

Monday, April 17, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20

Samuel

It is an interesting thing to see what your name means. The names of our two daughters appear in the Bible over the course of 1 & Samuel. The name Abigail means “a father’s joy.” The name Hannah means “grace or favor.”

The Scriptural Hannah (whom we meet in today’s reading) did not see herself as particularly favored. Even though her husband Elkanah gave her a double portion as evidence of her love, Hannah spent most days in tearful prayer. It’s easy to miss the good that you do have, when another good thing is what you desire. In Hannah’s case, it was a child.

Hannah is an interesting person to consider, and one in whom we can see ourselves. On the one hand, she is lacking contentment and appreciation for the gifts that God has given her. On the other hand, she is completely faithful and persistent in prayer. A mixture of ingratitude and faith. Such a sinner and saint is someone we can well relate to.

Of course, Hannah is ultimately shown God’s grace and favor as “the LORD remembered her.” Don’t misunderstand this, as though God had forgotten her for a while. No, this is a way of saying God showed grace to Hannah by answering her prayer for a child. And the name that Hannah, the graced one, gave her child is truly beautiful – Samuel, which means God hears.

The LORD hears your prayers as well. His answer may not come when we wish and may not always be the answer we desire, but He hears. Always. And He showers on us far greater gifts than a double portion of food. He provides for all our needs of body and soul. He gives food and forgiveness, eternal life, and earthly needs. He has sent His Son as the greatest answer to all our prayers.

So, bring every concern knowing His care for you. And no matter the answer or His timing, trust in the One who hears and remembers you in Christ.

Prayer: Dear LORD, fill me with Your Spirit to be persistent in prayer, patient as I wait, and grateful for all You give to me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28

Giving Back

It's interesting. What should I choose to give to God? Granted, first of all, that everything I have comes from the Lord; that He gives me everything, and that what He gives me, He doesn't hold back with claw back features, with restrictive covenants, or such. He gives it to me. But that leads to another question.

If I take anything He gives me and I say, "I'm giving it to you." Doesn't that sound like I don't appreciate what He gave me? Surely, He wants me to appreciate what He has provided for me. But then, I want to use His gifts in a manner pleasing to Him; I want to be like Him living in and like God, Like Jesus.

Hmm, God shared with me, He shared what He has given me. He came to me when I was rebellious, seeking to hold onto what was worthless (my pride, my efforts, my "independence", etc). He shared Himself with me, even suffering death for me. So God approves of the idea of sharing. I can share what He has given, that is not a rejection of it, but an appreciation of the way He provides me to be able to share "like" Him.

While God doesn't rank things in importance like we do, still He shared Himself, His Son, with me, even to death. Surely whatever importance God has, ranks up there with His Son. So, if I am to share like Him, I need to share what is important to me! Money, OK, property OK, reputation, ok, time ok, Anything I would like to cling to - that is shareable.

Prayer: Father, help me to remember what You have done and to share like You. Guide me here too. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11

He Raises Up the Poor

Tears of joy and gladness, tears of sorrow and grief, are emotions married couples experience when a child is conceived and when they cannot conceive. In both cases, God does not abandon His children, HE *raises up the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap*, and the Anointed King is *exalted* and faithful.

Yahweh granted Hannah's prayer for a son, and she conceived and bore a son. After the young child was weaned, Hannah lent/given Samuel—"His name is El (God)" to God, at the house of Yahweh at Shiloh; she rejoiced in Yahweh's salvation;

*"My heart exults in Yahweh; my horn is exalted in Yahweh. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation. "There is none holy like Yahweh: for there is none besides You; there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. **Yahweh kills and brings to life; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Yahweh makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and He exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.** For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's, and on them He has set the world. "He will guard the feet of His faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces; against them He will thunder in heaven. Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth; He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of his anointed." (1-10)*

God comforts all who are in Jesus the Messiah-*anointed*. All, who were dead in sins, were *raised up* with Christ through faith and Baptism, declared righteous and united in Him, the exalted King who died for us, who was *raised from the dead* for our redemption, who, in *death and resurrection*, victoriously defeated the power sin, death, and Satan for sinful and broken mankind. In Baptism, you were *crucified and raised from the dead* with Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord and King.

Prayer – Holy Father, You kill and bring to life, You bring down to Sheol and raise up, You bring low and You exult, You raise the poor from the dust and lift the needy from the ash heap and seated us in Your salvation in Jesus Christ, to Him be Honor and Glory with You and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, April 20, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 2:12-21

Good vs. Bad

What we have here is a classic example of bad on one hand and good on the other. There's no questioning that Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are the bad guys in this event. We're meant to come across them on the page and go "Booo!" Likewise, there's no questioning that Samuel is the good guy in this even. We're meant to come across him on the page and cheer. It's very clear cut: Eli's sons are bad, Samuel is good.

But things get a little less clear-cut when you ask "Why?" Why are Eli's sons bad? Why is Samuel good? It's from asking these questions that we can learn quite a bit about ourselves.

The sons of Eli were bad because they were greedy. They sought to keep the best portions of the sacrifices prepared for God all to themselves. They were gluttonous. They often gorged themselves on the food prepared by other hard-working people and prepared for God. They were prideful. They arrogantly abused their power and positions to steal offering from God and they felt no guilt or shame in doing so. They were sinful. But do you know what this sounds like? The Old Adam. This sounds like you and I and our own ugly, sinful nature. We are a lot like Eli's sons in this story. Due to our sinful nature, we are not the good guys.

But on the other hand is Samuel, and he's the good guy. He lives in the presence of God, worshiping Him, serving Him, and truly knowing Him. Samuel is not greedy or gluttonous or prideful. No, instead, because of His relationship with God, he is released from these sins. He has been made righteous before God. He's the good guy. Now, what does this sound like? New Creation. This sounds like you and me. Not like we used to be when we were trapped by our own sinful nature – the Old Adam – but the way we are now having been redeemed, forgiven, and saved by Jesus Christ. We have been made righteous before God. Just like Samuel, because of Christ, we are made into the good guys.

The challenge for us, then, is moving forward. Our sinful nature will never truly disappear until our time on this earth ends. And yet, Christ's forgiveness has made us new and righteous in His sight. We exist in both of these realities. We are both like Eli's wicked sons and like righteous Samuel. We are both saints and sinners. We are both the bad guys and the good guys. May we push aside the Old Adam and cling to the new identity Christ has won for us. May we strive to do good.

Prayer: "Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon ourselves the armor of light now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the Last Day, when He shall come again in glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to life immortal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer for newness of life in Christ," pg. 311.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, April 21, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 2:22-26

Growing in Favor with God and Man

My Family of Hope, the Prophet Samuel had an interesting life. God chose Samuel to be His instrument in the transition period from the rule of the judges to the reign of kings. Samuel was God's instrument.

Samuel's name means; 'I Asked The LORD.' Samuel's Mother, Hannah was childless. One year she was visiting the Tabernacle at Shiloh and the High Priest, Eli saw her. The Lord "remembered" Hannah's cry and heartfelt prayer. (1 Sam.1:19). The Lord blessed Hannah with a son and she named him, 'Samuel.' Samuel means, "I Asked the LORD." Hannah dedicated Samuel to God and Samuel served the LORD for the remainder of his life, from a young boy serving under Eli's leadership to being a Mighty Prophet of God.

1 Sam. 2:26 continues, "And, the boy, Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men." This verse is the same description that Luke uses in describing Jesus as a young boy. Luke 2:52, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and favor with God and man."

Samuel and Jesus grew in favor with God and man by being faithful to God. Samuel, as we know, was obedient and served Eli, the High Priest, studying God's Word and serving faithfully. Jesus, as a boy, was in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions.

God gives each of us the same opportunity to grow in favor with God and man with our Hope Family. Proverbs 3:4 states; "Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man." God gives us this opportunity each Sunday as we gather to Worship, hear His Word, and partake in the Lord's Supper. Our children hear the Children's message (we do too!), attend Sunday School, and we can attend Sunday School or the weekly Ladies and Men's Bible Studies. Individually and collectively, our Hope Family grows as we hear and study God's Word, live our faith with each other as His Ambassadors, 'growing in favor with God and man.'

My heartfelt prayer for each of us is that we avail ourselves to read His Word and receive His Sacraments whereby our hearts and lives are filled with His Living Water and the Bread of Life, growing in favor with God and man. AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, April 22, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 3](#)

“The Call of Samuel”

Have you ever wondered what God would have you do? Should you take that new job that you’ve been watching? Should you propose to the woman you’ve been dating? Should you choose paper or plastic at the grocery store? For most of us, God doesn’t provide clear, direct, unambiguous answers to such questions.

I’d guess most pastors wrestle with this long and hard before entering the ministry. In my case, I read stories like today’s reading to see how Samuel handled it. I read many other places in the Bible where ministry and pastors’ duties and calling are described. I talked to pastors and other people (including my wife), prayed, and meditated on the question. I even found an old copy of Martin Luther’s book, “On Vocation” and read that, cover to cover. But I never heard God speak to me as clearly as Samuel’s experience.

In verse seven of our reading we’re told, **“Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.”** This doesn’t mean that Samuel hadn’t ever read Scripture or didn’t have a saving relationship with the Lord; it’s meant to describe all Israel at this time. God’s people had the holy Words of God and knew Him, but they hadn’t had a prophet who talked directly with God in a long time. And Samuel had grown up with faithful parents and been “lent” to the Temple where he’d studied the Scriptures and knew them well. He wouldn’t have been sleeping **“in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was”** if he wasn’t well on his way to becoming a priest.

