**Numbers Series Slide**

* On January 13th, the residents of Hawaii thought they were going to die.
* At 8:07 that Saturday morning, every cell phone in the state received this message in all caps.
* **“BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.”**
* People took cover in mall bathrooms, bathtubs, drug stores—there’s a very chilling 9 second video online of a father lowering his young daughter down into a manhole. There were reports of people speeding down highways and and running red lights to reunite with family members. Others called one another to say “I love you” one last time.
* The alert lasted for 38 minutes.
* **What would you do if thought you had 38 minutes left before ballistic missiles destroyed you and your family?**
* One resident, a University of Hawaii professor, was in a toy store with her kids. So she sat down on the floor with them and read books. All the while thinking, “This is how I’m going to spend the last few moments with my kids.”
* This is how she described it.
* **“There’s the immediate shock ... and then hopelessness and [the realization] that there’s something that may be changing your life.”**
	+ *https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/pandemonium-and-rage-in-hawaii/550529/*
* Turns out. The whole thing was a false alarm.
* It was an accident.
* A state employee trying to run a routine in-house test pushed the wrong button…and made the whole thing go live.
* …and in an instant…created for many what were the worst 38 minutes of their lives.
* At 8:45 am, when the mishap was finally announced, there was a range of emotions. Relief. Anger. A demand for an explanation.
* And all those emotions are understandable.
* But for many Hawaiians they felt something different.
* Here’s the way one journalist put it.
	+ **“The alert gave many a new appreciation for their loved ones and for the islands’ simple pleasures: the white-sand beaches, the gentle trade winds, the January sunshine. It also brought people together in a way that they hadn’t before…**
	+ **[One state official] recalled going to the mall after the fiasco and described a sort of surreal atmosphere in which everybody was calm and friendly. “It was like Christmas morning and everybody got a car—there was an amazing sense of camaraderie,” he said. He noticed myriad strangers greeting one another, for example, exchanging stories about their morning and offering each other their spot in line. “The little things that people worry about in day-to-day life and get frustrated with,” he said, “completely evaporated.”- Alia Wong, *The Atlantic***
* Interesting. There wasn’t REALLY anything different from 8:06 am to 8:46 am on that Hawaiian Saturday morning.

The only thing that changed was people became aware of their fragility. That at any moment they could be wiped out by a missile.

And, so, they felt, in many ways, like they had lost their lives and then gotten them back.

* **“There’s the immediate shock ... and then hopelessness and [the realization] that there’s something that may be changing your life.”**

There’s an old hymn that I used to sing in church when I was a kid.

It went like this- “Count your Blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings see what God has done.”

Its funny. When I tried counting my blessings back then,..or heck, even yesterday… I never came up with “Thank you, God, that Ballistic Missiles are not Currently Inbound”

* …I didn’t even realize THAT WAS or COULD BE A BLESSING. That I wasn’t being destroyed by missiles! Ballistic, nonetheless!
* …and that has me thinking.
* How many blessings am I just completely unaware of?
* Forget the stuff, I “take for granted”. Like food and shelter, family and church, job and transportation, sure, sometimes I’m not as thankful for those things like I should be…
* …but at least *I’m aware* that all of those things EXIST and are a part of my life.
* What about the blessing that I don’t even know that’s happening? What about the things God is keeping me from that I just lack the spiritual vision to even recognize?
* What about the blessings I can’t count…because I don’t even know they exist?
* **Title Slide- “BALLISTIC MISSILES INBOUND. THIS IS NOT A DRILL**: **How to Make Blessings Count That You Can’t Count”** **Numbers 22-25**
* Listen…if a false alarm Missile Crisis can bring about the relief of anxiety, the expression of neighbor love and a deeper perspective of the preciousness of life and relationships…
* …what if we could actually be constantly and deeply aware of the REAL ways God is blessing us…protecting us…caring for us…saving us from ourselves?
* How would THAT change us?
* Today, we come to what I consider the climax of the book of Numbers. And it is one of the most beautiful examples of how deeply God loves his children.
* I hope you walk out of here today like a Hawaiian at 8:46 am on January 13th.
* ….With your worries evaporated…and a realization that there’s something that may be changing your life.
* The story I’m going to tell you from the book of Numbers, is 3 ½ chapters long. So I’m going to summarize as much as I can, then we’ll read some, then I’ll paraphrase…and we’ll read some more.
* Here we go.
