

Speak Now Or Forever Hold Your Peace

Unsung Heroes series

by Chris Famisaran

Good morning everybody. Feels like it's forever since I've been up here. Before I begin, actually, I want to do one thing. This was not planned, but I just thought of it today. I want to acknowledge somebody just real quick, Marissa. Everybody, please say thank you, Marissa. Why are we thanking her? Well as of today, she is no longer our Cradleroll leader. Kelly Gonzalez has stepped up to the plate. So thank you for seven wonderful years of leading our cradleroll division. And by the way, if if you have a heart a burden for cradleroll or primary or juniors, please come see us if you would like to volunteer in that department.

Let's pray. God, we thank you for another day of life and Lord, we thank you for the mist and a little bit of rain that you have blessed us with. As we now dive into the story of Eben Malak be with us in Jesus name. Amen.

Some years back, I think it was 2018, Makita Gyan on shared a story of a woman by the name of Marilyn Hagerty, you see she wrote a review. I don't know if it was on Yelp or if it was Google, but you know how some people feel very passionate about leaving reviews. She left a very raving review of a very notable restaurant named Olive Garden. And this particular Olive Garden which was in Grand Forks, she left it actually I'm sorry she left it in the Grand Forks Herald. She noted it was impressive, and she commended the generous portion of the chicken alfredo that she had received. And when her review went viral all across the country. certain individuals who felt they needed to correct Maryland's review spoke up in fact, they mocked her of her unsophisticated food tastes. And yet who rose to her defense. None other than Anthony Bourdain. Anthony Bourdain noted chef, food critic had his own shows. Unfortunately, he took his life some years ago, but he rose his defense what was interesting is he actually indicates is he agreed with the food reviews of the people but then he thought about it. You know, Haggerty says people were saying what a funny strange thing that it was for anyone to write about the Olive Garden and all of a sudden, Anthony Bourdain came to my side. He said he agreed with the people at first and he thought about it more. He

seemed to appreciate the fact that for people in middle America, it's part of how we eat. Now, Bourdain generously also helped publish a book of all of her reviews. Now, anybody know how old Maryland was? Anybody want to take a guess? 50. AD, not 10. She was 92 years old. So I have another reason why I'd want to maybe say a few words to the snobs if I do it. She's 92 years old. She's taken a chance to speak her mind. Get over it. Hey, I love the Olive Garden. You cannot beat their breadsticks and their salad. But he he published a book of all of her reviews. And he says this is a straightforward account of what people have been eating still are eating and much of America anyone who comes away from work from this work, anything less than charmed by Miss Haggerty and the places and characters she describes has a heart of stone. What was so interesting as Anthony Bourdain, he sticks up for this woman who's just she's sharing her passion, her love.

Now Have you ever maybe disagreed with somebody? Probably many of you are thinking duck. Have you ever said anything that was received with disgust? Or have you ever said anything that was received with disgust? Let's go ahead. Now let's jump to Jeremiah chapter 38. Jeremiah 38. Now last week, Bill did a really great job on preaching about people who took a stand for something, whether it was ethical or moral, if it may be even potentially could cost them everything, including their life. And today, we're going to follow a similar vein, we're gonna look at the life of Jeremiah, who was Jeremiah, he was a prophet in the Old Testament, and he shared some views and thoughts that he was impressed by the Lord to share with the king and the people. And like most prophets, it didn't. It didn't go well when he spoke, what he believed in, in fact, it rubbed people the wrong way. So yeah, he was a very unpopular prophet, and he had a message of warning people, eventually, with telling them wanting the people to not fight back against the Babylonians but surrender to them. What?! Why would they surrender? Now, especially at this time to Jeremiah has essentially been restricted to the king's courtyard, so that he could be watched he'd already been imprisoned a couple of times. And in fact, his daily allowance of food was a loaf of bread. Just bread. I love bread as well, but just bread. So what does it say?