But his “call experience” was something we’d all appreciate when we face those critical choices. God’s voice calling to him, three times. God coming and physically standing before Samuel and speaking directly to him – that’s what we’d like!

But God has spoken clearly to us. At our baptisms, He said, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” His Word entered our ears at that time as the water washed over our head. We were made His children when that happened, and made heirs of His Kingdom. Since then, we’ve heard and read His Word in Church, Bible Studies, from reading, and through fellow believers. And, our prayers and requests are heard and sometimes even made on our behalf by the Spirit.

We should follow these Words, pray, meditate, and talk to other believers about those hard issues. And then, filled with His Spirit and God-given wisdom, make decisions informed and comforted by these means.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray as Samuel did: **“Speak, for Your servant hears.”** In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, April 24, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 4:1-11

Right Question, Wrong Answer

After a defeat at the hands of the Philistines that led to the death of 4,000 men, the people of Israel were right to be taking stock. What had gone wrong? Any military is wise to consider such a question when a battle is lost. The correct course of action is to ask questions, properly assess the issues, and fix the problems before much larger losses follow.

The Israelites realize they must ask a larger version of this question: “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?” They rightly understood that a defeat of Israel was only possible if the LORD permitted it. As we read 1 Samuel, we are supposed to recognize that this first defeat is a call to repentance. False shepherds are serving as priests (Eli’s sons: Hophni, and Phineas), and they were leading the people away from the LORD.

It’s the right question, but they come up with the wrong answer. Instead of coming before the LORD in sorrow over their straying, they grab the ark to use God as their weapon. This continued sin leads to a much larger loss of life as 30,000 soldiers die along with Hophni and Eli, and the ark is lost.

The ark was the gracious presence of God in the midst of His people, but instead of coming before the LORD grieving their sin and receiving forgiveness, they blindly attempt to manipulate God. This disaster points us to ask the right questions in seeking the LORD’s guidance, but also to come before Him in humility. He will not be manipulated to our desires, but He does promise to fulfill His desires. He desires to forgive, help, and aid all who come before Him in repentant faith. May He always lead us to do so.

Prayer: Dear LORD, forgive me for the times I have strayed from Your Word and expected You to endorse my sin. Lead me to follow you through repentant faith and find true life in Your Son Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, April 25, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 4:12-22

A Great Privilege

God has given me a great privilege in having and using His Word, the Bible. Though He used men to write the words, and men to edit/compile the Words in what we call the Bible; yet the Bible is His Words given for my repentance, my education, and my sharing with others. So, I use it daily and grow and learn in it.

And I share the Word from God as He gives me opportunity and occasion. That too is a great privilege and responsibility. True, He uses it to change lives, true He brings salvation where He wants to, and true He doesn't need me to do anything; but I want to do things His way, to take advantage of what He gives me for the benefit of others, even as I see Jesus did.

In fact, though, I am like so many others. I often fail to do His will - Lord change me! It hurts to see others hurt because they bear the brunt of my failings. I am blessed to be able to help - and I fail. Sometimes the failure is to be quiet, to not share the good news; sometimes the failure is to see others doing what the Bible says offends God and to keep quiet. How hard it is to realize that sometimes, keeping quiet is the wrong answer.

Eli saw his sons and the church misusing God's evidence of His works and did not insist on stopping it. And so, he saw the disaster that false actions, that trusting in their own decisions, rather than Gods, fell on his family and the church. Please God don't let me make the same decision to be quiet!

Prayer: Father in heaven, I am afraid of others, of how they misuse Your Word and so bring trouble to Your people. Give me the courage to speak, to rely on You and not on any eloquence. Trusting You above all. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 5

The Ark of God

The Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark of God, and brought the Ark from Ebenezer—**אֶבְנֵי־עֵזֶר**, *stone of help*, “memorial stone erected by Samuel to mark where God helped Israel to defeat the Philistines - north of Jerusalem,” (BDB; see 1 Samuel 7:1), to a city off of the Mediterranean, called Ashdod, to the house of Dagon. Dagon was a fish god of the Philistines, a man-headed and hands, fish-body image/statue, supposed to be a deity of fertility. The Ark of God was in a pagan temple, and the next day, Dagon was found face down before Yahweh’s Ark. This very thing happens again, yet this time, the head and hands of Dagon are lying cut off on the threshold of Dagon. The Philistines are terrified and afflicted with tumors in **“Ashdod and its territory”** (1 Sam 5:6). These men do not want the Ark of God no longer and say, **“The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god”** (v. 7). Yahweh’s judgment and plague has come upon the Philistines. So the Philistines brought the Ark of God to Gath, and Yahweh, the God of Israel, afflicted the men there with tumors, young and old. Then the Ark of God is sent to Ekron, and the people in panic cried out, **“They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people . . . “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people”** (v. 10, 11). Yahweh’s hand was very heavy upon them there afflicting men with tumors who did not die, and **“the cry of the city went up to heaven”** (v. 12). Frightfully Amazing! Yahweh’s judgment is continually poured out on unrepentance and rejection of Him.

We are reminded, **“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”** (Exodus 20:4). For all who reject God’s Word, **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Heb 10:31).

For “everyone who confesses that “Jesus is Lord” and believes in his resurrection will be saved). To that end, he may send calamities to move people to contrition so that when they hear the Gospel, they may believe and be saved. Yet his grace is resistible. The total depravity of fallen human nature is on display when people refuse to repent and call on his saving name” (*Concordia Commentary, 1 Samuel, 140*).

Prayer – Lord Jesus, thank You for being present with us to heal us, to forgive us, and to strengthen us in love for one another. Amen. (TLSB).

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, April 27, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 6:1-7:2

God Keeps His Covenant

At first reading this story may seem odd. The ark of God was stolen away by the Philistines, leading the Israelites defeated. It seemed as though their covenant with God was lost. But God brought much trouble the Philistines who had taken the ark. So they put the ark of God on a cart pulled by two cows along with gifts and treasures, and they were brought back to the people of God in Beth-shemesh. But the, God struck down the killed seventy people who had looked at the ark when they weren't supposed to! The Israelites at Beth-shemesh were so happy to get the ark back and relieved that the ark was safe, but then God punishes them for making sure it was ok.

That seems kind of weird. It seems like God punished them for taking care of the ark. Why would God do this?

To God, even though the ark was with the Philistines for a while, the covenant He made with Israel had not changed. Part of this covenant was that no one should look upon or touch the ark unless they had been given special permission. To God, this rule still applied even though the circumstances had changed briefly. With this in mind, we really shouldn't be surprised by God's reaction to the people who looked upon the ark in Beth-shemesh. Of course God remembers His covenant! Of course He keeps the punishment that He warned regarding those who looked upon the ark! Those seventy people had broken their covenant with God! This story proves that He remembers His covenant – including the punishment if that covenant is broken.

But His covenant also includes promises if that covenant is kept. God promises forgiveness, life, and salvation. And God remembers His covenant. We know that He does because He kept His ultimate promise: sacrificing His own Son Jesus for us. And now He continues to keep His promise to forgive us through baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution. And He will keep His promise of life and salvation when He comes again on the final day of judgment to raise us from the dead and reunite us with Him forever. God remembers His covenant – both the punishments and the promises. This story of the ark's reunion with the people of Beth-shemesh works as proof of that fact. Thanks be to God that He keeps His covenant!

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, God of all grace, govern our hearts that we may never forget Your blessings but steadfastly thank and praise You for all Your goodness in this life until, with all Your saints, we praise You eternally in Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- *LSB*, "Prayer of Thanksgiving to God," pg. 310.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, April 28, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 2:22-26

Ebenezer-The Stone of Help

My Family of Hope, in our test for today from 1 Sam. 7:13-17, we see God working thru the Prophet Samuel bringing an, "Ebenezer"-The Stone of Help," to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines. God has delivered us through the Rock, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! As the prodigal son, in his wretched state feeding pigs and destitute longed for all the blessings of his father's house (Luke 15), so Israel "mourned and sought after the Lord." The Israelites, like us, are tempted to sin, fall away and when we are convicted of our sin, repent, and return to the Lord.

God heard their cry and used Samuel to bring His Law and Gospel to them. Samuel spoke, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, rend yourselves of the foreign gods...and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve Him only...He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 7:3).

They gathered at Mizpah and confessed their sins to God; "We have sinned against the Lord." We too, pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O, God, and renew a right spirit within me." The Lord heard Samuel's prayer and gave the victory over the Philistines and forgave their sin (1 Sam. 7:10-12). The Lord hears our prayers and forgives our sin. (1 Jn. 1:9) As the Prophet Isaiah states, "Though your sins are a scarlet, they will become as white as snow."

Samuel then took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shem. He named it, 'Ebenezer,' saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us" (1 Sam. 7:12). God continued to help Israel and continued to provide for them in all their needs and protected them from their enemies. Ultimately, He provided their Savior and ours, Jesus.

Jesus is your Stone of Help! The Empty Cross and the Empty Tomb are the proof. He provides us with His Living Waters to restore our soul! He strengthens us with His Body and His Blood for the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, the strengthening of our faith and the sure promise of eternal life.