* This massive group of Israelites, who had been enslaved in Egypt are making their way from Egypt, where God freed them…to a bountiful land that God has promised to give them where they can settle down.
* Yet, all along the way, they whine and complain, even as God has miraculously fed and sustained them. They don’t believe God will deliver on his promise. So they blame him and tell him they want to go back to Egypt.
* As a consequence of their failure to “Count their blessings” and trust God…God has allowed them to wander around the wilderness for 40 years before they enter the Promised Land. And the book of Numbers (which is actually called “In the Wilderness” in its original Hebrew title) is the story of their wanderings….in the wilderness.
* Finally, in Chapter 22, they’re getting close to the Promised Land. In fact, they have just won a huge battle against the Amorites who were standing in their way. And they have made it to Moab. They just have to cross the Jordan river, and they are home.
* Well, the King of Moab, (**his name is Balak**) saw the Israelites come in to his country…and after getting word that they had completely destroyed the Amorites…he is, understandably very nervous.
* So, he wants them gone. And in order to get a competitive edge in a fight against Israel, he sends some messengers with a load of cash to a very famous and very powerful sort of “Witch Doctor” in that part of the world at that time.
* His name is Balaam. Balaam is known as a “seer of the gods”. He had some sort of strange ability to put curses on people.
* So here is what Balak’s message was to Balaam…that was accompanied by a briefcase full of money.
* **Numbers 22:11**
* **Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the surface of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. I may be able to fight against them and drive them away.’ ”**
* Well, YHWH, Israel’s God ends up speaking directly to Balaam.
* And God tells him, “Don’t do it. Don’t you curse my people. Because I have blessed them. And whoever curses the people I bless, Well..I’ll curse them.”
* So, Balaam tells Balak’s messengers, “I ain’t gonna do it. Cuz I’m not tryin’ to tick off YHWH.”
* So Balak sends some even higher ranking and more important officials back to Balaam with a message that says, and says, “Look, you gotta do this for me! I’ll do whatever you ask. You name your price…and I’ll pay it! Just come back to Moab with my men and curse Israel for me! I’ll give you whatever you want!”
* Balaam then goes back to God and says, “Ok, they still want me to go, what do you think? …should I go?”
* And God says, “OK, fine. Go. But ONLY DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO and ONLY SAY WHAT I TELL YOU TO SAY.”
* But God perceives that Balaam is NOT going to obey him. That he is actually persuaded by the money and the honor that the King of Moab wants to give him to curse Israel…and that Balaam is not really interested in doing what God says.
* So that’s where we pick up in Chapter 22 verse 22. Balaam is on his way to see Balak, persuaded by the money and honor that he’ll get from the King of Moab if he curses Israel.
* **Numbers 22:22-41**
* **22 But God was incensed that Balaam was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand on the path to oppose him. Balaam was riding his donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing on the path with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the path and went into the field. So Balaam hit her to return her to the path. 24 Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow passage between the vineyards, with a stone wall on either side. 25 The donkey saw the angel of the Lord and pressed herself against the wall, squeezing Balaam’s foot against it. So he hit her once again. 26 The angel of the Lord went ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn to the right or the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she crouched down under Balaam. So he became furious and beat the donkey with his stick.**
* **28 Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and she asked Balaam, “What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times? ”**
* **29 Balaam answered the donkey, “You made me look like a fool. If I had a sword in my hand, I’d kill you now! ”**
* **30 But the donkey said, “Am I not the donkey you’ve ridden all your life until today? Have I ever treated you this way before? ”**
* **“No,” he replied.**
* **31 Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the path with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam knelt low and bowed in worship on his face. 32 The angel of the Lord asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Look, I came out to oppose you, because I consider what you are doing to be evil. 33 The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away from me, I would have killed you by now and let her live.”**
* **34 Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the path to confront me. And now, if it is evil in your sight, I will go back.”**
* **35 Then the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you are to say only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.**
* **36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite city on the Arnon border at the edge of his territory. 37 Balak asked Balaam, “Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?”**
* **38 Balaam said to him, “Look, I have come to you, but can I say anything I want? I must speak only the message God puts in my mouth.” 39 So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. 40 Balak sacrificed cattle, sheep, and goats and sent for Balaam and the officials who were with him.**
* **41 In the morning, Balak took Balaam and brought him to Bamoth-baal. From there he saw the outskirts of the people’s camp**.
* So at this point, Balak and Balaam are at what is called a “high place”. Its like a mountain top that overlooks this valley where people offere sacrifices to the god Ba-al or “bail”.
