

Numbering the Troops and Building Temples

1 Chronicles 21

February 29, 2008

Peter Hiatt

You know that tonight is the Academy Awards, right? You knew that? And you love God more than the Academy Awards, so you'll get credit in heaven for that one I think. Not as much as the Super Bowl one, but you'll still get credit. And since it is the Academy Awards, I thought that we should watch an academy award winning movie. In fact I was sharing with Frances what I wanted us to discuss tonight and she said, "Oh man, you should show this movie," so right now we have an academy award winning movie, Best Picture of 1988, so sit back and relax, grab some popcorn. Go ahead, Jared. Hit it.

Video Clip Rain Man

DOCTOR: Out of curiosity, does he have any special abilities?

CHARLIE: Well, he's got a pretty good memory. He counts toothpicks.

DOCTOR: Huh?

CHARLIE: Toothpicks. They spilled a box of toothpicks on the floor... and he took one look and knew exactly how many there were.

DOCTOR: He counted 'em in seconds. - Ray. Raymond. -

RAYMOND: Yeah.

DOCTOR: Are you good with numbers?

RAYMOND: Yeah. -

DOCTOR: I read about this. - I wanna try somethin' here. -

RAYMOND: Kmart, 400 Oak Street.

CHARLIE: What'd I tell you? After this.-

DOCTOR: Ray, can we try somethin'? -

RAYMOND: Yeah.

DOCTOR: Do you know how much 312 times 123 is?

RAYMOND: 38,376.

DOCTOR: He's right.

CHARLIE: What? -

DOCTOR: He's right.

CHARLIE: He's right?

DOCTOR: Yeah. Ray, How much is 4,343 times 1,234?

RAYMOND: 5,359,262.

CHARLIE: He's a genius. - That's right. - He's a genius. –

DOCTOR: Ray. Do you know how much the square root of 2,130 is?

RAYMOND: 46.15192304.2304.

CHARLIE: That's amazing. That is amazing. He should work for NASA or something like that.

DOCTOR: If you had a dollar, and you spent 50 cents how much money would you have left?

RAYMOND: About 70.

DOCTOR: Seventy cents? –

RAYMOND: Seventy cents.

CHARLIE: So much for NASA. –

RAYMOND: We should go to Kmart.

CHARLIE: After this, Ray.

RAYMOND: 400 Oak Street.

DOCTOR: Ray, do you know how much a candy bar costs?

RAYMOND: About \$100. –

DOCTOR: \$100, huh? Do you know how much one of those new compact cars costs?

RAYMOND: About \$100.

DOCTORY: In his case, he's pretty well off. He's very high-functioning. Most autistics can't speak or communicate. Ray, do you know what 'autistic' is?

RAYMOND: Yeah. –

DOCTOR: You know that word? Ray, Are you autistic?

RAYMOND: I don't think so. No. Definitely not.

That's the movie "Rain Man," and Dustin Hoffman plays Raymond, and Raymond is an autistic savant and that's his brother, played by Tom Cruise who is Charlie. And so Raymond has this astounding ability to obtain knowledge, but he hardly has any capacity to understand the knowledge. He can recite billions of facts, but he doesn't know what any of the facts mean. Like he has all this knowledge and no wisdom. And so Raymond, like in the movie, constantly recites facts and numbers and calculations—details—because counting and calculating give him a sense of security. But it's a false sense of security. Because he doesn't know what any of the facts mean. Like his brother Charlie. He likes to count things. He reminds me of King David.

There are two places in the Old Testament where the same story is told. It's a hugely important story and I don't think I've ever heard a sermon preached on the story. It's 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 31. So if you have a bible, you can look at it. Fortunately we have our screen working now so you can follow along that way.

1 Chronicles 21:1 "Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel."

Now that's pretty fascinating. This is the first place in all of Scripture that the word *Satan* shows up. It's the only place in the Old Testament outside of Job and Zechariah where Satan is mentioned in fact, and outside of Job it's the only place where Satan is said to tempt somebody or a group of people. And how does he tempt them?