My Family of Hope, Jesus' last words to the Disciples and to us before He ascended into heaven in the Gospel of Matthew, strengthen us as we look to God, our Stone of Help! "Lo, I AM with you always, to the end of the age." AMEN! (Mt 28:20)

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, April 29, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 8:1-9](#)

“Appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”

“Careful what you wish for; you just might get it”, goes the saying. Samuel, generally thought of as being a righteous judge and prophet, had fallen into the same pitfall as Eli, his mentor. With no hint that God had told him to do so, Samuel appointed his two sons to be judges over the southern part of Israel. And they took on this position with zeal. But they didn’t walk in Samuel’s ways (which usually were God’s ways). No, we’re told, “They took bribes and perverted justice.”

So, all the elders of Israel came to Samuel and demanded, “Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” If they’d said that they wanted to know when God would send them the promised king who would rule them in mercy and righteousness (Who we now know as Jesus), it would be a good question – no, a great request. But no, they wanted a king “just like all their neighbors”.

I still believe that America is the best place on earth to live. Our nation, and people, and (even) government are the best in the history of the world. But, you don’t have to look too far to find ample evidence of corruption, crime, greed, selfishness, etc. (I could go on). Earthly kings (and presidents, prime ministers, etc.) are woefully human.

No, wanting a king like all our neighbors isn’t what we need. But we humans aren’t very bright when it comes to what’s good for us. We want kings when we shouldn’t (and all too often the worst ones look the best to us), and we hang the best King on a cross and shout, “We have no king but Caesar!”

Fortunately for us, though, God works through kings. Sometimes they’re good, faithful people (really, a few are), and sometimes God works through them anyway. Sometimes, through our bad choices in leaders, we get not what we want, but what we need – like the people of Samuel’s day. Sometimes the bad happens to us to turn us back to our true, real, best-ever King, Jesus.

Prayer: King Jesus, in this dark time of increasing tribulation, bless us and hear our prayers for good leaders to encourage peace on earth and the spread of Your Good News. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, May 1, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 8:10-22

No Disclaimers

Having put in a request for a king, Yahweh reads the disclaimer to the Israelites. You are certainly familiar with the legal disclaimer that occupies a brief portion of every medication commercial. After multiple scenes of happy, dancing people set to upbeat music for this new amazing drug that is supposed to lessen your chance of dandruff, there is the brief, but terrifying legal disclaimer. You know it sounds something like, "Talk to your doctor today to see if Dandroffoze could be right for you...Some who have taken Dandroffoze have experienced increased dandruff, nasal congestion, burning of the fingernails, loss of feeling below the waist, bleeding of the eyes, ears, and nose, and, occasionally, death. Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms." (You know, if your symptom is death, you better have a long talk with your doctor!)

Well, the people of Israel had seen the commercials and they were sure that King was the cure to everything that ailed them. So, they went to Samuel because they were convinced that a King was right for them. Samuel shared the authoritative word of God as to what the guaranteed side effects of having a king would be, and they can all be summed up in three words: he will take. He will take your sons, your daughters, the best of your fields, vineyards and olive orchards, 1/10th of your grain and grapes, your male servants and female servants, and 1/10th of your flocks. AND "you shall be his slaves" (v 17). But the people had bought the slick advertising and said, "No way! ACTUALLY, we will have a king and we will be like other nations and He will judge us and fight our battles."

The irony is unbelievably sad. The people had been slaves under Pharaoh. And the truth is, they were going to be servants/slaves to some King, but instead of being under the thumb of Pharaoh, they were rescued by the gracious King Yahweh, Lord of heaven and earth. And He truly does judge the world with righteousness, and as He told Moses at the edge of the Red Sea, "The LORD (Yahweh) will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (Exodus 14:14).

In our foolish pride, we often run after other gods, other kings, fooling ourselves into thinking another king will be great or thinking we can rule ourselves. No. We always have a king. We will either serve the Heavenly King or we will serve those who oppose Him. There are no other options. And the great comfort for those who trust in the true King, He doesn't conscript us to fight for him while he sits at home (like the kings of Samuel's disclaimer). No our King fights for us. He gives His very life for us. He does so to rescue us from slavery to sin, death, and the devil. For our King "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). Such is the mercy of the True King, and His reign requires no disclaimers.

Prayer: Dear LORD, lead me to serve You alone, the One True King. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 9

Not My Plan

God has given me a brain, and I use it. I plan out the future and prepare ahead of time. Of course, I don't know everything so I have to allow for slip and slide as I progress through time. But, alas, I keep doing my planning, with consulting my God.

God has brought me here, without my help. I know that, but I keep forgetting that his plans take priority. Its not that my ideas are evil or wrong or even a bad idea. Its just that God's ways are so far above me that I never know them when I plan. I need to expect God to plan far better than I do.

And like so many other ways, I get hurt when God's ways are different from mine. Yes, I know they are better, but I keep trying to take control of my life. As if I could do a better job than God! So the small things, that I skip over as not important, God uses to change lives.

Saul just wanted to help his dad - but God used that effort to show him that God had a bigger plan for his life. So knowing that is the way God operates, I want to let Him guide my planning, being ready to change as He directs. The very fact that God acts independently of me means that I cannot even try to operate against His will - for which I am thankful. That would not be good. Thank you, God, for what I don't know you will bring.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for planning a better future for me. Please calm my heart, helping me to notice and appreciate you in my life. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, May 3, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 10:1-16

The Anointed Prince

The Prophet Samuel anointed Saul by pouring oil on his head and kissed him, saying, “Has not Yahweh anointed Saul as ruler over Israel, His inheritance?” Saul was marked as consecrated to Yahweh by this anointing from Samuel, and this was an act of God assuring Samuel as God’s instrument in this anointing Saul, king of Israel, ruler of God’s inheritance. Then, an interesting thing happens, Samuel tells Saul that he will meet a couple of men by “**Rachel's tomb**” and will tell him about female donkeys he sought after and about his father worried about him, and then to go to Tabor, where “**three men are going up to God at Bethel**” with offering to God, three loaves of bread, three goats and a skin of wine, and to accept loaves of bread from them as a sign as the designated ruler of Israel, and then he would meet a group of prophets prophesying with harp, lyre, and flute before them and the Spirit of Yahweh “**will rush upon you and you will prophesy and be turned into another man.**” Samuel tells Saul that God will be with him when these signs meet him, and then he will come to him after seven days, and so, “**God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day.**” What's going on here?

“Saul was told that the Spirit of Yahweh would rush upon him (1 Sam 10:6), an expression that is used for the Spirit’s endowment of Samson, Saul, and David (see the first textual note on 10:6). In the book of Samuel only Saul, Saul’s messengers, and David are said to have a special gift of God’s Spirit (1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 16:13; 19:20, 23; 2 Sam 23:2). The outward manifestation of the Spirit served an evangelical purpose, signaling the arrival of the new ruler in the kingdom of God, as in the NT, when signs of the Spirit accompanied the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2; 10:44–46; with prophesying in Acts 19:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 14:5–6, 22)” (*Concordia Commentary, 1 Samuel*, p. 196).

For us today, God anoints us with His Spirit in preaching the Gospel and Holy Baptism into Jesus Christ, The Anointed One of God. Paul reminds us of God’s promise to you and all who believe in Christ, “**For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee**” (2 Corinthians 1:20-22).

Prayer – “Thank You, heavenly Father, for providing Jesus as the ultimate sign of Your gracious guidance. By the power of Your Spirit, increase my faith in You and my confidence in living for Jesus. Amen.” (TLSB).

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, May 4, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27

The Reluctant King

Saul has a bad reputation among Christians today – and to a certain degree, rightly so. His time as king was full of terrible decisions and personality flaws. He turned away from God, become arrogant and self-absorbed, tried to kill David on multiple occasions, and became just the very definition of a bad, wicked man. But this is not the same image of Saul that we read about in our passage for today.

It seems that Saul wasn't always a horrible, Godless, and wicked man wrapped up in his own ego, pride, and arrogance. Instead, the Saul we read about today is caring, God-fearing, and extremely humble – so humble, in fact, that he hid among baggage to avoid being king! Imagine that! The tallest, strongest guy in the whole nation crouching and hiding among bags so as to not be given the responsibility of king. What a ridiculous image!

Now, it's easy for us to point our fingers at Saul at this moment and say, "He's running away from God's command like Jonah! Saul just wanted to avoid doing what God told him to do. See! He really is a selfish, wicked man!" But then look at what Saul did next. When he was discovered hiding in the baggage, he stepped up to the task of being king. He could have said, "Nope! I'm not doing it! Sorry, but you've got the wrong guy!" Seeing that Saul was humble and caring, this is probably precisely what he wanted to say. But he didn't. Instead, he stepped up to the plate and did his best to fulfill the role that God has assigned to him. This humble man reluctantly yet boldly did what God commanded of him.

This is a truly glorious moment for Saul that we should all learn from. There may be times in life when we don't feel up to the challenge. Times when our humility and sinful nature tells us that we aren't right for the role that God is calling you to fill (maybe that role is parent, spouse, employee, friend, etc.) Times when you want to hide in a pile of luggage and pray that God will pick someone else. But God has chosen you even when you don't feel qualified. So may you, like Saul, step up to the plate and do your best to fulfill the roles that God has assigned to you looking to Jesus who leads you. May you rely on Jesus to guide you through them and pick you up every time you fail. May you (though perhaps humbly or reluctantly) boldly do as Christ calls you to do.

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, grant Your mercy and grace to Your people in their many and various callings. Give them patience, and strengthen them in their Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to their neighbor in Christ's name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer for Christian Vocation," pg. 311.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, May 5, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 11:1-11

Righteous Anger/Righteous Action - Saul's & Ours

My Family of Hope, in today's reading, we see Saul acting faithfully in serving God and the Israelites in delivering them from the Ammonites. Saul showed righteous anger that led to righteous action.