* From there, God “puts words is Balaam’s mouth”…just like he did the donkey
* And so, with Balak waiting, excitedly ready for this Witch Doctor to deliver this terrible curse on Israel so that they will lose to the Moabites in battle…
* **V 22:8 & 10**
* Well, instead, Balaam blesses them. He basically says, “If God hasn’t cursed them, then I can’t curse them…in fact, I’m sort of jealous of them. I wish God would bless me like he blessed Israel.”
* So Balak responds….
* **Numbers 23:11-12**
* **11 “What have you done to me? ” Balak asked Balaam. “I brought you to curse my enemies, but look, you have only blessed them! ”**
* **12 He answered, “Shouldn’t I say exactly what the Lord puts in my mouth? ”**
* So Balaam decides to take him to another “high place”, to give it another shot.
* And they make the sacrifices to Baal again…and God puts another message in Balaam’s mouth.
* **23:21-24**
* **21 He considers no disaster for Jacob;**
* **he sees no trouble for Israel.**
* **The Lord their God is with them,**
* **and there is rejoicing over the King among them.**
* **22 God brought them out of Egypt;**
* **he is like the horns of a wild ox for them.**
* **23 There is no magic curse against Jacob**
* **and no divination against Israel.**
* **It will now be said about Jacob and Israel,**
* **“What great things God has done! ”**
* **24 A people rise up like a lioness;**
* **they rouse themselves like a lion.**
* **They will not lie down until they devour the prey**
* **and drink the blood of the slain.**
* After this, Balak just tells Balaam to be quiet. Stop talking. You aren’t doing what I asked you to do.
* **V 26**
* **But Balaam answered him, “Didn’t I tell you: Whatever the Lord says, I must do? “**
* So Balak decides to try it again. And they go to the top of another mountain. Another high place that overlooks the wilderness. Its called Peor. Balak hoping this time Balaam can manage to get a curse out.
* This time, the Spirit of God comes upon him and he speaks a poem that ends like this..
* **24:8-9**
* **8 God brought him out of Egypt;**
* **he is like the horns of a wild ox for them.**
* **He will feed on enemy nations**
* **and gnaw their bones;**
* **he will strike them with his arrows.**
* **9 He crouches, he lies down like a lion**
* **or a lioness ​— ​who dares to rouse him?**
* **Those who bless you will be blessed,**
* **and those who curse you will be cursed.** --
* Of course, this doesn’t sit well with Balak…
* **Numbers 24:10-14**
* **10 Then Balak became furious with Balaam, struck his hands together, and said to him, “I summoned you to put a curse on my enemies, but instead, you have blessed them these three times. 11 Now go to your home! I said I would reward you richly, but look, the Lord has denied you a reward.”**
* **12 Balaam answered Balak, “Didn’t I previously tell the messengers you sent me: 13 If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go against the Lord’s command, to do anything good or bad of my own will? I will say whatever the Lord says. 14 Now I am going back to my people, but first, let me warn you what these people will do to your people in the future.”**
* …and then Balaam prophesies a 4th time.
* **24:17 & 19**
* **I see him, but not now;**
* **I perceive him, but not near.**
* **A star will come from Jacob,**
* **and a scepter will arise from Israel.**
* **He will smash the forehead of Moab**
* **and strike down all the Shethites**
* **One who comes from Jacob will rule;**
* **he will destroy the city’s survivors.**
* At this Balak leaves furious, and Balaam returns home.
* Sounds great doesn’t it? Well…hold on.
* Anybody wonder what Israel is doing while all this is going on?
* **Numbers 25:1-5**
* **While Israel was staying in the Acacia Grove, the people began to prostitute themselves with the women of Moab.**
* **2 The women invited them to the sacrifices for their gods, and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods. 3 So Israel aligned itself with Baal of Peor, and the Lord’s anger burned against Israel. The Lord said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the Lord so that his burning anger may turn away from Israel.”**
* **5 So Moses told Israel’s judges, “Kill each of the men who aligned themselves with Baal of Peor.”**
* **TRANSITION:** I told you when we started this series in Numbers, that the theme of the book was God’s mercy in the midst of his judgment.
* Well, nothing puts that on display like this story.
* While God is protecting Israel…blessing them from the high place of Baal-Peor….completely unaware of that this blessing is happening…
* Israel is down in the valley worshipping the god of the Man who is trying to curse them.
* Is this story beautiful…or tragic?