With adultery? No, not here.

With murder? No not here.

With drugs, alcohol, and Playboy magazines? No, he tempts David to count things.

1 Chronicles 21:1-7 "Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, 'Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan and bring me a report that I may know their number.' But Joab said, 'May the Lord add to this people a hundred times as many as they are. Are they not, my lord the King, all of them my Lord's servants? Why then should my lord require such a thing? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?' But the king's words prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed and went throughout all Israel and came back to Jerusalem. And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to David. And in all Israel there were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword and in Judah 470,000 who drew the sword. But he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab. But God was displeased with this thing and he struck Israel."

Isn't that weird? You should talk about that so why don't you get in groups of four or five, okay? Just turn to the people near you. And I want you to answer these two questions:

1. Why is God so angry with David? Why does taking census get God so mad?
2. How do we do the same thing? How do we number our troops?

Okay, the first question—go for it.

[congregation discusses the questions]

Okay, so why does God get so mad?

God got mad at David, the man after his own heart, for numbering his troops. He might get mad at you. So this would be an important discussion to have, right? First of all, let's just try that. Now you discuss it with folks in your little groups. Someone in your group may have had a really good idea. You can stand up now and claim it has your own and impress everybody, okay?

So how do you number your troops? What are some ideas? What do you do?

"Count how much money we have in the bank account."

Yeah, count our bank account. That's the way we number our troops, right? What other things?

"Time"

"How big our church is?"

That's a great one. Membership at church. What other things?

"Schools"

Yeah, degrees, awards, schools. Yeah

"Marry the right person"

Marry the right person. Like what is Gretchen worth? 450 credits okay. What other things?

"Age"

Age, we compare ourselves, we keep track of who we compare ourselves to and how do we compare them. Maybe good deeds, maybe we keep track of our good deeds.

"Cars"

Someone said cars, that's good one.

Any others?

"Popularity"

Popularity? Yeah, how many people vote for you. We're in an election year and they may not actually vote, but inside we're keeping count.

I think that's all good. I think these are all ways. I mean that's bad actually, but they're all ways that we number our troops.

You know when I first started up at Lookout, Sandy Shomaucker always put together a little graph of how many people were in church every week. I mean I would pull out that graph and sit at my desk and if there were five more I'd get real excited, and if there were less....I, I would watch you know, and as the number would start going up on the chart.

And then one day I felt that God really convicted me. "Peter, stop counting." And it was a discipline for me to put that chart under the desk, and I said, "Sandy, you number it, and that's great. But I don't want to look at it; I can't look at it." And I felt like we did a pretty good job at that.

Probably a few years ago, I think, when all of a sudden we had a huge mortgage and a big building and everything, it felt like it became real tempting again. It was really hard and I truly struggled with that. I wanted to number the troops. Even while I'm talking about numbering the troops, I'm kinda counting in my heart as I look out here going, "God, are we going to make it?"

But why does God get so mad when we do that? That was the first question. What was your answer?

Not trusting in him.

Yeah, not trusting in him.

Who's in control?

Yeah, we count like the Rain Man, trying to gain control

Vanity

Vanity, yeah, looking at yourself right, that you do it.

Busyness

Busyness, distraction, maybe.

Listening to Satan

Yeah, now isn't that an interesting thought? Because here is Satan tempting David to do that counting. So next time you count, just stop a second. Who's talking to me? Is that the banker or somebody else? Yeah, any other ideas?

False identity

Didn't inquire of God

Yeah, didn't inquire of God, so the counting is becoming His lord. Well let's keep reading,

1 Chronicles 21:7- 12 "But God was displeased with this thing and he struck Israel. And David said to God I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing and now please take away the iniquity of your servant for I have acted very foolishly." And the Lord spoke to Gad, David's seer,

saying, "Go and say to David, 'thus said the Lord three times, three things I offer you. *[Now the number three shows up a lot; three's a significant number for a lot of reasons]* Choose one of them that I may do it to you.'" So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Choose what you will, either three years of famine, or three months of devastation by your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the Lord. Pestilence on the land with the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the territory of Israel."