Saul had returned home after his public selection as King designate at Mizpah (1 Sam. 10:17-27). While he was waiting on the LORD for his next step, Nahash, the Ammonites besieged Jahesh Gilead to demand their surrender. The condition was for each of them to gouge out their right eye "bringing disgrace to all of Israel" (v.5).

Saul's responded in both his righteous anger "when Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger" (v.6) AND his righteous action- he cut up his 2 oxen sending them throughout Israel. (v.7) Saul's Message moved Israel and they responded. "They turned out as one man...the men of Israel numbered 30,000 and the men of Judah numbered 3,000." (vv.7,8)

The end result of Saul's righteous anger and righteous action was the destruction of the Ammonites and the deliverance of Israel.

What about us? How do we respond when we see and hear of injustice and evil in our community, nation, and world? As Christians, we look to God for guidance, direction and hope. We pray for wisdom and His Spirit to lead us. Our righteous anger at Sin and its impact on the innocent and helpless, by God's grace and leading, moves us to Righteous Action. Lutheran's For Life is but one example of Christians responding to the evil by acting and living their faith. There are many others. When we see and hear of movements and social actions attacking our Christian faith and beliefs on what is a man, what is a woman, what constitutes marriage, when does life begin, etc. we take our collective breath, get on our knees and pray for His Spirit and His wisdom to do what is right.

We look to Jesus and how He defended the defenseless, healed the blind, the lame, freed the demon possessed, raised Lazarus, died so we will never die, forgave our sins and gave us His forgiveness, life and salvation for today and for eternity! As John 10:27 says, "My Sheep hear my voice, I know them, they follow Me, they will never perish and no one can take them out of my hand."

We see in Jesus' telling of the Good Samaritan this desire to act. "Which of them do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hand of robbers?" "The law expert replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus said, Go and do likewise." (LK 10:36,37)

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we pray you open the eyes of our hearts to see the needs of others in our community, nation, and world. May You grant us wisdom, discernment, and your Spirit to defend those who cannot defend themselves and to speak for those who have no voice. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, May 6, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 11:12-15](#)

“It’s Hard to be King”

Saul has behaved better than could possibly be imagined! He’s reluctantly accepted Samuel’s anointing as King of Israel. He humbly hid himself so that someone else might be crowned King. Then, when found, he accepted God’s call to lead his people, then waited for God’s direction for what to do as King. He faithfully voiced God’s wrath over the enemies of God’s people and led his new kingdom into battle, his first act as King. A resounding success, He remained humble, giving full credit to the LORD for their victory. A great 1st act of Saul’s reign!

But, before the battle, on the day of his coronation, “some worthless fellows” had publicly spoken against Saul’s kingship, brought him no presents, and marveled at the idea of Saul “saving” them. And now, flush with victory, some of the most eager of the new King’s subjects tried to get on his best side by suggesting those men should be caught and executed. “Let’s rid ourselves of complainers and support our king”, they might have been thinking. But again, Saul refused their request saying, “for today the Lord has worked salvation in Israel.” His mind was firmly focused on the true source of their victory.

It’s hard to be king and to remain faithful. To be surrounded by people saying wonderful things about you, to have power over life and death, to have riches, fame, and be in a position where you can lead all your people into tremendous accomplishments, just might go to your head. As we’ll soon see, Saul is a case study in this.

Jesus taught His disciples, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” King Saul, just as our leaders of today, lived in this environment and experienced constant temptation to put “self before subject” (otherwise known as “self before God”). And, once they succumb to this temptation once, it only becomes easier and easier.

Pray for our leaders and rejoice when you find some who remain faithful to their calling. Work to support them, reminding them that they are serving God by serving their constituencies. And who knows, maybe Saul was a good argument for term limits? But we do know that God loves and provides for us, even through sinful, human leaders.

Prayer: Oh God, You are the King of the Universe. Bless our leaders with faith in You, that they may serve You by serving us. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, May 8, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 12

The Will of the King

Now that King Saul is in power, the time of the judges has come to an end. It's time for Samuel to head into retirement...at least as the leader of the nation. But remains a teacher of what is good and right in God's eyes. So with this last moment in the spotlight (before his teaching would move to the background), Samuel makes sure that the people know that they didn't need a king. They already had the best One, but by kicking King Yahweh to the curb they had an evil thing.

In the past whenever they cried to God for relief from invading nations, God had faithfully raised up a leader for them, even while He remained the King. But this time, Israel was sure they knew better. They demanded a king. Samuel has warned them, but now it is made obvious. To confirm Samuel's word of warning, the LORD sends a thunderstorm in the midst of the dry season. This might seem like a good thing, but it's not. It puts in danger the wheat harvest that needs dry conditions. The wheat was planted to come of age when it never rains in Israel. But the King whom the Israelites have demoted rules over much more than an earthly army! Rather than trust in the LORD to solve their problems, the people demanded a different king. They are reminded that any other king will certainly be weaker.

How often do we tell God how He should rescue us from our problems? We are sure that He just needs to follow our ideas of how and when to help. How foolish we are! How different is our Lord Jesus, who prayed, "Not my will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Despite Israel's sin, Samuel promises to continue to pray for them and teach them. Even better, Samuel promises that "the LORD will not forsake His people." This is our comfort also. The LORD never forsakes us. Jesus keeps forgiving us, reassuring us with His Word, and guiding us by His Spirit. He was forsaken on the cross that we, His people, would never be forsaken on account of our sin. So when your time of trial comes, call out to the LORD and remember His faithful love. Trust the King of Kings to know best how and when to help. He's already met your greatest needs in Christ, the King.

Prayer: Dear LORD, in my time of need, help me. Most of all, help me to follow you, especially in my trials, trusting in Your good and gracious will. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 13:1-7

The Problem of Pride

I am tempted, always, to take credit for what God does through me, or even those who help me. It is easy, after all, I did those things. Don't I deserve the credit? And it makes me feel so good!

But pride is not good for me. Oh, I what to think it is because I like that feeling for a moment, but then, then comes the moment of truth. I boast, even to myself, I have value but I didn't really do it. It was Gods who did it, not me alone. When I boast, when I take credit for God's work, then I lose God's support. Then I find that I can't really repeat what I have taken credit for. Then in panic, I want to try to force God to do for me what I want. Sigh.

Repent, I tell myself. Repent for I surely cannot do what God does. I turn to God in prayer, I listen to Him and let go of my pride. Sometimes I must admit to others that my boast was just that, that I cannot do what I boast about. But God is merciful, more often, I just mourn in repentance, as I realize how failed my Lord again. I am so thankful that He forgives me and strengthens me to rely upon Him once again.

Why O God, do I continually try to replace you with myself? Why do I keep falling for such foolishness? I am so glad that You love me anyway!

Prayer: Thank you for forgiving me. Please keep reminding me that humility is best for me. Thank you again. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, May 10, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 13:8-23

The Foolishness of Saul/The Man After God's Heart

The men of Israel are in trouble, and the people are hard-pressed and hiding because the Philistine army was gathered like the sands on the seashore, oppressing the people on the way to fight Israel. Now Saul was at Gilgal waiting for the appointed time of seven days appointed by the Prophet Samuel, and Samuel did not come, and the people were now scattering from Saul. Impatiently and perhaps frantically, Saul asked for the burnt offering and peace offering and offered the burnt offering. And right after he finished the burnt offering, Samuel came, and Saul met him, and Samuel said,

“What have you done?’ And Saul said, ‘When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.’ And Samuel said to Saul, ‘You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart . . .” (1 Samuel 13:11-14b).

Samuel left, and Saul gathered the people and went to Geba of Benjamin with about six hundred men. The Philistines were in Michmash, spreading out from there, and they went to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes or sickles. They were charged money by the Philistines, for there was no blacksmith in all the land of Israel, for they had no weapons but Saul and Jonathan, and so the story of everything continues to unfold . . . tune in tomorrow for chapter fourteen for the battle.

Saul disregarded Yahweh's command through the Prophet Samuel by offering a sacrifice ignoring God's Word, an offense also against the Law and the Prophets, and desecrating his kingly God-given office in doing this unauthorized sacrifice. Samuel tells Saul that his kingdom will not continue, and Yahweh sought a man after His own heart and **“has commanded him to be prince over His people”** (v. 14; 1 Sam 9:16; 2 Sam 7:16) ← We see this man to be prince, is David.

For you, Yahweh God has provided you an everlasting Prince and a Kingdom lasting forever in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of God who defeated sin and death for you and lives and rules over all kingdoms, giving you a new heart through faith and Baptism.

Prayer – “Almighty God, in Your infinite wisdom, You use all things for our temporal and eternal good. Forgive us the many times we do not wait on You but turn to our own faulty human solutions. In Jesus' name. Amen.” (TLSB)

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, May 11, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 14:1-23

God Has a Plan

This is an amazing story. Saul's army is trapped, outnumbered, and using farming equipment as weapons. They are on the edge of being completely overrun by the Philistine army. The situation is so dire that many members of the Israelite army have run away and returned home. It's in this situation that Jonathan has a wild idea. Jonathan has the wild idea that he and his armor-bearer are going to sneak into the Philistine camp, present themselves to the enemy – make themselves vulnerable – and then see what God tells them to do. If God tells them that they will defeat the Philistines, then they will attack. But if God tells them that they will not defeat the Philistines, then they will retreat. This is a crazy plan! To summarize, Jonathan's plan is as follows: "let's sneak into the enemy camp, present ourselves to them, and then see what happens." This is crazy! But as crazy as Jonathan's plan is, we can learn a lot from it. In fact, in some ways, we may even want to emulate Jonathan's plan.

