertained. Multiple tv’s, computers, ipods, ipads. The internet, cable, and cell phones are things people in much of the world only dream about. And they are things people 25 years ago or so never even thought of. God richly provides for us. He gives to us today in ways that he has never given before.

And yet, what do we do? We often end up complaining. “God hasn’t given us enough. If only God would give me a little bit more then I’d be happy. I wish God would give me a little more spending money. Or that he would bless me so I can get out of debt. If only he blessed me the same way he blessed my neighbors down the street. I just wish God wouldn’t make me suffer so much. Why is he personally making me suffer?”

And at times, this may lead us into despair. Perhaps you are having a hard time finding or holding a job. You move from place to place. You can’t afford to buy gas to get where you need to be. You are living in debt. And you don’t see it getting better any time soon. So you begin to doubt if God is really taking care of you. You seriously wonder why he is not watching over you and giving to you as he promises to.

At other times, we complain about the things that God does give us. We had the newest and the best. But the newest and the best are only so until the next big thing comes out. And then we want that. Someone’s house is always better. Someone is always going to have nicer clothes. Someone is always bigger, faster, or stronger. Someone is always better looking. Someone makes more money then you, have a nicer job, and drive a better car. Why doesn’t God bless you with

more? And so like a spoiled teenager we whine and complain because God doesn't always give us what we want when we want it.

When you start to doubt God and his grace, just turn to his Word. Look at his past promises. Notice how he kept them. Look at how he has always provided for others. Our lessons today have showed us exactly this. Jesus performed miracles to provide for others. If Jesus is willing to do that, than he is certainly willing to take care of you. God has always provided enough for his creation, and so you know that he will provide enough for you. Look at birds, fish, or flowers. They will always have enough food and water to survive. And so you will.

Take a look at the past of your life. You have always had clothes. As far as I know, no one here had to sleep in the streets for a time. Somehow, in someway God has always provided for you. When you were young he provided for you by providing for your parents. Now he may provide for you directly. Or he may provide enough for another or others to provide for you. God has always graciously given to you. And so you know that he will graciously give to you throughout your life.

As great as the many physical gifts God has given us, he is given us something that is far greater—the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

One thing that God has not given us is perfection. Well, that's not entirely true. God did create us in his own image and likeness. Adam and Even were created perfect and did not sin. Until that day when Satan came in the form of a serpent. Ever since than we have been sinners. We have been enemies of God who hated him and wanted nothing to do with him. We still sin against God day after day as we fail to follow all of his commands. And we deserve nothing but eternal punishment because of who we are and what we have done and failed to do.

And there is nothing we can do about it. We can't earn the forgiveness of sins. There is nothing we can do to impress God enough to make him save us. If we try to earn our own way, we will fall, stumble, mess up. We would drown in a pool of our own sinful nature. We are not champions on our own. Our ancestors lost that battle with the

devil in the Garden of Eden. And ever since then we have been loosing the battle against sin, death, and the devil every single day.

That is why God sent his Son, Jesus Christ. He is true God and true man. And he lived a perfect life for us. Not once did he go against God's word, not once did he fail to obey his commands. And even though he had done absolutely no wrong, he was put to death on a cross. But Jesus willingly let himself be murdered on the cross because he knew what he was going to accomplish through it. On that cross Jesus took all our sins upon himself. He became guilty of every one of our sins. And he suffered through the pain and agony of hell in our place as he was forsaken by his heavenly father. But Jesus didn't just take away our sins. He gave us his perfection. His only life has become ours. So in God's eyes we are once again his dear children, pure and innocent in his eyes.

But all of this would have been for naught, had Jesus stayed in the grave. He didn't. Three days after Jesus died he rose from the dead. He not only defeated sin, but he also defeated death. For death could not hold him down. And he promises us, **because I live, you also will live.** Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can be assured that we too will rise from the dead and live with him in heaven forever. And when Jesus rose from the dead, he crushed Satan's head. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died, but in the end, it was Christ who was victorious.

And in the end we are victorious. We are Champions in Jesus. For Christ has given us his victory. To all who believe in Jesus, he has given us eternal life. John 3:16, perhaps the most well-known passage in the Bible, beautifully tells us so. **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.** Through Christ you have the victory over sin, death, and the devil. Our text for today and our VBS theme make this known: **With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.** The devil cannot control us any longer for Christ has snatched us back from his grasp. Our sins cannot condemn us any longer because Christ has removed the guilt of all our sins. Death has lost its sting because death is not the end, but the beginning of eternal life in heaven.

And God gives all of this to us as a free gift. Just a little bit ago, the children stood in front of you and recited some Bible passages that they memorized this week. The fourth one was from 1 Corinthians 15:57. **Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** God graciously gives us victory and makes us champions through the work of Jesus. It wasn't because of anything we have done. Nothing we have accomplished made God save us. Normally when one becomes a champion, it's because they have earned it. They put in years of practice, they worked hard, and accomplished some great feat. But we don't become champions because of what we have done. Rather it is because Christ has given us all the benefits he has won for us.

Hands-down, it is the best gift ever. If God gives you nothing else in this life, he has given you his Son. And that makes you rich. Your faith, which receives, all the wonderful blessings God offers through Christ, makes you richer than most people in the world. His victory is our victory. He earned it for us. We don't have to do anything. It's yours freely as a gift.

God has certainly blessed us with many gracious gifts. Your home, food, clothes, items for entertainment, transportation, and learning. He gave them all to you. He gave you gifts and abilities that enable you to work—strength and smarts. We could go on and on about all the gifts he gives us. And they are great. But the greatest gifts of all, forgiveness of sins and eternal life, are given to us as well. They are gifts that we don't have to earn. God simply gives them to us. It is through Christ that we have this victory. Through him alone we are true champions. Amen.