* Well, it depends…on whether your eyes are up in the high places…or down in the valley.
* Actually…it just depends on whether or not you can see.
* **1) If you could see what God is sparing you from, it would change your life.**
	+ When the state employee pushed the wrong button in Hawaii last January, little did anyone expect that it would actually turn out to be a gift for the Hawaiian people.
	+ For example, they realized how unprepared they were for an attack. They got to see all the holes in their plan (or lack of plan, for that matter).
	+ But it was also a gift in that the people got a glimpse into a blessing they didn’t realize they were experiencing.
	+ Suddenly, NOT having Ballistic Missiles Inbound was changing their lives…at least for the moment.
	+ AT 8:05 that morning, nobody was counting that blessing.
	+ No one was randomly hugging people in the streets.
	+ No one was lifting their kids up out of manholes with a warm embrace.
	+ No one was crying tears of joy with their family on a bookstore floor.
	+ At 8:46, EVERYBODY was counting that blessing.
	+ Israel would not get that opportunity.
	+ In fact, Israel wouldn’t even know about God sparing them from Balak’s cursing until AFTER he takes them into the promised land.
	+ **[PAUSE]...**Because they didn’t have eyes to see it.
	+ Did you notice that what happened to Balaam on the Donkey is actually a foreshadowing of what happens to Israel?
	+ Remember when Balaam gets on his donkey to go to meet Balak, he is intent on cursing Israel.
	+ So, God sends this angel, with a sword to kill him. To stop him.
	+ …and Balaam has no idea the angel is there…he can’t see.
	+ Which is really interesting, because that’s his job.
	+ Balaam is famous for being a ‘seer of the gods’…but he can’t see the only God that matters.
	+ He can’t see God’s judgment right in front of his face.
	+ It has to be revealed to him…from a donkey.
	+ IN fact, Balaam is so intent on doing what he wants to do…on getting the money and the honor from Balak…that he GETS ANGRY at the Donkey for saving his life…because he doesn’t KNOW the donkey is saving his life.
	+ He thinks the donkey is hurting him.
	+ **22:25**
	+ The donkey crushes his foot against a wall…and all Balaam can think is, “Dumb mule! You hurt my foot.”
	+ And so in turn, he lashes out at the donkey.
	+ What he can’t see is that if the donkey would have taken another step, Balaam would have been known as the headless horseman.
	+ **22:27**
	+ Then, finally, the donkey crouches down in front of the angel…and all Balaam can do is attack her.
	+ **22:31 & 33**
	+ Notice, the difference in Balaam and the donkey, is that the donkey SAW the angel…and Balaam didn't.
	+ The donkey saw the warning- BALLISTIC ANGELIC MISSLE INBOUND. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.
	+ And it changed the donkey.
	+ But it wasn’t until the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes to see the angel…that he finally understood his own evil…and actually came to appreciate what the donkey did for him.
	+ When God opens Balaam’s eyes to see the spiritual…he does exactly what the Donkey did…bowed down.
	+ **22:34**
	+ And he confesses his sin.
	+ He repents.
	+ Repent means to “turn around”
	+ This is a beautiful picture of it.
	+ It means that you finally see that the road your headed on is leading to death…that you finally perceive the reality of the spiritual…and you turn around to go toward GOD, instead of away from him.
* **Back to 1)**
	+ Here’s a question I’ve been asking myself as I’ve wrestled with this story.
	+ Is it possible, that today, in all of my grumbling and complaining…in all of my looking at my circumstances…many of which I don’t like…many of which bother me…is it possible that God, right now, even as we speak…from a high place…is pronouncing blessing on me…and protecting me from cursing…and I don’t even know it.
	+ Is it possible, that even in the reality of the HARDNESS, the pain, the perceived unfairness in my life…is it possible that I don’t even perceive 1/1 Billionth of the ways God is sparing me from harm? Or the ways he is blessing you from the high places?
	+ For all the hard in my life…for all the hard in your life… there is something deeper, a blessing that cannot be received unless God opens your eyes…that will produce in you a gratitude and hopefulness…that will alter the way you look at life…the way you look at relationships…the way you look at the future.
	+ …and sometimes…when God opens your eyes to see it…you actually see that all the “donkeys” that you think have been keeping you from what you want…well, they’ve actually been saving your life.
* **Transition:** So how do you see it? How do you get “the eyes” to perceive what God’s blessing and his protection in your life…especially if you, like Israel, are in a wilderness of sorts. Well, very simply..
