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***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is***  
***God Behind the Seens***  
**2 Kings 6:8-23**  
**March 4, 2018, Jeff Germo**

Before we start I need to explain the title of this sermon. I need to preempt those anonymous notes I get about grammar or spelling mistakes. I sent my sermon title to Callista, as usual, so she could start working on graphics and things like that. I suggested *God Behind the Scenes*. And she said she didn't like it. She said it gives the impression that God only works behind the scenes. So, feeling the need to explain myself, I said, "That thought had crossed my mind as well. However, even though we do see God at work in very concrete ways through his people, most of what God does *is* behind the scenes." Then she said, "I like the word play between the two spellings of 'scene' and 'seen.'" So, I said, "Okay, how about, '*God Behind the Seens*,' meaning that much of what God does is behind what we can see. There you go. So, I am hoping that the grammarians in our listening audience will be able to fully appreciate this play on words and let me get away with this intentional 'blunder.'"

Let's do a quick recap of where we have come thus far in our sermon series. We started in September from the beginning of the Bible. We will eventually get to the end sometime next fall. We are only hitting some of the major points along the way so we can see how the message of Jesus is the overarching theme throughout the entire Bible.

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There are three threads we have seen weaving their way through every page of Scripture, through all history, and even through our lives.

1. **God is up to something.**
2. **Satan is up to something.**
3. **We, left to our own devices, without the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, most naturally move away from God.**

We saw these three threads very clearly in Genesis 1–3. God created the heavens and the earth with purpose in mind. He created the first man and first woman for relationship with each other and with him. His desire was that they would live in his perfect *shalom*, which is actually his desire for all of us.

God's desire for all of your relationships is that they would be peace-filled, that there would be harmony. Of course, it doesn't always work out like that. Paul said in Romans 12:18, "***As much as it depends on you live at peace with everyone.***" Sometimes we can do everything possible to be at peace, but someone in our life isn't doing their part. There are some people who seem to work purposefully at causing disunity and discord. We can't do anything about that. We can only control our behaviour, not the behaviour of others.

Meanwhile, back at The Garden, things went well until they believed the lie of Satan that they could be their own gods. They pointed their fingers at each other, at Satan and at God, deflecting all blame for their sin. Things spiralled out of control. *Shalom* was lost. Their relationship with each other and with God went bad because trust was gone. The most important part of relationship is trust. If you don't have trust you don't have relationship.

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So, God immediately set a plan in motion to restore the *shalom* that was lost. That is what God has been up to since then. That is the project he invites us partner with him in. He called Abraham and Sarah in their old age to be the start of a nation to partner with him, gathering a people for himself who would be all about restoring his *shalom* to the earth.

God promised them that their descendants would be too numerous to count, that they would have land to settle in and call their own, and that they would be a blessing to every nation on earth. They continually struggled in their journey with God. Like us, they were prone to wander.

Abraham and Sarah finally had a child when Abraham was one hundred and Sarah was ninety. Their son, Isaac grew up and got married to Rebecca. They had Jacob who married Rachel and Leah who had several sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. Make sure to read the back story in Genesis if you haven't done so yet. It is very intriguing and filled with drama.

Their family grew to 72 and ended up moving to Egypt because of a famine in Mesopotamia. It was there that they became slaves of the Egyptians for over 400 years. Over that time, while they were brutally oppressed by their slave masters, they grew in number to about two million.

They cried out to God to save them, so he raised up Moses who, through a whole bunch of miracles from God, delivered them out of the hands of their oppressors. But they ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years because of their disobedience and constant complaining.

During their wandering they camped out at Mount Sinai for a while, where God gave them the law, so they would know how to love each other and God once they crossed the Jordan River and settled in the land God had promised them.

They eventually settled in the land and while they were there they looked around and noticed that all the other nations had kings to lead them. Israel didn't have a king because God was their King. They had prophets and judges who would hear from God and give them direction. God, through Samuel, told them that he *would* give them a king, but warned them that the kings would not treat them kindly. They wanted one anyway, so Saul was their first king. He had a seemingly humble start, but his insecurity and pride led to a huge downfall.