Jonathan trusted God. His plan was wild and ambitious, but he completely trusted that God would guide him through it, whether it ended in victory or retreat. He didn't test God by saying, "If you're really with us, God, then help us defeat the Philistines." Instead, he trusted God saying, "I know that you're with us, God, so tell us what to do." He completely trusted God, and God did not disappoint. Indeed, God fulfilled Jonathan's crazy plan – not because Jonathan wanted Him to, but because it was God's plan also.

So what can we take away from this story? I'm not saying that we should come up with wild and crazy plans like Jonathan. I'm not saying that God will always make all of our plans come to fruition regardless of how unrealistic they may be. What we can learn from this story is that **God has a plan**, and He does not disappoint. So may we, like Jonathan and his armor-bearer, trust in God completely.

Prayer: "Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with Your most gracious favor, and further us with Your continual help, that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in You we may glorify Your holy name and finally, by Your mercy, obtain eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen"

- LSB, "Prayer for divine guidance," pg. 310.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, May 12, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 14:24-46

Honey, Meat, Faith, Prayer & Good Friends!

My Family of Hope, in today's reading from 1 Samuel 14:24-46 we see a myriad of things going on in the life of Jonathan, Saul's Army, and Saul. These moments are similar to items in our own lives when so many things are happening all at once in our homes, church family, community, and world. Verses 45 & 46 show us the importance of good Friends, prayer, and faith when so many things hit us at the same time.

Jonathan and the army were pursuing the Philistines and were hungry. Saul forbade them to eat before evening under penalty of death. Jonathan didn't hear this decree and ate honey. Think of it! No cell phones, texting, or emails back then. No instant telecommunication in any manner?! As a result of eating the honey, he would face death due to Saul's decree. (vv.24-30).

Saul's army then defeated the Philistines and slaughtered their sheep, cattle and calves, eating the meat with the blood, (vv.31-35). By eating meat with the blood, they broke God's Command (Gen. 9:4-7 says, "But you must not eat meat with the blood that has life blood in it.")

Saul now faced a dilemma, both his son Jonathan and his own army had broken both his decree and God's command! What should he do? Indeed, what should we do, when we are overwhelmed by personal and professional issues all at once?

Saul did the right thing: "Saul built an altar and prayed." (vv.36-44) He paused, he prayed, and sought God's guidance! Saul then asked Jonathan what he did. Jonathan answered honestly and openly just as we should do. Jonathan said he had eaten the honey, and asked his father if he should die. To this Saul answered, "Yes." (vv.44)

The whole dilemma came from making decrees or statements and not seeking guidance or advice from others, in particular God's guidance. How often do we take the time to seek God in prayer or call one of our Hope family friends or our Pastor and ask their advice or counsel? In every Hope Church announcement, there is always a line at the end whereby Pastor invites us to contact him if we have any questions about anything. What a blessing!

Fortunately for Jonathan, he had good friends within the army. The soldiers told Saul that Jonathan shouldn't be harmed but live! "Jonathan has brought about this great deliverance of Israel...he did this today with God's help." So, the men rescued Jonathan and he was not put to death!

My Family of Hope, what can we learn from today's reading? I'd suggest 3 things. First: Pray for God's guidance and wisdom when we feel overwhelmed by issues in life. We can pause, take a deep breath, get on our knees, and pray for God to help us. Second: Seek out our Christian Friends for advice before making important decisions. Sometimes it helps to ask for the outside eyes of a friend for advice or feedback when we have a very personal, emotional issue. Third: Always, Always, Always LOOK TO God, His Word, seek Godly counsel, and pray for Jesus' wisdom, love, and grace.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to share. Oh, what a privilege to take everything to God in prayer! In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday May 13th

Read [1 Samuel 14:47-52](#)

“Lessons from History”

One of the best scenes in the 2nd Guardians of the Galaxy movie takes place between Yondu (the blue guy with the fin on his head) and Rocket (the genetically and physically enhanced raccoon). Rocket has been doing irrational, strange things that only push people away from him. Yondu explains to him why he does all the things that he does; why there is a single thing that underlies all this “bad” behavior. Yondu explains to Rocket that the reason that he knows what makes Rocket tick is, “because you’re me, boy!” He’s recognized himself in all this misbehavior and wants to help Rocket move past his past.



Reading Biblical history has a point just like Yondu made. At times, we are Samuel. We are Saul; David, Jonathan, and the rest of Israel. Most of us would never wish for a King (because we’re Americans, after all), but we want someone to tell us what to do (sometimes, anyway). Sometimes we follow God’s will pretty well; sometimes we ignore that and follow our own will (all too perfectly!).

Today’s reading points out that Saul excelled at leading Israel militarily. We’re told that, “when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself.” That sounds like the wisdom of a King or general. We’re told the names of his wife and kids and his leading general and more facts about his life. Why?

Sometimes, I can’t figure out why God included some of these “trivial” details in His Bible. Other times, His Word makes that “Oh, He’s talking about me” connection. God uses historical trivia, genealogical lists, Psalms, parables, and just plain stories to teach us more about Him and ourselves. In different ways and different times, all of these connect with us.

We can learn from Saul about living faithfully in a position of authority (sometimes by him living un-faithfully). We hear God’s voice in our ear, like Samuel’s voice spoke to Saul. We can sometimes see the perfection of God’s Word by matching names, places, and events in the Bible to extra-biblical sources. We can trace Jesus’ ancestry through kings, prophets, prostitutes, and other sinners; taking comfort in God’s ability to use the “least of these” for His purposes.

God knows how to communicate His message to us because He made us. He walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. His Spirit filled the men who wrote down His words for us. And Jesus. Like Yondu, Jesus understands us because He became one of us. But, unlike Yondu, He lived perfectly and offered Himself for us on the Cross.

Prayer: Word of Life, thank You for Your Word, which constantly proves to me that You know me and still love me so much You sent me Jesus. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, May 15, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-11

The Will of the King

God promised Abram, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse" (Gen. 12:3). When the Israelites were going up to the Promised Land, they were attacked by the Amalekites (Deut. 25:17-19). Now was the time for God to punish the Amalekites as He had promised of those who dishonored the Israelites back in Genesis 12.

Samuel came to Saul with a command from the LORD to attack the Amalekites and destroy everything. Off the army went under Saul's command, and they defeated the Amalekites. But they decided to save the Amalekite king and some of the best things. They decided that instead of listening to the LORD, they should keep the best of the sheep and the oxen and the fattened calves and the lambs and all that looked good to them.

We often fail like that too. We probably don't see it as a failure to listen. After all, we give God some of our income, our time, and our talents. It's just that we hold on to the best for ourselves, especially if we think that it just looks too good to give up.

How different Jesus was for us! He spent all His time, His talents, and His treasures as the Son of God to help others and bring glory to God His Father. He poured Himself out on the cross to win our salvation. He obeyed God's Law perfectly and saved us through His death and resurrection. He gave all for us.

Knowing the free gift of Christ, we ask God's Spirit to give us hearts that yearn to listen and to give. We pray that God moves us not just to hear His Word, but to listen and take it to heart, in order to shape our use of our time, talents, and treasures that in love for Christ who has loved us we too, would help others and bring glory to God.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for Your life of dedication and service to me, though I do not deserve it. Cleanse my heart and mind, that I might serve You as I share Your salvation with those around me. Give me a generous heart, one like Yours. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, May 16, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 15:12-25

Repenting...Again

When life is fine, I appreciate the Lord. I rejoice in His presence in my life. Oh, how happy I am! But the way of the word is still in my flesh. I still find that I want to enjoy that which makes God unhappy. And when I do make God unhappy, my life with Him is gone. I am lost, and alone.

Then comes that hard time in life, the need to admit that I have done wrong. Oh, I am willing to look like I am repenting, saying I'm sorry, but, in my heart, there is where I need to repent.

It is hard (so hard!) to admit that what I am proud of is not right, to admit to myself that I am wrong. But God is always right! I can't do it. I can't admit to myself that I have done wrong - that I made a mistake, yes, but admitting I am wrong is different. It takes God's intervention. It takes Him to take me down.

And He does. It is a great mercy that He doesn't leave me in my sin, but keeps putting my sinfulness before me, and keeps offering me His mercy, His love. Jesus has already died and risen paying for my sins. He keeps His promise by being with me. He changes my heart, again, sigh, and makes me His. So yes, in spite of my heart, I do repent, it's hard, but with God's help, I have and will repent again.

Prayer: Thank you God for putting me through the hard parts of life. With Your help, I have lived through them, for the best. Thank You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Not Appearances, but the Heart

“For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

Yahweh told Samuel to fill his horn with oil and anoint one of Jesse’s sons as king over Israel since Saul had been rejected as king by Yahweh. Samuel is afraid that Saul will kill him if he finds out he is going to anoint a new king. Yahweh tells him to take a female cow as a sacrifice and to invite Jesse. Samuel goes to Bethlehem, and the elders come to meet him trembling and hoping Samuel came to them peaceably. And peaceably so. They all consecrated themselves, including Jesse and his sons, and went to the sacrifice. But looking to each son, as expected to be anointed king, starting with Eliab, they all thought;

“Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him.’ But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Then they went through all the sons, and Yahweh had not chosen any of them, so Samuel asked if Jesse had any more sons, and his youngest was out tending sheep, and Samuel had Jesse send for him.