What's the sword of the Lord?

Okay, God's word...The sword of the spirit which is the word of God. God's Word, it's God's truth. Remember there is a flaming sword at the edge of the Garden of Eden. And who's the angel of Yahweh? We talked about him when we talked about Gideon, remember? He's like man and God. That's kinda freaky, every heard of that kind of situation before? I mean, it kind of reminds us of Jesus, right?

1 Chronicles 21:12-13 "'Now decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me,' said Gad to David. *['Which one do you choose?']* Then David said to Gad, 'I am in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of the Lord *[Why?]* because His mercy is very great. But do not let me fall into the hand of man."

Did you get that, I think that is kind of important. When David is faced with a choice between the mercy of man and the mercy of God, he says God's mercy is greater. In fact God's mercy never comes to an end, says scripture. And so even when God disciplines, even when God destroys, his mercy has not come to an end. That's fascinating.

1 Chronicles 21:12b-17 "'...But do not let me fall into the hand of man.' So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel. And 70,000 men of Israel fell. And God sent the angel to Jerusalem. *[Now what's Jerusalem? We know this. Jerusalem is a bride, right? Of who? Jesus' bride. That's interesting.]* But as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, 'It is enough, now stay your hand.' *[Stop.]* And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite, and David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders clothed in sackcloth fell upon their faces and David said to God, 'Was it not I who gave the command to number the people? It's I who have sinned and done great evil but these sheep what have they done? Please, let your hand, oh my Lord my God, be against me and against my father's house, but do not let the plague be upon your people.'"

That's a cool Old Testament pattern that you'll find over and over again with people like Abraham and Moses. God will threaten destruction and then God's servant will beg God to have mercy and it's like God is really waiting for that. He delights in that. God is thrilled.

And then look what David says, "Let your hand be on me and my house." Who's his house? That would mean his kids. So another way of saying that is, "Let your hand be upon my seed." Who is the seed of David? Jesus. Isn't that wild?

1 Chronicles 21:18-26 “Then the angel of the LORD [*who also looks like Jesus*] ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. He turned and saw the angel and his four sons who were with him hid themselves. As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David and went out from the threshing floor and paid homage to David with his face to the ground and David said to Ornan, “Give me the sight of the threshing floor that I may build on it and altar to the Lord. Give it to me at its full price so that the plague may be averted from the people.” Then Ornan said to David, “Take it and let my lord, the king do what seems good to him. See I give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for the wood and the wheat for a grain offering. I give it all.” But David said to Ornan, “No. But I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” So David paid Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site. And David built there an altar to the Lord and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called on the Lord and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering.”

You remember that fire falls on the temple and fills it. The fire comes from heaven. It's that fire that consumes the sacrifices. You also remember that in Acts Chapter 2, the fire comes from heaven and falls on the new temple which is the church, right? And the living sacrifices.

1 Chronicles 21:27-30 “Then the Lord commanded the angel and he put his sword back into its sheath. At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there for the tabernacle of the Lord which Moses had made in the wilderness and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of the Lord for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord.”

...of Yahweh, maybe it was like a flaming sword.

Then David said, “Here shall be the house of the Lord God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel” Isn't that wild? That's where David built the temple. On that site.

You know when we were in Israel, a while ago, we saw the threshing floor of Ornan. Or at least where it was because we saw the temple mount. And I remember our guide, he told us, he said “This is weird but archeologists have discovered under the threshing floor that there are wine presses.” And so that the temple was built on that spot where there were wine presses which are for making wine and a threshing floor which is for threshing grain which is for making bread. Now your Jesus radar ought to be going off about now.

In chapter 22 then, David instructs Solomon to build the temple on this site. David says to Solomon in verse 19, “Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God.”

A friend who is here tonight sent me that verse this week in an email to use tonight saying, “build the sanctuary of the Lord God.” That's what David says to Solomon. Do you get it?

Stop counting and build the sanctuary.