* **2) The lower you go, the higher you see.**
	+ To get to that point in Hawaii, where everyone’s anxieties melted away…where all the stuff they were worried about at 8 am that morning evaporated into gratitude and joy to just be alive…
	+ They had to be taken to a low point.
	+ For 38 minutes, they had to see the sword coming for their necks.
	+ My God, but when they came out the other side…life was sweet.
	+ Children that were annoyances, begging for chocolate chip pancakes with their cartoons…well, at 8:46, suddenly Saturday January 13th became a PJ day where those families cuddled on the couch together and at Choclate chip pancakes and watch cartoons all day long.
	+ Loved ones who were being ignored, suddenly got phone calls.
	+ See, the Hawaiians, for 38 minutes were taken low…but coming out the other side…they could finally perceive the highest most beautiful things about life.
	+ **24:11**
	+ After Balaam, blesses Israel for the third time, Balak says to him, “Fine. Well you know, you’re missing out. I could have rewarded you richly, but since you just HAD to listen to YHWH, I’m not giving you money or prestige. HA! TAKE THAT!”
	+ You know what that is?
	+ That, my friends, is the equivalent of that bookstore owner in Hawaii…you know, the one where the lady hunkered down with her kids reading right before she thought the missles were going to hit…its like that owner saying, “Mam, you are gonna have to pay for those books now. You got all your tears all over them and ruined the pages.”
	+ Like, at that point, that mom is not gonna argue dollars and cents. She’ll just throw a $50 bill on the counter and say, “Take my money. I thought I was gonna lose my kids, and now I’ve got them back.”
	+ This verse is like a police going to the man who lowered his daughter into a manhole and saying, “Excuse me, sir. You’ve violated a city ordinance when you put your daughter in that manhole, you will have to pay a $100 fine.”
	+ That guy would have said, “Here’s $200. I thought I was losing my daughter…but now…I have her back!!!!”
	+ When you’ve been taken low…hurt, beat down, discouraged, …when you’ve been through the hardest stuff life can throw at you…and then suddenly…you see the thing that gives you hope. The thing that says… “This event will not have the final word. This disease. This divorce. This sin. THIS INBOUND BALLISTIC MISSILE WARNING...will not define your future.
	+ Instead…when we get eyes to see the blessing that’s happening in the high places…
	+ **“There’s the immediate shock ... and then hopelessness and then the realization that there’s something that may be changing your life.”**
	+ Did you notice that in this story…its always the lower…that God is using to speak truth to the higher.
	+ A donkey, not only that, one of the few FEMALE donkeys that show up in the entire Bible…teaches a world renowned Witch Doctor…and puts him in his place.

**Back to 2)**

* + Of course, at this time, being female was something that was seen as negative. But God uses a FEMALE DONKEY, to tell this “seer of the gods” …well…how to actually see GOD.
	+ Then, God uses Balaam, who is doesn’t have the riches or the authority that the King of Moab has (that’s why its so tempting to him to be bought by money and power)…he uses Balaam to teach the King about what GOD actually says.
	+ A humble donkey teaches a powerful witch doctor about God’s blessing.
	+ Then, a humbled witch doctor teaches a powerful and rich King, that you can’t curse people God has decided to bless.
* TRANSITION: So let me ask you- Have you seen yet?
	+ Is your life filled with anxiety over disease, divorce, death, pain, hurt, unfairness, injustice?
	+ I’m not saying those things aren’t real.
	+ In fact, Christianity, unlike ANY OTHER WORLD RELIGION, acknowledges the reality of pain and suffering.
	+ So I’m not telling you that the hurt isn’t real…that the evil isn’t real…it most certainly is.
	+ But the question is, if you are bogged down and despairing in that…complaining like the Israelites in the wilderness…
	+ Maybe, God is trying to take you low…maybe he’s trying to open your eyes…to save you.
	+ **Maybe there is the immediate shock, then the hopelessness…and now, even starting today, he’s opening your eyes to see that there may be something changing your life.**
	+ See…
* **3) The path is narrowing. Time to get your eyes up.**
	+ This story has, I suppose a tragic end.
	+ Basically, the missiles hit Israel.
	+ Like we read in Chapter 25, some of the people of Israel end up worshipping the idol Baal.
	+ And every person who aligned themselves with this false God, dies by the sword.
	+ You think, isn’t that harsh.
	+ Well, first, bear in mind that life itself is a gift. From God.
