



Anthems

2 Battle Belongs

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We're in Part 2 of a series called *Anthems*. We're taking the anthems we sing as a church, and we're looking at the purpose of worship. Last week, we looked at the importance of lyrics that yes, we're moved by melody, but we need to know the words that are coming out of our mouths because we worship together. When God's people come together and we sing, we're raising our voices to declare who he is and what he has done.

Today, we're looking at this great battle anthem called *Battle Belongs*. I want to encourage you in this series. If I start singing in the middle of the message, join me. Just go there with me if you know it. Others will be like, "I don't know the song." I understand a lot of us carry these songs for decades. I'm going to start one. I'm going to just get into it, and the song has motions. How many of you remember Sunday school motions. I told Matt, "We don't have enough motions in our worship today, so start putting some motions into what we have going on."

This one comes with some pretty graphic motions, and it goes like this. "I'm in the Lord's Army. I'm in the Lord's Army. I may never march in the infantry, Ride in the cavalry, Shoot the artillery, I may never shoot for the enemy, But I'm in the Lord's army! I'm in the Lord's army! Yes Sir! There are people in here going, "If they do that one more time, we're out of here, alright?" I think I just saw the Pastor holding an assault rifle up there. We did that at four and five years old.

A couple of years ago, I was teaching on Zacchaeus and on the way to church, I asked my son, "Carson, we sang a song in Sunday school growing up, "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he..." My son didn't know what I was singing. I go, "Carson, I'm a terrible father. They didn't sing that son in Critter Street?" My goes, "Dad, we're more of a Veggie Tales type church."

So, we were at breakfast on Friday morning at Clockers and I go, "Carson, I'm going to lead out with "I'm in the Lord's Army. I'm marching in the infantry, riding in the calvary, I'm shooting the artillery..." Did you do that in Critter Street?" I just got a look and a "We didn't do that one either."

Anyway, we have these great, great songs. I've been so encouraged over this past week and even this morning. People are coming in with just being renewed with the idea of worship. We have a desire here that not just the volume increases, but that you would see the value in, yes, we looked at worship as more than music we sing on Sunday in a building, but we are talking about singing together and lifting our voices together in corporate worship.

I read a story this week from August 14, 1941. This is on the deck of the Prince of Wales, a British ship. On this day, one of the most important documents of the 20th Century was signed. It was the Atlantic Charter. This was a few months before the U.S. entered the war. On this day, to sign this charter, President Roosevelt met with Sir Winston Churchill, and they signed the document. There was a whole ceremony. We've got British and U.S. soldiers together. They each picked a hymn, both President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, for the soldiers to sing. This has always been a part of our history.

In the scripture today, we're going to see part of the history of leading out into battle with song. The theme today that we are going to look at... If you have your Bibles, turn to 2 Chronicles 20. Look it up on your phone, your app. We're not going to be able to cover the whole text. I want you to take it home as homework. You are going to see that even here, praise and prayer lead out in battle. Each of these, President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, picked a hymn. And it's recorded that Churchill's hymn was "Onward Christian Soldier, marching as to war with the cross of Jesus going on before."

Then it's something that when I read lyrics, I have to read them. But if I were to start singing it, I could step out from here and we'd bust into it. That's the power of music. It helps us memorize and meditate on words. *"With the cross of Jesus going on before, Christ the Royal Master leads against the foe. Forward into battle, see his banner go."*

Today, we're going to talk about how you and I, when the battle is at our doorstep, when it looks like we're overpowered, outnumbered, and we are going down, we have resolve, and we lead out with prayer and praise. And that is the theme of our worship today. We want everybody to take a step. If you've come to Starting Point, then you know with our discipleship ministries here at Woodland Hills, we're always encouraging people to take a step. This series, a series on worship, is no different. During this series, we want for you to take a step and worship from observation to participation. There are some of you that have been coming here for years and worship is kind of a warmup act for preaching. I want you to know we do not believe that at this church. We don't believe it's something we do to get ready for something. We believe this is declaring unto the Lord and among God's people who He is and what He's done.

As we looked at last week, this is what takes the truth of God's word down into the crevasses of our souls, John Piper said. Again, we looked at it last week. Many of you have told me, "I'm exactly what you talked about, Ted. I can't sing, but I make a joyful noise." I want to hear those joyful noises.