A few weeks ago, a friend walked up to Frances here at the Sanctuary and one of these people that gets words from the Lord, you know, she walked up and she said "Francis, I think I have a word from the Lord." Stop counting. Don't count, that's what she said: "don't count."

Well anyway, the sanctuary, the temple in Israel is built on that place. It's built on that place of grace. It's built on the place where God turned his hand, his sword on the seed of David rather than the people. The sanctuary is built upon grace. And built by grace. And the sanctuary is built where David once counted.

The sanctuary is a temple. We read about the temple in this day and age and it's just freaky weird. We don't understand what's going on there, but you remember the temple had this outer courtyard and when you walked into the outer courtyard there was this huge bronze altar on which they would sacrifice lambs and other animals. And then over on this side there was a huge laver, a basin, they called it a sea, full of water to wash the priests like living water. And then you would walk through doors from the outer court into the holy place, the sanctuary. In the sanctuary, on one side there would be ten tables of gold which held the bread of the presence, like bread from heaven, living bread. And on the other side there would be 10 golden candlesticks, like the light of the world. And then in the center, down the middle, would be the altar of incense which was like a fragrant offering, a fragrant smell to God. Behind that altar of incense was this big door and this huge curtain that separated the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary and you remember when Jesus died on the cross that curtain ripped from the top to the bottom.

The book of Hebrews says that curtain separated this age from the next age. For on the other side of the curtain was the presence of Yahweh, the Lord God, the ark of the covenant. On top of the ark of the covenant was the mercy seat and in the sanctuary was a high priest, who worked the system. Every year he would go into that holy of holies to make sacrifices.

And what did you do when you went to the temple? I mean what did they do? Well, at least we know that they watched sacrifices. And they watched offerings. And they knew that blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins and fire, the consuming fire, would consume the sacrifices.

If you read the book of Hebrews along about chapters 8, 9, and 10, you find out that that entire temple system was fulfilled in Jesus and it was all about Jesus. It was all about the revelation of God's heart and how he loves us and how he takes away our sins and how he draws us into his presences. It's the story of God's mercy, the revelation of God's heart.

You see, we are the sanctuary, and so why do we come here. Why are we supposed to come here? I think it is to observe God's love in Christ Jesus. In other words, it's to worship.

There's this old story about this priest, this village priest, and this old man that used to come to the church every day, sit in the sanctuary, and then leave. Then one day the priest said to the old man, "Sir is there something bothering you? He said, "Oh no, I'm fine." He said. "Well what are you doing here coming every day?" "Well," he said "I just come here and look at God and God looks at me."

That's why you are here. Just to look at God. You know people ask, "Peter, what do I do? What are we to do? What do I do?" First and foremost, you don't. You don't do, you don't calculate, you don't count. You look at God, his heart.

So I hope you are starting to get the point. I think this is the point of this story. We take a census in order to calculate what we can do. How many members do we have, how much money do we have, how big is my checking account, how popular am I. We take a census in order to calculate what we can do.

But we build a temple in order to observe what God is doing. Or in our case, what God has done. The work of the flesh, living by the law, human religion is all about calculating what we can do. But faith is not calculating what we can do. Faith is believing what God has done. Some of you, probably all of you, and I certainly include me in that group, you've been taking a census, haven't you? Somewhere calculating, numbering, worrying. You need to stop. And in that very place, that very place, build a temple. Your life is not a census. Your life is to be a temple. That's who you are. You need to stop and in that very place and build a temple.

Do you remember when Jesus was on the hillside and there was just a multitude of people? And he said to his disciples because they were getting all stressed, he said, "Well feed them." And they took a census, right? And they said, "But Lord all we have is 5 loaves and 2 fish." And Jesus said "And Me." Give them to me. And he blessed them and on that spot they built a temple, the church to the glory of God. They saw Jesus and Jesus in the love of God. He's the love of God.