So verse one of chapter 38, Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah was telling all the people when he said, This is what the Lord says, Whoever stays in this city will die by the what? The sword or famine or plague, but whoever goes to

the Babylonians will live, they will escape with their lives, they will live. And this is what the Lord says this city will certainly be given into the hands of the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it. Now, what's the backstory? Why, why is Jeremiah saying this? What's about to happen? Babylon is going to come over and take over Jerusalem, specifically all of Judah. And it's been a while that this has been in the works. Israel and Judah for many years, God had been pleading and tried to ask please to be faithful. And finally, God said, Enough is enough. And this is when Babylon comes in, you know, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Okay, same time and here Jeremiah is telling everybody, chill, Let's surrender. Now, this doesn't go over well, because as you'll see, well, people don't want to give up. I mean, you think about it. us as Americans? Do we like to give up? How did our country start? By being rebellious, right? We didn't like being told what to do. That still has not changed. We're a very independent people. And yet we see here that there's there's several narratives, and we find that in chapter 37, actually, there's this false hope in Egypt that Zedekiah you know, everything's gonna be okay. And then in chapter 38, no, everything is not going to be okay. All right. And so, Shephatiah, Gedaliah Shelemiah, and Pashhur, they didn't appreciate what Jeremiah is saying. They thought what he was saying was treasonous. And so what do they do? They go and complain to the king.

In verse four. It says, Then the official said to the king, this man should be put to what? To death. He's discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as all the people by the things. He is saying to them, this man is not seeking the good of these people, but their ruin. And what does Zedekiah say? He's in your hands. King is going to do nothing to oppose you. And so now coming from the perspective of these four guys, okay, if you're the leader of the army of a platoon or a company of soldiers, and you hear somebody saying, just give up and you're trying to set the defense, what do you want to do to that person? You want to silence them? There's many ways of doing that. Right? You could put duct tape on them today. Or you could just maybe make them disappear. Tell him to be quiet. He's sowing seeds of doubt and discord. So Jeremiah is seen as a traitor, what do you do with traitors? You get rid of with them or you silence them, because what they can say can infect the morale in the will of the people of the soldiers. And unfortunately, the viewpoint of the people was opposite of what God was trying to tell them. So what did they do?

Verse six, so they took Jeremiah they put him in the cistern, Malkijah the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern and it had no water in it. Only mud and Jeremiah sink down into the mud. Okay, so let's go back. Now, what did they say in verse four? What do they want to do? What did they tell the king? We want to put them to what? Death? All right, because he's speaking treasonous words, he's got to be dealt with. And they get their wish. Right? The king says, All right, he's in your hands, they could have killed him. A question I have for the texts of these people is, did they chicken out? Because they said, Hey, you can put Him to death, but instead, oh, we're just gonna put him in the cistern. There's this possibility he could get out, maybe to try to assuage our consequences. Because maybe what if Jared, what if Jeremiah what he's saying is true. If they really wanted to, they could have killed them deliberately, right straight up. But instead, no, they put them in a cistern and it was muddy. And we hear King Zedekiah. And then a kya, by the way, was not a good king. Okay. He basically gives into these four men who complain about Jeremiah, and not just these four men, these four men probably represent a bigger body of people. But he signed off Jeremiah's death sentence, he enabled it to happen. They didn't say anything. Now, Jeremiah, he's lowered into the pit by rope, so he can't just get out. He can't climb his way out. It's at times usually filled with water. It's filled with mud. And if you've played in a mud pit before, can you just jump out of the mud? No, in fact, can you climb out of mud? No, you're just gonna keep sinking down. He needed a rope. And so they put him down in there to suffer. And eventually, maybe when the rains come, he'll drown. In a way, I think they're trying to deflect their guilt and trying to tell their conscience, it's the right thing to do. Maybe it's God's will he'll save him if need be, I don't know. But in verse seven, here we see our hero, Eben-Melek, who's of course shots from the Cush people. He's an official in the royal palace. And they heard what Jeremiah, where they'd put him in in the system.