“And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, ‘Arise, anoint him, for this is he.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah” (vv. 12-13).

We have a promise that came not from appearances but from the new heart God created in you, a promise that comes from line and offspring/seed continuing from Adam and Eve all the way to Abraham all the way to David, anointed king of Israel here in today’s text, and all the way to the Christ, which is Jesus, that is the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation for you we see unfolding here in 1 Samuel through David’s descendants. Yahweh God’s promise of deliverance from sin, death, and the power of Satan is in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead for you and for all. This is God’s plan, and in JESUS, the King of Kings and Lord of lords, in whom you have the Holy Spirit and a new heart as a new creature through faith and in your Baptism. You are in Jesus’ eternal life today and into the new heavens and new earth. God’s Word is trustworthy and True!

Prayer – Thank You, Lord, that You do not judge by appearances but have promised us that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rm 8:1). Amen. (TLSB)

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, May 18, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23

God is Good

“Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.”

We’re going to take a small break from our narrative to talk about this verse. These are confusing, difficult, and perhaps even disturbing words. Reading this for the first time can leave many people with a sour taste in their mouth. What does it mean that the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul? What does it mean that a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him? On the surface, this verse seems to be illustrating a dangerous reality: God *was* doing good things for Saul, but *now* God is doing bad things for Saul. At first, this seems to be what the verse is saying. This is a scary, confusing, and dangerous conclusion to arrive at.

So let us unpack this verse by first making something extremely clear: God does not do bad things. Therefore, God’s removal of His Spirit from Saul was not bad. It was bad news for Saul, but it was not bad in terms of good vs. evil. Think of it this way: Say there is a man who always brings candies to worship on Sunday mornings and gives them to children as gifts. If that man were to suddenly stop bringing the candies, would he be labeled as a bad man? Certainly not! He would be thanked for his generosity and honored for his devotion to children! Likewise, why would we consider God to be bad after He ceases to give His abundant gifts to the unfaithful Saul? We wouldn’t! God is not bad for removing His Spirit from Saul. Instead, He is good, fair, and just.

Unfortunately for Saul, without the protection of God’s Spirit, he became open to torment from evil spirit. Now, these spirits were not sent by God as though He and Satan were companions. Rather, they are from God as parts of Creation. Indeed, all things are from God and are ruled by God. As per God’s command, evil cannot survive wherever He is. Even the spirits and Satan himself are subject to this boundary.

We can find great comfort in this. God’s Spirit is in us. As long as He is there, no evil can enter in and take hold of your heart. May we ever remain faithful to God who is good, fair, and just. For while we are His, no evil can overtake us.

Prayer: Father, may I boldly say, “Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ! Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed. Now that to the font I’ve traveled, All your might has come unraveled, And, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me!” In Jesus’ name. Amen.

- “God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It,” *LSB* 594 vs. 3.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, May 19, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-23

There's More to It Than Meets the Eye

My Family of Hope, in today's reading we see the prelude to the fight between David and Goliath. Everything was riding on this pending battle: the future of Israel, Saul's reign, the future of the Philistines, and the two combatants-David and Goliath. When we look at the scene we take notice of Goliath and all his menacing attributes: his height, his weapons, and his taunting. Saul and the Israelites took note too! "They were dismayed and terrified." On one side of the Valley of Elah stood Saul and the Israelites and on the other hill, the Philistines and Goliath.

Just as in our own lives, there are appearances of what is on the surface...

Health issues (waiting on test results, facing surgery)

Financial problems (dealing with a set pension, the rising cost of living, debt, being in between jobs)

Beyond this there are family and personal relationship issues and trials.

Yet, there is more than meets the eye! For Saul and Israel, God had a plan and a promise for them that was greater and more powerful than Goliath and the Philistines. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was their God. The God who led the children of Israel from Egypt by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire and fed them with manna and quail was their God and He would deliver them!

Whatever issue that you or your family may face, you have God's Promise as St. Paul writes in Romans 8:28-37. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose...What can we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? I tell you that in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

We know there is more than meets the eye. Through the eyes of faith, we see Jesus, our Savior, Shepherd, and Lord, who sits at the right hand of God, praying for us. We see the empty cross and the empty tomb. We have His living waters, His Bread of Life to feed our faith, to sustain us for life's journey, and we have His promise for today and for eternity. "I will be with you always to the end of the age." Matt. 28:20

Prayer: Dear Jesus, Thank You for giving us forgiveness, life, and salvation. Thank You for feeding and strengthening our faith with Your Word and Sacraments and for your Promise to be with us always, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 17:24-58](#)



“Asymmetric Warfare”

The familiar story of David and Goliath is an example of “asymmetric warfare”. That’s a military strategy that says, “Don’t attack your enemy’s strength; rather, find a weakness and attack there”. Used since ancient times, this strategy helps a weaker army experience victory over a more powerful army.

The Philistines were a powerful army. Probably descended from 12th century immigrants from Crete in the eastern Mediterranean, they’re noted as being a force to deal with all the way from Egypt to eastern Turkey. Gradually inter-marrying with local people, they nevertheless are still recognized by the name for their former territory, “Palestine”.

In Saul’s day, they were a constant enemy in battle. They’d battled the Israelites on their way out of Egypt and now fought mightily to retain their lands and cities from the Jewish “invaders”. In today’s reading, they stood on one side of a valley, their forces lined up behind their champion, Goliath. This “giant” was the picture of power: nine feet tall, wearing a helmet of bronze and a 125-pound coat of mail, bronze leggings and a giant spear with a 15-pound spearhead.

And he had been taunting the Israelites for 40 days. He’d offered to battle a single Israelite, this battle to determine which nation would submit to becoming the other’s slaves. And after 40 days, the Israelites were spooked. Even tall Saul looked puny and weak compared to Goliath. And, God’s Spirit having left Saul, he and his army were just shaking in their boots, waiting for a miracle that they didn’t believe in.

Enter little David. Less than 20 years old, the youngest of seven brothers, a shepherd by trade, David had the audacity to volunteer to be Israel’s champion. Described later as “having a heart like God’s”, David demonstrated no fear. He went out to face Goliath wearing no armor, carrying no sword. David knew the count. He shouted to Goliath, “I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” The battle was brief, “David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.”

That’s asymmetric warfare. And it foreshadows a similar battle that would take place a thousand years later. Another “Man with a heart like God” would go onto the battlefield with even fewer weapons. He’d be nailed to a cross with not a stitch of clothing to protect Him, and His enemy would

throw his biggest weapons at Him: taunts, slaps, and scorn, followed by scourging, nailing, the sin of the world, and ultimately, death.

But, things weren't as they appeared. The devil wasn't the giant; his Opponent was. And Jesus didn't have a weak point that the devil's weapons could touch. David finished the battle by cutting off Goliath's head; Jesus finished His battle by crushing the head of the serpent. And that's how things stand to this day.

Prayer: Mighty God, fill me with the faith of David, that I may never know fear because of my Champion, Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, May 22, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-5

A True Friend

For many people, the highest compliment that they can give to another is that "he would give you the shirt off his back." Whatever you need, whatever I can give, I'm happy to do it. This attitude is the essence of a true friend.

Clearly, this "shirt off his back" attitude is evident in Jonathan for his friend David. We are told, "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt" (1 Sam. 18:4). Such was the bond between Jonathan and David that Jonathan gives weapons, his defensive armor, and even the robe off his back.

But Jonathan's statement of taking off his robe and giving it to David is even greater than the typical generous friend. He is relinquishing any claim to the throne and handing it over to David. He is recognizing that David will rule, not himself.

Your dearest friend, Jesus, emptied Himself completely, giving up His rightful place in order to suffer and die on the cross. All for you. All so that you would have His place and reign with Him. Such generosity dwarfs even the actions of Jonathan. For Jesus will not just give up His robe, power, and His defenses, but even His very life to give everything to you.

As someone so dearly loved, Christ calls us to "love one another as I have loved you." Who is a friend who needs what you can offer? I doubt they need your sword, and maybe not even the shirt off your back, but they need you. In joy, give as Christ has given to you.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, let me be the sort of friend to others that You are to me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 18:6-16

Dependent on Him

When I consider the blessings that God gives to other people, if I think only of myself, like I want to do, then I resent their joy and glory. I want that for myself. Jealousy is always waiting like a snake in the grass, a snake to poison my life, hurting me and my relationship with others.

But I am God's child, resting and trusting in Him. I don't need all those earthly things, blessings in this world, glory, and honor. They are nice but only what God gives me is worth having. My protection, my health doesn't depend on my status or things. So why do I find myself longing for those other things.

I remember that without God, I am dependent on my superiority, my value to other people. When I look at them, I compare myself to them, and constantly worry that they might not give me what I need. When God blesses them, then I both worry about them and want what they have - to protect myself. Jealousy signals my leaving God and being desperate to secure myself.

One of the benefits of trusting God, lies in His willingness and ability to comfort me, to convince me that I am not in danger, to show to me that I can share the joy of others without worrying about anything. Trust is such a glorious blessing in itself. Trusting in God not only saves me from the devil, that trust also builds my relationship with others, makes my life with them enjoyable.