One day when Becky was little. This was just so cool. I'm driving in the car with her. I think I told you this once before. I remember I looked at her and I said "Becky, how much do you love me?" And she looked at me with those big eyes, and she said "I love you 12...and that's a lot." Well you see, it was the biggest number she knew, right? It was the biggest number she knew and we laugh because really love messes with our math, doesn't it? You throw love into an equation and everything is out the window. That's because love is everything. It's everything. It's the biggest number we know. It's infinite. And God is love.

In the movie, The Rain Man, the irony is that Raymond is not really the only one that loves to count things. Not the only one that's autistic in that way, handicapped. His brother Charlie is as well. It's just that Charlie doesn't count toothpicks. Charlie counts money, counts cars, counts money in his bank account, but then Charlie discovers something that destroys his census. He discovers love for his brother Raymond and that renders all of his counting obsolete.

And so God hated David's census. But I don't think that's because God hates math. He invented it. I think it's because God hates the way we count. We just don't do it very well. We are not that good at math.

When I was a freshman at the University of Colorado, I took a math class that kind of changed my life. It was weird. Cause everything changed in this math class and everything changed because in the math class they introduced a new number. You know what I'm talking about? The number infinity. And the class was calculus, and so I have pop quiz, okay?

You know what this is? This is infinity. It represents a number for which there is no end. It's infinite. Okay class, now if you take 1 and add it to infinity what do you get? Infinity that's right, that's really good because it's the infinite number.

Now take this. What if you take the number 300, okay? This is like the number of Gideon's troops. You remember God said "Gideon I'll be with you." What if you take 300 instead of 1 and add it to infinity, what do you get? Infinity, that right! You get the very same number.

Okay David, David, King David, what happens if you number your soldiers and you find out there are 10,000 soldiers and you add the 10,000 soldiers to infinity, what do you get? Infinity! Yeah, Infinity isn't that amazing? Now David what if you number your troops and you get 1,570,000. I mean 1.1 million of Israel and 470,000 of Judah and you add it to infinity, what do you get? Infinity! Same thing! Infinity. It didn't change, right?

And so David, why are you numbering?

It must be because you don't believe that I'm infinite.

It must be because you don't see me.

It must be because you don't understand.

So you know what I'm gonna do, David? I'm gonna take away 70,000. What's infinity minus 70,000? Infinity! Yeah, so this finite number really doesn't matter David.

Hey, church, check it out. What if the church budget is \$10,000. What's 10,000 plus infinity? Infinity. What if the church budget is \$1,570,000 and we have this much in the account...what is that 1,570,000 plus infinity. What is that? Infinity. Amazing. What if our church had 10,000 members? Infinity. What if our church had two gathered in my name and he was with us. Infinity. That's right.

Okay, what if you have \$100,000,000 and infinity. How much do you have? Infinity. Yeah, same stinkin amount. But now this is the problem. When I hold up a \$100,000,000, what do we do? I can count that. I can control that, I can comprehend that.

I have a really hard time comprehending infinity though.

And so what does God do? He says I'm gonna take it away. You know he's in the business of giving and taking. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." And there will come a day when He will take everything from me...all the members in my church, my wife, my kids, my bank account, my last breath. And then I think he'll look at me and say something like this.

"Peter, what do you have, what do you have? All you have is infinity. Yes, all you have is Me and I am yours and you are mine and I give you all things with me."

God's math is different than ours. Paul writes, "I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, for the surpassing worth, the infinite worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Infinity.

God is infinite. And God is Love and he is Mercy. His steadfast love never ceases.

That means it's infinite. His mercies never come to an end.

That means it's infinite. God is love.

Nothing is as powerful as love, nothing is as powerful as God.

So you see, his power, it isn't just more money. His power is not just more kilowatt hours or British thermal units or more force. His power is holy, it's different, it's love, it's the meaning of all things. All things are created and maintained with his love. He is love.

And so if I have all prophetic power and understand all knowledge, but have not love, what am I? Nothing, says Paul. Then you don't got anything because love is everything.

In this fallen world, blinded by sin, I think we are only beginning to see it. But we are beginning to see it.