Last week, a staff member was back in the back and she said, "When we were first married, we were singing out of a hymnal at a church and my husband leaned over to me and said, 'Hey, would you please sing on key?'" That's a new husband. That's a husband that needs some training. I restrained myself in the first service from saying who it is and I'm not going to say it in this service either. Let me tell you, it's requiring a lot to hold back on this. This was last Sunday. I'm walking outside and that husband is the first thing I see – a God ordained meeting. This is something that probably happened 20 years ago, but I'm still ticked about what he said to his wife. I looked at him and I said, "I can't believe you said to your wife, 'Please sing on key.'" I must have heard the story wrong because he goes, "That's not at all what I said to her." I go, Okay, well I'd love to hear your side. You're right. I shouldn't judge people until I get both sides of the story." He goes, "I asked her to please pick a key." I don't know what's worse.

She could sing on key, but she just kind of bounces... You got a little bit of that today. I switched up keys on the last song a little bit. Sometimes you just gotta go there. Today, we are looking at Battle Belongs and we're going to look at this great battle anthem as we walk through the story of King Jehoshaphat and how he calls upon the Lord to go before him in battle. Here's what we're talking about today, the very first part of this song that we are going to sing to end our service. When all I see is the battle... When we talk battles, for some of you it's physical. I've talked to several members of our church today where their battle is physical right now. Someone is going in tomorrow for a test, and they say the hardest thing about it for them is that when you go in and you know something is wrong and they scheduled a test for four weeks out. "Ted, you have no idea. You're just consumed for four weeks. It could be nothing, it could be something big, but I'm going in tomorrow." It could be a physical battle for you right now.

It could be a relational battle, a marital battle, a vocational battle. You're in the fight of your life at work right now or in your business. Financial, vocational, relational, whatever the battle may be, today, we want to talk about victory and where our victory comes from. "When all I see is the mountain, you see the mountain move", the lyrics say. "And as I walk through the shadow, your love surrounds me. There is nothing to fear now for I am safe with you." I share this often in my family. When we've gone through battles in our church or in our family, when I come home and I'm able to look at Amy and I'm able to look at my kids and go, "If I lose everything, I know I've still got you."

Let me tell you something far more important than that. If I lose everything, I still have Him. That's what we want to declare today. We are going to look at four... There are so many observations from 2 Chronicles 20 and I want to encourage you to read it and make it your homework this week. It's a great story. We're just going to look at four observations from this text.

1. As Jehoshaphat gets news that a vast army is coming against him... So, he's the king of Judah and a vast army is approaching. This vast army is actually made up of three separate armies. That's an important detail for the whole story when you get to the end of it and see the defeat.

When he gets word of this vast army coming to invade Judah, the scripture says he is alarmed. He's alarmed, but he has resolve. This is the key for each one of us when we face a battle. Yes, we can be alarmed, but we have resolve immediately to know where our help comes from. So, when you're overwhelmed, outnumbered, like the battle seems too big and you've got nothing to fight it with, your alarmed, it's scary. We can admit that it's scary. You've waited four weeks for just the test, not even the results. So, you are alarmed. We start with knowing where the help comes from.

2 Chronicles 20: **4 The people of Judah** when they hear of the three armies approaching, they **...came together to seek help from the Lord...** So, the Bible says they were alarmed and they immediately sought help from the Lord. **...indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.**

That we would be known at Woodland Hills as a people who whatever we are facing, that is our first response – to seek help from the Lord.

A couple of things about battle as we jump into this text. 1) we do not minimize battles here at this church. We are not a positive vibes church. We're not a hype church – "Just think good thoughts. It's not that bad." We don't walk around when a battle's coming to us and be like, "Oh, it ain't that bad. It's all good." No. We can say, "This is bad." We do not believe here at this church in toxic positivity – Just think it's good and it will go away. No. We can admit this is a battle. Guess what? Even if you don't admit it, the three armies are still approaching; they are still coming at you. So, it does no good to minimize a battle.

But we understand immediately we do not fight alone. We seek help from the Lord, which means we don't fight alone, and we do not fight in our own strength. Every time I say something even close to this, I just picture one of our first elders at this church, Gary Smalley, standing up here talking about the power we need from God. And to many of us, when we need power in a battle, we sit around and just try to will it into being. No, nothing is coming from within us. Our help is from above, and he goes before us. So, we don't fight alone, we don't fight in our own power, and then this is the key we will see in the text – we remember who the victory belongs to. So, going out ahead of battle at the end of battle, you're going to see in this text, it's music, it's singing, it's worship. And that's where we begin.