David, a man after God's own heart, was the next and greatest king Israel ever had. God said that it would be through his lineage that the Messiah would come, so he would not fail to have a descendant on the throne. That's exactly what happened. From David to Jesus, was about a thousand years, and in that time there was a whole bunch of drama complete with espionage, murder, love stories, deceit, epic battles, heroism and lots of God stories in the middle of it all.

When David was near death he crowned his son Solomon king. After Solomon things went downhill very fast. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, because of his youthful pride and weak leadership, led Israel to a great division. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel refused to follow Rehoboam. Only Benjamin and Judah were left. So, two kingdoms were formed, Israel to the North and Judah to the south. Both kingdoms had kings and the Northern Kingdom of Israel typically had kings who led the people away from God. The Southern Kingdom of Judah, from time to time, had kings that tried to do the right thing, but none of them gave themselves wholeheartedly to God. Like us, they all had the propensity to wander away from God.

The various kings are recorded in the Old Testament in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. At the same time as all this drama with the kings was happening, God had appointed prophets to speak into the lives of Israel and Judah and their kings. God would use the prophets to warn his people when their behaviour was harmful to each other or God's reputation.

Many of these prophets were pretty quirky individuals. There are some very crazy stories about some of them. So make sure you read these passages so you get the back story. It can be quite confusing because the stories switch back and forth between the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel, but if you persevere you can make sense of it eventually.

If you are relatively new to the Bible or feel like you have never really gotten a good grasp of the overall storyline it would be a great time to join Brian Down's class Sunday mornings before church.

Today we are going to take a look at a passage in 2 Kings 6. This is a bizarre story. Let's set the scene here a bit by delineating who the characters are in this narrative.

First on the scene is the king of Aram and his army.

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Genesis 10:22 tells us that the Aramaeans, as well as the Israelites, were descendants of Shem, one of Noah's sons. They became a constant thorn in the side of Israel, continually at war with them. They are present day Syrians.

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Second on scene is the king of Israel. It doesn't say in this passage, you have to scan back a few chapters to find out that it was Joram, also called Jehoram. He was the son of Ahab and Jezebel who were infamous for being *the* most evil monarchs in Israel's history. Jezebel was "pure evil." Joram wasn't quite as bad as his mother and father, but close to it. He was a very weak leader who didn't lead the people to follow God wholeheartedly.

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And then comes Elisha onto the stage. He was an eccentric, quirky prophet of God. He was Elijah's protégé who was equally eccentric. So, we have the king of Aram, the king of Israel, and Elisha, the prophet of God.

Who is the protagonist in this story? It's God.

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He is the main character working behind the scenes and through Elisha. We are going to see that very clearly this morning.

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## **2 Kings 6:8–23 (NLT)**

***<sup>8</sup> When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, "We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place." <sup>9</sup> But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, "Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there."***

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***<sup>10</sup> So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there. <sup>11</sup> The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?"***

Do you get what's going on here? The Arameans were trying over and over again to go to battle with Israel, but God was informing the prophet Elisha of their plans. He would warn King Joram, so Israel would always keep one step ahead of the Arameans. The king of Aram was getting very frustrated. Assuming that he had a spy in his army, he accused his officers of being traitors.

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***<sup>12</sup> "It's not us, my lord the king," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"***

***<sup>13</sup> "Go and find out where he is," the king commanded, "so I can send troops to seize him." And the report came back: "Elisha is at Dothan."***

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Dothan was in northern Israel, coincidentally, the same place where Joseph found his brothers when they grabbed him and threw him into a well and then sold him to some slave traders.

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***14 So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. 15 When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. "Oh, sir, what will we do now?" the young man cried to Elisha. 16 "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!"***

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***17 Then Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!" The Lord opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire. 18 As the Aramean army advanced toward him, Elisha prayed, "O Lord, please make them blind." So the Lord struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked.***

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***19 Then Elisha went out and told them, "You have come the wrong way! This isn't the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to the city of Samaria.***

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The city of Samaria was in the Northern Kingdom, which was synonymously called the Kingdom of Israel or Kingdom of Samaria. The city of Samaria was 15 to 20 kilometres south of Dothan. So, Elisha led the Aramean army, all of whom were blinded by God, all the way from the city of Dothan to Samaria where Joram and his army were waiting for them. That's a pretty bizarre story.