And so Paul and Silas were in the Philippian Jail, power level about 2. But they saw Jesus, and there was no jail strong enough to hold them.

Peter, scared Peter, the Apostle Peter, disciple Peter. He hung on a cross upside down and naked outside of Jerusalem. Power level about zero. But he saw Jesus and the Roman Empire could not withstand his gospel.

Young man named Francis, he walked out of his village in Assisi, Italy, naked. That's zero. That's like nothing. Power level zero, but he saw Jesus and he changed the world.

Young man named Martin, power level about zero, but he saw Jesus and he's part of the reason why you're here.

If you look back on the 20th century, I don't know for sure, but I would imagine that after a time, people would begin to realize that maybe the most influential person wasn't Stalin. Maybe it wasn't Hitler. Maybe it wasn't Reagan or Churchill. I think it was probably someone more like this: a little Albanian nun who took a vow of poverty, but she saw Jesus and changed the world.

And now you see this isn't just theory. I've seen it. Elaine shared last week. That's what I saw in Elaine. What I learned from Elaine. There were times when I know Elaine felt more like about minus 12 or 13 and then she would see Jesus. And let me tell you she had power more power than Satan in all the kingdom of hell. But you see it's not Elaine. She's the earthen vessel. It's Jesus in Elaine.

I was so grateful that Elaine said this last week, "I think our entire battle is actually just seeing Jesus." Seeing Jesus which is then ingesting Jesus. Which is also being nourished by Jesus. It's worship. It's faith.

And so this is what I'm saying: in your life, in my life, Satan will tempt us to count. But we must build the sanctuary, His temple.

On the night that He was betrayed by one disciple and abandoned by the rest of his disciples, so they were about power level minus 10. They were not well that night. It was that night that Jesus took bread and broke it and said, "This is my body given to you, take and eat and do this in remembrance of me."

And in the same way after supper, he took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood shed for forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. Do it in remembrance of me."

And so in just a minute, we are going to invite you to come to the table and this is what I want you to do. I want you to bring yourself. What's your power level? What's your love level? Are you empty? That

may be good because when you're weak then you're strong because you see that you need something. Bring yourself to this table. You plus infinity equals infinity. You're the body of Christ.

Now before you come, I want you pray a little about that, okay? If you would, you can turn to the same people again that you just confessed your counting sins to. Didn't know it at the time, but you did and just turn to them and this is what I want you to pray about. You can either pray out loud with them or you can pray silently. Okay? And after you've prayed for a while, Justin will begin playing and then we'll have the bread and the wine at three stations and you can come forward and take communion.

You're going to take Infinity. That's freaky weird, huh? But this is what I want you to pray about. Pray about that place that you're taking a census.

Maybe it's your bank account.

Maybe it's in a certain relationship.

Maybe it's your good deeds. What you have accomplished.

Pray about that place where you were taking a census and pray that in that place you would build a temple to the glory of God.

I don't know what that exactly means to you. But just take a minute and ask God about that, okay? And say God where have I been counting and you want me to be your temple. You want me to build a temple. All Right? You can just go ahead and turn to the person next to you. You can do it alone, either way and then in a minute when the music starts come forward and we'll ingest Infinity.

Communion

Benediction

And so Lord Jesus, we surrender the temple, we surrender the sanctuary, we surrender the sacrifices to you. Do what you want with these finite things for you are In-finite and we have you and you have us. Me and you God, we know everything. Me and you, we have all power, me and you, we can love our neighbor, so thank you Lord Jesus. Use us for your purposes we pray and forgive us for counting because we just don't count too good. In Jesus' Name we confess it. Amen

A couple thousand years ago this world was in the hands of the evil one. A couple thousand years ago the nation of Israel had fallen apart. God's chosen people had all turned their back on Him. They were betraying Him. And 2,000 years ago, Caesar was taking a census. Do you remember that? Caesar Augustus, there was a census sent out over all the world to see how much he controlled but Caesar doesn't count too good. He forgot this: born in manger and born in you. So have courage.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