	+ That’s what so many people in Hawaii realized back in January.
	+ But the people of Israel didn’t know that up on the hill, the very hill from which they would worship Baal, it was actually God, YHWH, who was the one blessing them.
	+ Tragic.
	+ God was blessing them, yet they chose to curse God.
	+ I don’t know if you noticed…
	+ But there’s a little literary trick that the author of Numbers uses when he tells the story of Balaam and the Donkey.
	+ **22:23**
	+ The first time the Donkey sees the angel, she is on a path, with no boundaries, no fences, no walls…just an open field to run off into. Plenty of space to avoid the angel’s sword.
	+ **22:24-25**
	+ The next time, the angel is on a narrow path, with a stone wall on either side. Not as much room to escape. And this time, salvation is more painful for Balaam. His foot gets crushed against a wall in order to avoid God’s judgment.
	+ **22:26-27**
	+ Then in the last instance, there is no room to turn aside…all the donkey can do is kneel.
	+ See, what the author is doing is showing that though God is patient, though he endures, and relents his judgment…though he has indescribable mercy even as he should pronounce judgment…
	+ …the chances for salvation are narrowing. The more you refuse to repent,… the more false gods, like money and power, God will strip from you so that you can’t do anything but kneel…humble yourself and say, “OK God, I quit. My only hope is you! These other gods DON’T Work.”
	+ Or, you can keep beating all the donkeys that are telling you, pleading with you to stop. To turn around. And you will find only the judgment of God.
* **Numbers 31:16**
	+ Unfortunately, for Balaam, even after God opened his eyes to see how he blesses his people…protects them from curses…
	+ Well, Balaam is one of the guys that leads Israel to worship Baal on the very spot where YHWH spoke through him to bless them.
	+ ...and he eventually met again the angel with the sword that he first met on the road on a donkey.
	+ He repented, but eventually, the call of the gods of money and power were the voices he listened to.
* **Back to 3)**
	+ Israel missed it, too.
	+ God had blessed them all through the wilderness…he had overcome their enemies, fed them, provided for them…and on the cusp of the promised land…that chose to reject him.
	+ Yet still, even in that, in God’s mercy…he preserved Israel. He brought those who refused to bow to Baal into the hope he promised.
	+ Remember the verses in Balaam’s blessing about a Wild OX…and his horns…and a lion?
	+ Remember the one about A King with a scepter that will rule that will SMASH the rulers of Moab.
	+ Those prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus.
	+ Jesus is referred to as the Lion of Judah.
	+ He is the king who rules the nations.
	+ And one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is LORD.
	+ But you know how he got there?
	+ God went low, to get high.
	+ He humbled himself. He put on human flesh.
	+ He came preaching, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God of is at hand! The Kingdom that you can’t see, you can’t perceive…its near. Its close. So turn around…because in the Kingdom of God, you will find that every injustice, every evil, every sad thing will be undone. And you will forever know what it is to see God and experience his blessing.”
	+ But people didn’t like that message.
	+ And So, eventually, after Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the high place, on a donkey…they beat him, like Balaam beat his donkey.
	+ **…and Jesus, though he looked for a way to turn aside from the cross that was prepared for him, he had no room. He could only die.**
	+ And on the cross, he was struck with our judgment. The sword of the angel of the Lord hit him to spare us.
	+ And now, if you humble yourself, go low, and repent…if you believe that Jesus has taken your sin from you…
	+ The bible says, you will be resurrected with him, lifted high, to experience and know God and his blessing for eternity.
	+ That’s the hope. That’s what allows you to persevere in the wilderness. The cross is your opportunity to see the ballistic missile of God’s justice though inbound for you, fell on Jesus.
	+ And now, we can lift each other from the manholes, we can embrace each other in the bookstores, because the bible says we were hidden in the bomb shelter of Jesus Christ.
	+ **COL 3:1-3**
	+ **So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.**
	+ **2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**
	+ **Jesus is now the priest in high place, protecting you from the effects of sin, and constantly pronouncing blessing over you.**
	+ **The only question is, will you lift your eyes to see him. Will you get out of your circumstances and repent…and trust him.**
	+ **Will you let the Lion of Judah save you?**
	+ **Will let the crurcifed, beaten donkey, the cursed God-Man on the tree, become the great wild ox whose horns pierce your enemy…even when your greatest enemy is you?**
* **Lords Supper Slide**
* **“There’s the immediate shock ... and then hopelessness and [the realization] that there’s something that may be changing your life.”**