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***20 As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, "O Lord, now open their eyes and let them see." So the Lord opened their eyes, and they discovered that they were in the middle of Samaria.***

You gotta picture this in your mind. It's a hilarious story. Joram, the king of Israel, was afraid of the Arameans. He was a fearful, weak leader. However, he and his army successfully kept one step ahead of them, avoiding a fight, and here comes this quirky prophet of God, Elisha, leading the entire Aramean army into the Israelite city of Samaria. Once they are in the middle of the city, Elisha asked God to open their eyes. King Joram freaks out. He has no idea what to do now that the army he has feared is led right to him by Elisha.

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***21 When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, "My father, should I kill them? Should I kill them?"***

That would have been the natural thing to do back then. He's got them in his pocket. They are stunned and docile. He could have easily killed them all.

***22 "Of course not!" Elisha replied. "Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master." 23 So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their master. After that, the Aramean raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.***

No, don't kill them. Invite them over for dinner. When I read this it reminded me of Psalm 23.

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**Psalm 23 (NLT)**

***1 The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.***

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**<sup>4</sup> Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.**

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**<sup>6</sup> Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.**

**“You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.”** That’s exactly what happened here. God did the unexpected.

I want to go back and look at our narrative and draw out some principles about God and how we can relate to him when we are facing down obstacles.

The first thing is something we have been saying in every sermon in this series.

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**1. God is at work.** He is doing something. We can’t see much of what he is doing. It is “behind the scenes,” behind what we can see. As followers of Jesus we need to do what Elisha did for his assistant, pray that God would open our eyes so we would see what he is doing around us.

If we really believe that God created the universe and humankind with purpose in mind, it only follows that he is at work doing things around us. Remember, his plan is to restore his *shalom* to the earth. He wants you to have peace in your relationships.

The Holy Spirit is always at work. He is continually drawing people to himself. Our job, as followers of Jesus, invited into partnership with him, is to ask God to open our eyes so we can see what he is doing and join him in it. The people in your life you are at odds with — God wants you to have peace with them. ***As much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone***” (Romans 12:18). God is working in your heart and he is working in the heart of the person you are at odds with. He wants you to do whatever you can to restore peace.

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**2. Things are not always as they seem.**

That is pretty clear from this narrative. What Elisha’s assistant saw when he looked out his door was the huge army of the enemy Arameans, ***“with troops, horses, and chariots everywhere.”*** Elisha asked God to open his assistant’s eyes so he could see that there is more happening than meets the eye. ***“... there are more on our side than on theirs!”***

You may look at your situation, whatever it is, and think you are facing an impossible opponent. You might feel like giving up. What God wants to do is get us to the place where we will open our eyes and see that he is up to something. Things are not always as they seem.

Our real enemy, Satan, wants us to give up. He will tell us lies and half truths. He will tell us that the reason the person is oppositional towards us is because they are an idiot and beyond hope, so you shouldn’t even bother trying.

What God wants us to see is that there is something else going on. There is a story behind why they are behaving the way they are. There is a story that goes back a long way before you encountered them. God wants to open our eyes so we don’t judge people just by how they act in the moment. Satan wants you to give up on them. God wants to open your eyes so you see them the way he sees them.

Satan wants to defeat you. He wants to tell you that God has forgotten you. He wants to tell you that you do not deserve God’s love. Here’s the beautiful truth. We don’t deserve God’s love. But, even though we

don't deserve his love, he loves us completely and unconditionally because we are his children. Nothing we do will make him love us anymore, and nothing we do will make him love us any less. He just loves us.

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### 1 John 3:1 (NLT)

***1 See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!***

All the obstacles you are facing now are real. They are painful. That's all true, however, there is more happening in your story than you know. God is working behind the "seens."

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### 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NLT)

***17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.***

Some of you are going through some pretty tough things right now. When you are in the middle of difficult confusing times, it's important to fix your gaze on Jesus and let him recalibrate your mind so you can see what he sees.

Whenever I go to Israel, after our tour is done, I rent a car for a few days and visit some families I know there. One time I was supposed to meet a friend in Nazareth. I started out in Jerusalem and trusted my GPS. This was several years ago, before GPS was that great. I had no idea where I was going so I had to trust the GPS implicitly. If I trusted my own intuition I could lead myself into some pretty scary places.