2. In the text is... When the battle rages, invite others to join you in prayer. That's exactly what King Jehoshaphat does. He gathers the people, and he cries out to God. We read in 2 Chronicles 20: 5-9, **5 Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard 6 and said...** This is important because coming out of the pandemic in 2020, there is so much debate over public gathering and whether or not it's important. I can't even believe we had the conversation. You know we were pretty bold here to say, "Gathering God's people together is very important. Yes, there is value in being home, there's value in watching something on a screen, but what we're talking about in this series, when you read throughout the entire Bible, when God's people gather together and lift their voices together to declare the truth of God's word, to declare the message of Christ, who he is, what he has done, there is power in that. So, yes, this is important.

I have friends who post online almost every Saturday night – "Sunday morning church is a Saturday night decision." Make this part of your decision to gather with God's people, to sing praises unto the Lord. So, we gather God's people. Here now is the prayer. **"Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? Calling down his Father in heaven. ...You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.** Now we are going to get into some of the history of Israel. **...7 Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?** That's a nutshell of coming into the land. **8 They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, 9 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine...** Whatever comes against us, whatever we face. **...we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.'** And that's where we get to the chorus of *Battle Belongs*. When the battle is raging, when the battle is at your doorstep, you do not need to fight your battle alone. God goes before you, but you need to enlist others to join you in prayer.

We read that in the chorus of this song. “When I fight, I’ll fight on my knees.” I’m going to fight in prayer... Prayer is a weapon of war. “...with my hands lifted high. Oh, God, the battle belongs to you. And every fear I lay at your feet, I’ll sing through the night, Oh, God, the battle belongs to you.” Can I just encourage you, follower of Jesus, be the friend that joins others in battles and leads out in prayer.

I told you the story last week of Victory in Jesus. I ended the service with that. I was a worship pastor in South Georgia. This was a great weekend for me. I had a marriage event, a conference in Gainesville, Georgia. It was with the pastor that I served with for two years in South Georgia. They invited him to be a part of it as well – Austin Deloach. His nick name is De La Hoya. It was the first time I had seen Austin in 10 years.

What I love about my friendship with Austin is we talk on the phone, we text, but we haven’t been face to face in 10 years. When we get together, we pick up where we left off. So many laughs, so many great stories, a walk down memory lane. He was sharing... Everything I’m about to share with you, I need you to know I’m not breaking any confidence here because this was his story he shared on Friday night at the conference. I’d never heard him share his marriage story, even though I’m a part of it. I sat in the front row. A very emotional night for me. Very emotional weekend for me to hear his story because Austin called me Pastor. I call him the Billy Graham of South Georgia – he’s an evangelist man. He’s a preacher. People come to know the Lord when he preaches. God has used him. Like I told you, he’s just a calm, kind, gracious guy off the pulpit, he is ready to go. God has used him in a big way.

In 2,007, Austin called me. He said, “Jennifer just asked me to leave.” I said, “Tell me what’s going on.” He said, “Jennifer asked me to leave. Ted, things are not good.” If you’re a ministry leader in here visiting, I just want to remind you, and this was what was going on in Austin’s life. His ministry was thriving while his marriage was falling apart. It happens all the time. We get these calls at this church all the time from ministry leaders who on the outside and everything they’re doing, they are killing it, but their marriage, if I can use King James language, is stinking.

I asked him to tell me what was going on and he said, “We just had a pretty big blow up and she asked me to get out of the house. What should I do?” I said, “Leave. Give her her space right now. Let her feel safe.”

As I heard his story and I spent time with Austin in 2007, the hard part for me was in 2007 I was going through a pretty big battle here at Woodland Hills Family Church. We were going through a pretty divided time as a church. We were going through a pretty major church split. It was ugly, it was nasty. I apologized to Austin this weekend. I said, “I feel like I was a friend during that time, but I wasn’t the friend that I could have been.”

I think sometimes we forget this. When we are in our own battles, we forget we are surrounded by people in their battles too. If you want help in your battle, why don’t you jump in and help someone in theirs. We are so stinking selfish. We are so caught up in our own battle and everything going on in our life. When was the last time you were a friend to someone in another battle, and you said, “I’m going to join you in this battle.” How God brought this message at this time that was planned weeks ago into that time with Austin yesterday and Friday into the movie I watched on the way to Atlanta...

Who has not seen the movie War Room? You have one assignment this week. You have to do nothing else but watch the movie War Room. This is Elisabeth and the battle in this movie... There's one battle and the battle is a marriage falling apart. When you watch the first hour of the movie, you're going to hate this guy right here with every ounce of your... I wanted to throw something at him. I was so mad at him. He was a total jerk, stealing from his work...