Prayer: Thank you God, thank you for making and enabling me to trust You and to live in that trust. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30

Yahweh was with David

David is more esteemed and successful than Saul and his officers in battle in Israel. Saul's jealousy led him to a deceitful plan to kill David, for David to marry his elder daughter Merab, yet Merab was given to Adriel. Then, Michal was used in Saul's plan for David to become his "son-in-law" by killing one hundred Philistines and bringing him their foreskins as a bride price. However, Yahweh was with David, for He had left Saul (see 1 Sam 18:12, 28). Yesterday we read that Saul was bedeviled by an evil spirit and tried unsuccessfully to kill David with a spear (v. 11). Everything continued to go downhill for Saul.

Saul now attempts to get rid of David (after the spear situation) by the hand of the Philistines using his daughter Merab. Saul thought, **"Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him"** (v. 17). That was unsuccessful. Then Saul attempts a second time using his daughter Michal, **"Let me give her to him, that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him"** (v. 21). You can start to see and feel Saul's murderous jealousy persist. David agrees to be the king's son-in-law. Saul said to his officers to tell David, **"The king desires no bride-price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged of the king's enemies.' Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines"** (v.25).

So David **"went along with his men, and killed two hundred Philistines And David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him his daughter Michal for a wife"** (v. 27). Saul's plan did not work out to kill David, and David was victorious. **"But when Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually"** (vv. 28-29). David was more successful than Saul in battle and was more esteemed than Saul.

What a story! Yet, we might think, "What a sad story," and then again, this is a story of victory for the line of the tribe of Judah then and now. The attempt to kill David was unsuccessful by the jealousy and anger of Saul and the evil spirit. The offspring/seed to come, the Son of David, our Lord and King Jesus the Christ, did not fail against the enemy but triumphed over sin, death, and Satan in His death and resurrection from the dead for you.

Prayer – Heavenly Father, thank you for giving your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. Repent our hearts of jealousy and anger toward our family and one another and grant us Peace in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, May 25, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 19

Saul's Hatred

Saul was full of envy, jealousy, and hatred. He hated David. David was handsome, cunning, well-liked, and highly respected. Everything just seemed to work out for David, and it drove Saul crazy. David was everything that a king should be. And this made Saul jealous and scared for his throne. Saul hated David. And this hatred caused Saul to try and kill David in a number of ways. Saul tried to skewer David with a spear when he was playing the lyre (3 times!). He tried to marry one of his daughters to David in hopes that it would make him a target for the enemy. He even asked his own children (Jonathan, David's best friend and Michal, David's wife) to murder David in cold blood. It's no stretch to say that Saul was driven mad by jealousy and consumed by hatred – so much so that he wanted David dead.

Thanks be to God that very few (perhaps none) of us have experienced this level of jealousy and hatred. Life would be unbearably terrifying if all people were consumed by this sinful rage. But we have all experienced this sinful rage at some level. We've all felt inadequate in comparison to another person, jealous of another's success, or afraid of being overlooked. And how do we respond in such situations? We become angry, jealous, and even hateful. We attempt to kill them with our words and opinions. We so often act like miniature Sauls – attacking those who disagree with us and neglecting our callings to serve ourselves.

And this comes so easily to us. If it weren't for God showing us our sin, forgiving us by grace, and giving us new life through Christ, we would live in a world of Sauls. We would all be self-centered, hateful sinners consumed by rage.

Thanks be to God for His good and powerful Law which keeps us from wrong, shows us our sins, and guides us to righteousness. Thanks be to God for His grace which restores us even though we fall victim to our own self-centered sin. Thanks be to God that He is with us so that we do not end up like Saul.

Prayer: "God of love, through Your Son You have commanded us to love one another. By the guidance of Your Word and Spirit, deliver us from impenitence and teach us the truth that we might confess our sins, receive Your forgiveness, and be reconciled to one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer for reconciliation," pg. 312.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, May 26, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-23

Jonathan & David-Friends for Life...Our Friends & Family of Hope

My Family of Hope, the story of Jonathan and David is an amazing one of friendship, devotion, dedication, and support. 1 Samuel 20 tells and shows us that genuine friendship is seen in our words and actions.

Jonathan was totally devoted to David, to the point where he risked his life in defending him and in standing up to his father, King Saul. "Why should he be put to death? What has he done? Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David" (v 32-33). Jonathan then tells David of King Saul's plan and uses the shooting of the 3 arrows (v 35-41) to communicate the threat. Our text concludes with the mutual promise and pledge, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD. The LORD witness between you and me, and between your descendants and our descendants forever" (v 42, 45).

What an example of friendship, devotion and dedication between Jonathan and David. How can we apply this example to our own lives and with our family and friends of Hope? My Family and I attend the Wednesday 6pm Service primarily. When I attend the 8am Sunday Service, I always sit behind a couple and an older gentleman they bring to Church each Sunday. Their devotion and dedication to this gentleman is a warm light of love and friendship and a tremendous encouragement to me. Our conversations and greetings are always warm and a blessing.

When we look around our Hope Family and see each other, how can we draw encouragement from Jonathan and David's example and be a true friend as Jesus is our Friend? In the beautiful hymn, 'What A Friend We Have in Jesus,' we sing of His Love and friendship, his kind and care for us. Jesus' life and Jesus' example of meeting people for who they are and where they are is a great example to us. As Jesus states in Matt. 25:40, "As you have done it to the least of these My Brethren, you have done it to Me." And in Mark 9:41, "Truly I tell you, anyone who gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is My disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

Prayer: Dear Jesus, may you open the eyes of our hearts to see each other as you see us and bring your love, kindness, and care to our Hope Family and to all we meet. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, May 27, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 21:1-9](#)

“Holy Things”

David is now on the run. He and Jonathan are both convinced that Saul’s intentions are unflinchingly focused on killing David. So, he’d fled, without taking so much as a backpack or lunchbox. Today’s story finds him beginning to get back on his feet – finding food and a sword (he’d left that behind, too). He probably didn’t realize at the time, but he was also providing material for future theological study.

David had only travelled a short distance to the town of Nob, where he found the priest, Ahimelech. David told a “white lie” that he was on a secret mission for the king (possibly to give the priest plausible deniability in case Saul questioned him later), and asked for food. But Ahimelech had no food except the consecrated showbread. Twelve fresh loaves would be placed in the holy place of the temple every week, the old bread going only to the priests for their consumption. But this devout priest saw the urgent need before him, ensured it would be consumed in a respectful manner, and gave it to David.

This story would be just an odd twist to the tale if not used by Jesus Himself to illustrate a fundamental truth about His Creation: **“the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”** In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a field on the Sabbath, when the disciples grabbed some wheat and ate it. Some Pharisees saw this and pointed out this violation of the Law. “Hah – gotcha!” they thought. Jesus replied, **“Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?”**

God’s directions for this bread, along with every other detail of temple decoration, rites, and practices was given in excruciating detail in the Scriptures. And then repeated. God was very clear on this. And, there were penalties for not following His directions explicitly. You could die (at God’s hand) for violating His rules.

However, these “Holy Things” were made for man, not man made for them (Mark 2:27). Today, we treat our “Holy Things” in our church in light of this teaching. We make our church beautiful, decorate it attractively, and fill it with beautiful music to reflect and honor God’s beauty and His Good News. But we use these beautiful things. Church isn’t a museum, filled with things that are only for show. The most beautiful church is well-worn. Creation in totality was created to showcase God’s love for mankind; the Church is His special place where He feeds us and fills us with His gifts.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You made me one of Your “Holy Things” through Jesus’ death and the Spirit’s baptism. Use me to show the beauty of Your love to my neighbors. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, May 29, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 21:10-15

Protected...in Spite of Our Actions

David would have a hard time blending into Gath. As he continued to flee from Saul, he came to “Achish the king of Gath.” If Gath sounds somewhat familiar, it should. Gath was the hometown of Goliath and one of the five major cities of the Philistines.

So, when David arrives in town, he is not exactly going to be able to just be a face in the crowd. Very quickly, Achish’s servants recognize David. Not only is he likely known from his defeat of the giant Philistine warrior, but he has had a hand in the defeat of many other Philistine soldiers. His battlefield victories were so well known that Achish’s servants sing a song that must have been popular in Israel (and hated in Philistia), “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”

David thinks quickly when he is discovered and pretends to be insane, complete with drool pouring down over his beard. Achish wants nothing to do with David, but more significantly, he was not afraid of David, and therefore didn’t see him as a threat. David is rescued from another bout of danger.

David’s move seems clever. But from a larger perspective, it’s unnecessary. David has been anointed as the next king of Israel. God has chosen him to be the future king. Perhaps David is protected in spite of his actions, more than he is rescued by his own actions. God didn’t need David to be clever. Actually, David’s actions to protect himself seems to reveal a lack of trust that God will provide. The truth is that God is certainly able to keep His word and protect David without any assistance.

Mercifully, God provides and protects us day after day. He keeps His promises to us in Christ, and He does so often in spite of our actions, certainly not because of them. David’s protection reminds us that God keeps His promises – always. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 2, “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for He is not able to deny Himself.” The faithfulness of God is both comforting and humbling. For we need Him at all times, even when we think we are clever to rescue or provide for ourselves. In His infinite mercy, we are so often protected in spite of ourselves.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for Your boundless faithfulness to me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 22:1-5

Looking at Myself

God has a wonderful of using bad circumstances to bring about His plans. Where I am sitting sullen before God because not anything seems to be going my way, God just smiles at me. When I think about it, I know He has something “up His sleeve”. He has plans.