I tried very hard to take directions from the nice British GPS lady, but she would always tell me to turn just after I had past the corner. And then those words we are all well aware of would try to comfort me. "Recalibrating." She was trying to tell me that no matter what wrong turns I took, she would recalibrate and get me where I wanted to go. This happened several times and I was starting to get quite worried.

She led me up an extremely steep and very narrow dead-end road that was two way traffic, but only one vehicle could fit at any given time, in the middle of a very Arab part of a city that should have been Nazareth, but wasn't, and somehow I had to try to turn around while a whole bunch of people were glaring at me wondering what I was doing in their part of the world. I finally gave up and went to visit a different friend.

Here's the deal. **GPS will sometimes lead us wrong, but Jesus never will.** He has called us to follow him.

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**When we are going through confusing or tough times we need to slow down, fix our gaze on him and recalibrate.**

I have to do this every morning and several times throughout the day. I start out each day by getting quiet with Jesus and asking him to recalibrate my mind and help me to see things as he sees them.

Something else we can see very clearly in this passage is that...

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### 3. We are in a spiritual battle

The Bible tells us that we have a very real, spiritual enemy.

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Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

***<sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.***

We need to remember this. Satan is battling for control of our minds. He wants to discourage us. He wants us to live our lives as if he doesn't exist. He is very much at work, however.

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1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

***<sup>8</sup> Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.***

We need to know that we have a very real enemy and when we choose to willfully walk in disobedience to God by doing things we know God would not approve of, we open ourselves up to the attack of the evil one. There is more going on around us than what we can see.

Here's the deal though. God does not want us to live in fear, or hatred, or despair. He wants us to fix our gaze on Jesus and allow him to recalibrate our minds.

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2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

***<sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.***

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1 John 4:4 (NIV)

***<sup>4</sup> You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.***

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Ephesians 3:20–21 (NLT)

***<sup>20</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. <sup>21</sup> Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.***

We are going to celebrate communion together now. We are celebrating the fact that Jesus defeated sin, death and Satan so we could have peace with God. Satan would have us believe all kinds of lies about us, about God, and about others in an attempt to destroy our peace. Take a couple minutes and allow Jesus to recalibrate your mind so your thoughts come in line with his.



***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is  
God Behind the Seens  
2 Kings 6:8-23  
Week of March 4, 2018***

**Objective of this study:** To learn to open our eyes to what God is doing around us and join him in it.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 23** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

**Welcome (5 minutes)**

Tell stories about GPS leading you wrong.

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

**Word (30-45 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read 2 Kings 6:8-23.
  1. Describe the various characters in this narrative. What are they each like?
  2. What can we learn about God through this narrative?
  3. What can we learn about the spiritual world through this narrative?
  4. What can we learn about how to handle life's struggles through this narrative?
3. Divide up the following passages and ask, what does each say about how we can face conflict or struggles? 1 John 3:1; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:4; Ephesians 3:20-21

**Sermon Quote:** “The Holy Spirit is always at work. He is continually drawing people to himself. Our job, as followers of Jesus, invited into partnership with him, is to ask God to open our eyes so we can see what he is doing and join him in it.”

**Work (30-45 minutes)**

1. Is there something going on in your life that you wish you had God's perspective on? Share if you feel free.
  1. What kind of recalibration or change in thinking do you need to make in order to face it with Jesus and see it from God's perspective?



### **Prayer**

1. Spend the rest of the time sharing and praying for each other for your eyes to be opened to what God is going around you. Start by praising and worshipping Jesus. Recalibrate. Fix your eyes on him. Focus on being grateful.
2. Pray about the things you discussed in the study.
3. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
  - A. Praise God that he met all our needs financially last year. We are seeing so many God stories.
  - B. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
  - C. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
  - D. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
  - E. **Our missionary of the month:** Sandy Ewan in South Sudan
  - F. **Our missionary of the week:** Mark and Catherine Buhler in Vancouver with Fellowship International
  - G. **Local CR church:** Living Waters Fellowship Church in Black Creek: Randy and Diane Beatty