It's so funny when we watch movies. We're always on the good side. We're always the good guy. We never relate to Goliath in the story. We're always David. But I've been around a lot of you. You need to play the antagonist every now and then. I'm watching this movie and I'm seeing this battle. Elisabeth is a real estate agent. My favorite character in the movie is Miss Clara. She has got it and you ain't gonna get away with anything with her.

She's selling her house and Elisabeth walks in. Miss Clara walks into the sitting room and goes, "This is my third favorite room in the house." Elisabeth asks, "What do you do in here?" she said, "Mostly sit." Then she walks over, shows her the dining room, then says, "This is my second favorite room in the house." What about your first room? What's your favorite room in the house? She said, "I'll show you that tomorrow when you come back. Basically, "You're not ready." She picks up on it, just in their interaction over selling a house. This isn't even part of the message, but I just want to remind every realtor in here. Your job is a ministry. You never know what God can do with you. But in reverse in this movie. She went in with her battle and Miss Clara asked her, "Tell me about your prayer life." Elisabeth gives the typical answer, "Well, it's not hot. But I pray. Maybe like a lot of people, pray at mealtime. Let's say I'm somewhere in the middle."

Miss Clara gets up to go get the coffee and you see she pours half a cup from the pot that's hot and then takes old coffee, pours it in on top of it, and brings it back to Elisabeth. Elisabeth takes a sip and says, "Miss Clara, you drink your coffee lukewarm?" She goes, "No, mine's piping hot. But you told me you like lukewarm."

Here's what I want to encourage all of us with. We have stepped back from the value of prayer and how important this is in our life when fighting battles. And you see a battle take place here. And much like my friend Austin, he was in a battle. Years of struggle. Now I'm at a marriage conference watching Austin and Jennifer tell their story of God's complete and total healing. And I know that's not everybody's story in here, but I have to ask the question for some of you in that battle right now, a relational or marital battle. How's your prayer life with it. I know you spend plenty of time scheming. You wake up plenty of times at 2:00 am thinking about, *She asked me that question at 8:00 pm and I didn't have a good answer. Man, I got it now. And when we wake up, she's going to get it.*

All I'm saying is you're thinking about the battle plenty. Are you praying about the battle plenty? God does an amazing work in this life. And the next day, she comes back and Miss Clara shows her her favorite room, which is the war room. The war room is her prayer closet. It's this little closet that she cleared out and just she's got all these papers of people she's praying for.

How many of you want a Miss Clara in your life? I do. Better yet, how many of you are Miss Clara? I'm busy. I'll be honest with you. I've got a lot going on. I got enough going on to be dealing with your

nonsense. You need to get your act together. I'm sitting there watching this play out and I'm listening to her and I'm like, Listen, we can fix this in about 30 seconds. But Miss Clara says there's a much more powerful weapon than that and its prayer.

Let's keep going with the observations.

3. When the battle rages, admit when you are powerless and have no answers. Just admit it. This week on National geographic... I encourage everyone to watch it. I've watched it six or seven times over the last few years. It's the interview with George W. Bush on 9/11. It's just the timeline of that one day. They're showing the clips, but then they are showing how he's processing it and the angst in that.

He says very clearly in there, "We didn't have a strategy. We didn't even know what was going on." As I looked at the timeline, I was placing myself in the same... That morning of 9/11, I was down at Big Cedar meeting with the staff at the River where I was a senior pastor in a battle there. They wanted me gone. We didn't know what was going on with 9/11. The whole day was chaos. We did not have answers. All I remember is getting back to the church at the River in Forsythe and people started calling. Not to find out what's going on, not to get answers. They started calling to go, "Can we just come up there and pray?" Why? Because it's all we know to do. I just remember gathering with people in the lobby. We didn't have answers. In that interview, George bush talks about just how frustrated he was the whole day because the telecoms went from Florida over to Louisiana and then up to Nebraska, then back to D.C. He said, "I still can't believe that Air Force One wasn't on top of it. It made him mad, it frustrated him.

When the plane went down in Pennsylvania, there was a period of time where he thought it was because of his order that he gave the air force to shoot down civilian aircraft that they were headed toward. He said the whole day played out like this. But you and I, having no answers that day, all we could do was pray.

