

Jesus is a Banner of Victory

Exodus 17:8-15 ⁸ Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. ⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner;

Our text takes place shortly after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea there the Amalekites attacked them. Moses had to be a banner of blessing to the people standing with arms lifted up for one day and could not do it without help. But now, Moses says, the Lord will be the banner for his people. He will hold up His hands over his people to guide them and bless them and give them hope. As long as Jehovah's hands are held up in blessing, as a banner, his people cannot lose.

700 years later the Lord's hands were still raised in blessing above his people. In Isaiah 8 it is foretold that the Assyrians would overflow and flood Judah up to their necks. The Assyrians invaded Israel and Judah but not Jerusalem.

In the midst of this devastation the prophet Isaiah says in verse 18:

Isaiah 8:18 Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! We are for signs [banners] and wonders in Israel From the LORD of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.

In the midst of this devastation the Lord raises a banner/ a sign for the people. A banner which will gather them, lead them out of the devastation and give them salvation. The Lord is a banner to His people.

When Jesus is born and brought to the temple Simeon the prophet calls him a sign or a banner which will be spoken against.

In our gospel reading we heard Jesus talking about how he would himself be lifted up, and when he is lifted up he will be a banner drawing all people to himself. Jesus was lifted up on the cross and at that time his hands being lifted up, he was a blessing to his people.

Because Jesus' hands were lifted up on the cross, we cannot lose, our victory is certain through him who died for us.

Jesus is a banner is a guide when you don't know where to go

A banner or flag is a great way to guide people. You fly it and people know where to go. When I ran cross country in high school, the flags let you know where to go. Red meant to turn left. Yellow meant to turn right. Blue meant to stay straight. Or you can think of semaphore flags, sharing information and directing ships. In the past ships knew where to go because of the information passed by flags.

Jesus is our banner of victory to lead us through dark times.

We often don't know where we are going in life. Sometimes people have plans and ideas and goals, but life tends to throw curve balls at us. I certainly had no plans to live in India for nine years. Nor was it my plan to leave India and come here to Markesan. This seemingly randomness and unpredictability could cause a lot of anxiety. Where are we going to end up? What if I had followed a different path? Yet even though we don't know where we are going, we know that the Lord's hands are raised as a banner of blessing above us. We don't know where we are going, but we are following Christ. We don't have to fear the path ahead, wherever it goes we are with our Lord.

Proverbs 16:9 ⁹ A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Psalms 32:8 ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Christ is our banner. We follow where He leads.

Mark 8:34 "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

We follow the cross even when it leads us through difficult times. We lift high the cross. We pick up the cross, calling others to follow after us. We don't know where that path will take us but we know who we are following.

Jehovah-Nissi - The Lord is our banner and we are not lost.

Jesus is the banner to proclaim the victory of the Lord.

Another good use of a banner is to spread the fame of your name.

In the ancient world banners were a way to spread the glory of your name. Every army that flew your banner, whatever they did was attributed to you. Simply by sending out your banner the greatness of your name and reputation could grow. If you were already well known your banner could incite fear in the hearts of your enemies.

The kids heard this week in VBS about a Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well. When she perceived that Jesus was a prophet what question did she ask Jesus? Where should we go to worship, on this mountain or do we have to go to Jerusalem.

Jesus answers, "salvation is of the Jews." With those words Jesus acknowledges that the Jews were the banner of the Lord. It was through the Jews that God made his name known through out the earth. If

the Samaritans wanted to learn about God they had to learn of him through the Jews. That was how his name was proclaimed.

When the Jews were still back in the wilderness, God was about to destroy them for their sin. Moses prayed, **“for the sake of your name do not destroy them.”** They bore the name of God if they died everyone would think God had failed.

However, Jesus continued in his discussion with the Samaritan woman, **“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;” John 4:23**

No longer were the Jews God’s banner. The son of God himself had come. The father spoke from heaven in our gospel reading. **“I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”**

Jesus is the Lord’s banner through whom he preaches victory

Isaiah 49:22 Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, And set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in their arms, And your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders;

No longer do we need to go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord but rather we go to Jesus. He is the banner who proclaims the name of the Lord.

The third commandment reminds us to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” In the New Testament what day is the Sabbath? It isn’t Saturday, or Sunday or Monday, but any day when we come to Jesus. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, neither here nor there, neither this day or that, but those who come to him in spirit and in truth.

The Lord is our Nissi - He is our banner to proclaim the name of the Lord.

A banner can also give hope

In the book the Return of the Kings the people of Gondor in their direst hour, when all hope seems lost see the banner of the king, Aragorn son Arathorn heir of Isildur. The banner flies from the black ships and Aragorn leads the armies of the dead saving the people Gondor.

A banner can certainly be a symbol of hope in the midst of a dark time.

After Abraham left his land and his family, after he arrived in the land God had led him to. God appeared to Abraham. It is easy to skip over this second appearance, when God appeared to Abraham in the land of Canaan, but we forget how easily we ourselves can become discouraged. Having reached a goal we might be left wondering now what. We graduate from college and start working. We buy a house and move in. We get married and start being a family. Suddenly it can feel like a letdown. Even after reaching Canaan Abraham needed to be reminded that the Lord’s hands were still raised in blessing as his banner.

Psalm 60:3-4 3 You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of confusion. 4 You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth.

Psalm 60 there talks about how we sometimes must endure hard times, difficult days. But even in those dark times that Lord has lifted up his hand as a banner to bring hope and salvation to the people.

The bronze serpent is also called a nissi, a banner for the people to bring them hope and salvation in a dark and difficult time. They were certainly enduring a difficult time. There were snakes everywhere. People were dying all around them. The Lord lifted up the bronze serpent a banner of salvation for His people.

So also, Jesus has come as a banner of salvation in a dark time. Jesus is our Nissi, our banner to give us hope and salvation.

Psa 20:5 We will rejoice in your salvation, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners!

Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord comes as a banner of victory to His people. He is our banner to lead and guide us when we are lost. He is our banner to bless us through the lifting up of His hands and the lifting up of the pastors' hands. He is a banner to give us hope and salvation in the darkness. He is a banner to gather us together as one people.

Jehovah-Nissi - The Lord is our banner.

Amen