Now Eben-Melek. Okay, it's most likely a title or an official name. We know he was a Cushite. We also know he was a eunuch. And what loyalty does he owe to Jeremiah? He's a foreigner. He was a eunuch. And he was excluded and many things. In fact, commentaries as well, he probably was in charge of the harem. Adults, you know what that means? So he was a foreigner, you really probably didn't have any ties to Jeremiah, and yet he sticks his neck out for him, this

unsung hero puts his reputation on the line. Would you be willing to want to put your reputation out on the line for somebody? We have no familial ties. He's not from your country. He's different. What if Jeremiah in the past had mistreated Eben-Melek would he have wanted to stick up for him then? Probably not. You were mean to me. So here's your punishment. You know, when it comes to especially if Eben-Melek is different from Jeremiah, but do you want to help them? Maybe maybe not?

You know, we live in Southern California. And we consider Southern California a melting pot. But are we really a melting pot? Let's be honest, we're not. Yes, we have diversity. We have so many different people groups. But note, people groups. Because in a way, if you look at different cities or different regions, you'll see people groups, different ethnicities, people who come here from different countries, try to gather together. Why? similar language, similar beliefs, values. Were not as really tight together as we think we are Amen, Which is a tragedy. Now in the church here, we have to live in love together because we're all brothers and sisters. is in Christ, amen. We can get together we can love each other. But when we go outside the borders of this church, it's a different story. And God is calling us to be that difference maker to love your neighbor, not just because he's your brother or sister or in Christ, but because that's what God wants us to do. And so we see Eben-Melek risk his reputation. In fact, it says Eben-Melek's compassion fueled his fight to confront the king and save Jeremiah from death.

And so in verse, continuing on verse seven, it says, while the king was sitting in the Benjamin gate, Eben-Melek went out of the palace and said to him, My Lord, my king, these men have acted what wickedly. In all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, they have thrown him into a system and where he will starve to death when they are no longer when there's no longer any bread in the city. And then the king commanded Eben-Melek the Cushite take 30 men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies. Oh, so he does a complete 180. Oh, guys, you can go and take care of Jeremiah, all of a sudden when he's confronted, oh, you need to take 30 people to go get them out. So we see Zedekiah grow a backbone and save Jeremiah. Now, Eben-Melek didn't need 30 men to go and get Jeremiah out of the system, but he needed them for protection. And we also see that he plans ahead by bringing some old rags and

clothes and in fact, verse 11. So Eben Melek, took the men with them, him and went to the room under the Treasury in the palace, he took some old rags and worn out clothes from there, let them down with the ropes Jeremiah in the cistern. and Eben-Melek, the Cushite said to Jeremiah put these old rags and worn out clothes under your arms, the pad the ropes, Jeremiah did so. And he pulled them up with the ropes and lifted him up out of the cistern and Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

Now eventually, right after Jeremiah has a secret meeting with the King, telling him pleading, please do this. And yet unfortunately, many people they did not listen. When we look back, we can see that sometimes life can get a little bit muddy. Life can get muddy is life easy and simple, clear cut. Not can be challenging, it can be frustrating to feel like am I going to make any progress and that's where Jeremiah was at, literally, in a cistern. He had no way of getting out. In fact, that was one of the lowest points in his life. And yet, Eben-Melek stepped up to the plate, an unsung hero. And he confronts and he says, King Zedekiah This is wrong. We have to do the right thing. Jeremiah's life was in danger. He would not have been able to endure long, especially with lack of food.