This is exactly where Jehoshaphat is at and this is what he prays at the end of that prayer that we just read a second ago. 2 Chronicles 20: 12 ***Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power... So, they admit they are powerless ...to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do...*** Christian, get to a place where you're okay with saying, "I don't have an answer for this. I don't know the next step to take. But here's what I do know and here's what I'll do until I do get answers, until this battle comes to an end and my enemy is defeated. ***"...but our eyes are on you."***

I'm powerless, I have no answers, but our eyes are on you. That's all we know to do. The scripture says, ***14 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah,*** And in 2 Chronicles 20: 15 he said, ***15 He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: So, now this is the Word of the Lord coming to them after they prayed. 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.*** The children of God have always heard this. They've always been commanded to take this approach when it comes to battle. We looked at this text last week – Exodus 14. I get emotional at this part because... One thing when you pastor in a small town like this, I know the stories that are sitting in here right now. And I know the battle that you are in. You've asked us to pray about it, but are you on your knees with hands

lifted high? Have you prayed about it? I hope some of you go home, watch that movie, and clear out a closet. Put the notes all over the place and just begin praying.

13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."- Exodus 14

Deuteronomy 20: 1, **When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your I, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.**

Joshua 1: 9, **Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your I will be with you wherever you go."**

And this Psalm is probably one of my favorite psalms. I quote it often from this pulpit. And I often quote it right before a presidential election. And we are going to bring it out again as this year ramps up. Psalm 20:7 – **Some trust in chariots, some in horse, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.**

So, whatever size army is coming against you, don't think it's about building up and being stronger and working in your own power. Let's look at the next part of Battle Belongs. We are going to be singing here in just a moment. *"And if you are for me, who can be against me?"* That comes right from Romans 8: 31. You're going to see scripture after scripture in this verse. *"For Jesus, there is nothing impossible for you."* Matthew 19: 26. *"When all I see are the ashes, you see the beauty."* We just sang that. Isaiah 61: 3.

"Thank you, God, when all I see is the cross, you see the empty tomb." Let this be your song this week. *Almighty fortress, you go before us. Nothing can stand against the power of our God. You shine in the shadow, you win every battle, nothing stands against the power of our God."*

If the battle belongs to the Lord, doesn't it make sense to send him in first? Doesn't it make sense to let him go before you? That's exactly what we read in 2 Chronicles 20: 21 because I think this would have been the group I would have been in.

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him... We are going to gather a choir. Don't miss this part. **Praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army...** This has always thrown me. "Hey, Ted, you're in the choir." "What are we doing." "Well, we're going to put the infantry back there, the tanks are back there, and we want you to sing out ahead of them." I would prefer a sword. Who would prefer a sword over a song? But those who know God is fighting their battles know the song is the victory. They know who is fighting their battles. Can you imagine the boldness? We know the outcome. They are able to go out ahead of the army. **saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."**

And the last part of this, as we close and as we declare victory together, we're going to declare it with singing and instruments. I've been looking forward to this for any of my church of Christ friends in here. We're going to do it with instruments too. We're doing it with music, with singing, with instruments.

2 Chronicles 20: **22 As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.** Do you know what happened? This is why you have to read the whole text later on today. These three armies that make up the vast army, they turn on each other. Isn't that something to sit back and watch? When they show up, the people are dead. They say the plunder from the activity was so great, it took them three days to remove all the plunder. ...**invading Judah, and they were defeated.**

2 Chronicles 20: 27-28 - **Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the Lord had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. 28 They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lyres and trumpets.** And they lifted their voices.

Here's what we read as we conclude this story today. **29 The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms...** Of course, it did. We heard what happened. You weren't waving the sword. No, we were singing. It was pretty powerful. Let our prayers and our worship at this church be known with that kind of power that people see it. ...**when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.**
– 2 Chronicles 20

I think we love the word *rest*. After the battle is over and rest comes upon us, don't we get to a point where we're like, "I deserve this little break." Somebody brings a new battle they want you to join them in and pray for them in. You're like, "Kind of on a sabbatical right now. You should have seen what I just went through. It was a big deal. You should have seen how I joined so and so and their battle. I prayed for them, and we saw victory in that. Give me a little bit of time."

That's what I love about the movie War Room. They do have a miracle take place in their marriage. I mean Miss Clara in the kitchen by herself. She's dancing around and just having the time of her life. And then guess what she does immediately. It's what ends the movie. She goes back into the War Room, her prayer closet. She asks God to give her another one. "You did it again. Now lead me to someone who needs me to be their prayer warrior." It's a term we've used in the church for years. If you grew up in the church, you've heard it. Who are our prayer warriors?

I hope out of today and as we worship together with Battle Belongs, you will be a prayer warrior. I hope you take a step in participation and lift your voice with your battle and the battle you know others are facing around you. I'm not telling you to get in anybody's business today, but if you know a friend or family member going through a battle, ask if you can join in prayer. Miss Clara didn't have any trouble doing that... She went to war for this marriage and to see God's healing, it's what our church desires to do. We need more Jehoshaphats, we need more Miss Claras.