How many of you want to be Eben-Melek? To be honest, sometimes, like, especially if you're gonna get canceled. Right? That's what we're, you know, what's really, you know, is one of the greatest if not the greatest fear that most people struggle with. being publicly shamed. When everybody knows, oh, that Eben-Melek Oh, that Jeremiah. Let's cancel them. And that's literally what these four guys tried to do to Jeremiah. They tried to cancel them. But Eben-Melek stood for something. Maybe he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. I don't know. He asked who had been inspired by God in some way. And he tells king Zedekiah , the ruler, who he also if he wanted to, he could have thrown Eben-Melek in the cistern and as well with Jeremiah, but he didn't. So what can we learn from this? Okay? Eben-Melek compassion fueled the fight to confront the king and save Jeremiah from death.

Who needs to experience compassion in your life? As you look at the people in your life, your family, your friends, your your, your people, group those Do you work with your neighbors? Who can you tell? Just needs to have somebody listened to them? Earlier this week, I was talking with a delivery driver. I won't say

his name because I'm, you know, I've don't have his permission, but he just dropped something off. And we just started talking about stuff. And then somehow we started talking about the fact that his sister has cancer, pancreatic cancer, I think it was pancreatic cancer stage four. Those of you who know, pancreatic cancer, it's very difficult. And what breaks his heart is his sister who lives across the country is not right now able to come back and see their mom who has dementia. And he doesn't know he doesn't have the funds right now to fly back. He doesn't know if he's ever going to see his sister again. When I looked at him, when I first talked to him, I had no idea that that was the burden that was on his heart. Some of you have recently lost a loved one. Some of you are wondering, what's my next job? Because I have to feed my kids. Some of you are wondering, is there any significance to my life? There's a man who works at Disney. I don't know his title. But when he was a kid, he was in middle school. He told his classroom is music class, I'm gonna go work at Disney, I want to be I think it was an animator or graphic artists or whatever. And everybody's like, Ah, you're never going to amount to anything. And his teacher said, Why of all the people in this classroom, he would be the best capable to do so. 40 years go by, the man makes it to Disney. And he's doing wonderful. And he writes his old teacher letter. And he he finds his teachers phone number, and he called the house his wife picks up and he says, Oh, he's he's had a back injury, he can't come to the phone right now. And said, Okay, I want to send this letter. It's just a thank you letter, summarizing all the wonderful things, how much of a difference he had made in my life. And so he sends a letter. The teacher receives it. And he's blown away. He calls him back. And he says, I have to be honest with you, I don't have a back issue. I've been struggling with depression. And I wanted to die. And I was thinking about it until I got your letter. Because all of the 40 plus years that I've been teaching, I wondered if I had made a difference in any of the kids lives. In his letter was a confirmation that of course, you're going to make a difference in people's lives, positive or negative? Let's make it be positive.

I struggle with this sometimes, because it's like, oh, do I make a difference? And I find out when I get to a church and when I leave a church. I know if I've made a difference or not. And in the in between times, it's sometimes a struggle. For those of you who have been leading you wonder, do I make a difference? You absolutely do. Moms and dads especially you make a difference in your lives. And

so I want to encourage you find a couple of people. Find a couple people in your life who need to experience compassion just as Jeremiah. Well, he needed more than compassion. He needed his life to be saved. But Eben-Melek had compassion for Jeremiah. If it's simply as simple as simply as just listening to somebody hearing their story, praying with them, or taking them a cold bottle of water, or driving them to the pharmacy, or picking them up from the airport, whatever it may be. Minister in some way, to those around you. That is my plea. And my challenge to you this week.

Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for Your grace is so much more than we could ever expect. Forgive us, Lord of our shortcomings. Let us see the things that you're doing our lives that we may see and be grateful. Lord, be with the things that are on our hearts. And above all, Lord, help us to have the same compassion and courage that Eben-Melek had as we continue in our journey of our unsung heroes, Lord, may these stories resonate, but not only just that they stay in our hearts Lord, provoke us and give us wisdom and courage in the words to know how to move forward with compassion and courage to minister to others and to be a blessing in Jesus name everybody said amen.

Grace and peace everybody.