Sometimes His plans coincide with mine but more often He has much better things in mind. While I am angry with Him, He is preparing a much better life for me. I am so disgusted with myself. Why do I keep looking only at my aims, my plans, when I know that God has a great future for me. Sigh.

It’s mostly my personal desires that get in my way. While I want to do things God’s ways, still I find myself seeking to pressure God and life to go the way I have planned. Selfishness only destroys myself. When I look at my desires, I look away from God, I look only at myself. I fail to notice the way God works out the world. No, I want what I want. Then I have a tantrum. Give it to me Lord!

I am so blessed. He forgives me. He lets me hide my sight, He lets me wish for my way, He lets me ignore Him - and then He comes with great blessings. I get His better plans. I am much happier when I don’t get my way because His ways are always better. What a God!

Prayer: Thank you God. You gave a great sacrifice for me when Jesus died, and I keep looking at myself. Thank you for forgiving me.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, May 31, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 22:6-23

Saul Massacres the Priests of Yahweh

“Then the king [Saul] said to Doeg, “You turn and strike the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.” 1 Samuel 22:18-19

David, the son-in-law of King Saul, is fleeing from his murderous rage, for Saul was seeking the life of the son of Jesse (1 Samuel 20:31). David inquires of Yahweh at **Nob**, where he came to Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub (22:9; see 1 Sam 21:1-9) and was given provisions (Bread of Presence) and the sword of Goliath (22:10) whom David struck with a sling and a stone, killed, and beheaded with Goliath’s sword (1 Sam 17:49-51). David is now in the **Forest of Hereth** with about four hundred men (22:2, 5), and **“Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him”** (1 Sam 22:6, *italics mine*).



Doeg the Edomite informs Saul he saw David at **Nob** (vv. 9-10), so Saul inquires Ahimelech, the priest, and all the priests of Yahweh. Saul accuses Ahimelech of conspiring against him by giving David bread and the sword of Goliath (vv. 13-15), and **“the king said, ‘You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house’** (v. 16). Yet, Saul’s servants would not kill the priests of Yahweh. **“Then the king said to Doeg, ‘You turn and strike the priests.’ And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword”** (vv. 18-19).

Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, escaped and fled to David and informed David Saul had killed the priests of Yahweh; David knew Doeg would tell Saul (v. 22). David said to Abiathar, **“Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping”** (v. 23).

Prayer – *Jesus, our great High Priest, since You freely gave Your life for me, take my life into Your service* (TLSB) Grant us Your Peace, safekeeping, protection from evil and those who seek our harm, and to forgive as You have forgiven us. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, May 25, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 19

Saul's Hatred

Saul was full of envy, jealousy, and hatred. He hated David. David was handsome, cunning, well-liked, and highly respected. Everything just seemed to work out for David, and it drove Saul crazy. David was everything that a king should be. And this made Saul jealous and scared for his throne. Saul hated David. And this hatred caused Saul to try and kill David in a number of ways. Saul tried to skewer David with a spear when he was playing the lyre (3 times!). He tried to marry one of his daughters to David in hopes that it would make him a target for the enemy. He even asked his own children (Jonathan, David's best friend and Michal, David's wife) to murder David in cold blood. It's no stretch to say that Saul was driven mad by jealousy and consumed by hatred – so much so that he wanted David dead.

Thanks be to God that very few (perhaps none) of us have experienced this level of jealousy and hatred. Life would be unbearably terrifying if all people were consumed by this sinful rage. But we have all experienced this sinful rage at some level. We've all felt inadequate in comparison to another person, jealous of another's success, or afraid of being overlooked. And how do we respond in such situations? We become angry, jealous, and even hateful. We attempt to kill them with our words and opinions. We so often act like miniature Sauls – attacking those who disagree with us and neglecting our callings to serve ourselves.

And this comes so easily to us. If it weren't for God showing us our sin, forgiving us by grace, and giving us new life through Christ, we would live in a world of Sauls. We would all be self-centered, hateful sinners consumed by rage.

Thanks be to God for His good and powerful Law which keeps us from wrong, shows us our sins, and guides us to righteousness. Thanks be to God for His grace which restores us even though we fall victim to our own self-centered sin. Thanks be to God that He is with us so that we do not end up like Saul.

Prayer: "God of love, through Your Son You have commanded us to love one another. By the guidance of Your Word and Spirit, deliver us from impenitence and teach us the truth that we might confess our sins, receive Your forgiveness, and be reconciled to one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer for reconciliation," pg. 312.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, June 2, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 23:15-29

Between A Rock & A Hard Place

My Family of Hope, have you ever felt like you were caught between a rock and a hard place? Have you ever felt like you were at your wits end? Overwhelmed by the stresses and pressures of life?...Changes in health, financial pressure, parenting, raising children, aging and all that goes with it?

All of us have faced these issues before and will face them again in the future. In today's text from 1 Samuel 23:15-29, we see Saul pursuing David and his men to take their lives! David was at Keilah in the Desert of Ziph and learned that Saul had come to take his life (v.15). Jonathan then went to David and helped him find strength in God. (v.16)

Saul was persistent in his pursuit of David and enlisted the Ziphites (vv. 19-23) to find out where David usually went. The situation looked bleak for David and his men. Yet, during their calamity and dire straits, God was present. God was present to comfort, strengthen and to give David hope "find strength in God!"

God did intervene and He did deliver David and his men (vv.28,29). "Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place, 'Sela Hamaleketh!' The Rock of Parting."

What are you or your family & friends facing today? When we feel that we are caught between a rock and a hard place, like David was with Saul, where do we turn? We do what David did. Psalm 121 read, "I lift up my eyes to the hills from where my help comes from. My help comes from the LORD." This means that we look to Jesus who invites us in Matt. 11:28 "Come to Me, you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." We look to the "great cloud of witnesses" mentioned in Heb. 12:1, that is, our family & friends of Hope Lutheran and we "Fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross, scorning its shame and is seated at the Right Hand of God." (Heb. 12:2)

Prayer: Dear Jesus, when we or our family of Hope feel overwhelmed by life's issues and stress, please take our fear and give us faith, please take our pain and give us Your peace. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, June 3, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 24](#)

“Love Your Enemies”

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” Although he died long before Jesus spoke those words, David, in today’s reading, perfectly demonstrates that teaching.

It’s relatively easy to accept God’s teaching that we should help our neighbor (maybe even love them?). The story of the Good Samaritan comes to mind, where an average person took exceptional care of a total stranger in need. That seems reasonable. But “love your enemies?” And “pray for those who persecute you”?! If God loves me and I love Him, isn’t my enemy an enemy of God? It doesn’t make any sense to “love my enemy”! Today’s reading explains this.

There can be no question that Saul was David’s enemy. The first time they met, Saul sent David to certain death in battle with Goliath. For a time, they grew close to each other, David even marrying Saul’s daughter, but even that was just a part of Saul’s plotting to get rid of this threat to his throne and to his dreams of a dynasty. This conflict continued hot and cold for a while, as David soothed Saul’s demon with music and military victories.

But now, it’s all out in the open. Saul had killed all the priests, along with every man, woman, child, and animal in the town of Nob as an example to his subjects of what would happen to them if they helped David. Now, with 3,000 of his best soldiers, Saul was chasing down David like a dog. Informants provided him news of exactly where David was.

In today’s story, though, David has his chance to bring all this to an end! He was hiding in a cave just at the moment that Saul entered that cave alone to “take care of business.” David literally caught his enemy with his “pants down”! But he wouldn’t kill Saul. His men tried to talk him into killing the king, but David refused. The Lord had anointed Saul king, and David would not take action to overturn God’s plan, even though God had chosen him as the next king.

God’s plan is for all people to come to faith and believe in Him for salvation. Jesus died for everyone while we were His enemies. And so, like David, we should not get in the way of God’s plan for those who remain His enemies. By living as forgiven “sons of our Father in heaven”, we show His difference from the ways of the world by loving and praying for our enemies (but, like David, watching our backs around such people).

Prayer: Merciful God, You loved me even when I hated You. Help me show this love to my neighbors and even to my enemies, as Your Son did for me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, June 5, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 25:1

A Unique Honor

A couple weeks back, a fire engine was perched on the Gravois overpass over 270 as I went to pick up Hannah from her last day of school. The ladder on the truck was fully extended, and a giant American flag gently flapped in the breeze as about half a dozen firefighters stood on top of the truck and watch the interstate below. Periodically, I have seen such displays in the same location. Flags are draped over the overpasses that a procession will go under as they make their way to Jefferson Barracks. It is a unique honor, usually reserved for soldiers who have died in battle (or police and firefighters who have perished in the line of duty). The truck took up a few lanes across the busy overpass, but no one complained or honked their horns. There was an appropriate solemnness and appreciation. After all, these firefighters were saying “Thank you,” for all of us when the long procession would come that way.

Now multiply the procession that you envision many times over, and you would get a glimpse of the train of people who must have gathered along the way to Ramah. Today’s devotion is just one verse: “Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.” It’s hard to wrap your mind around: ALL Israel assembled and mourned. Such had been the significance of Samuel. He was the last of the Judges. He was the trusted (although not always listen to) advisor of Saul. He was Yahweh’s prophet – speaking God’s Word even when the people didn’t want to hear it. And Samuel received a unique honor. No one else in Scripture has such a description attached to his or her funeral – “ALL Israel assembled and mourned.”

We do well to honor those who have given the last full measure of devotion in service to our nation. We do well also to honor those who serve the people of God with the life saving Word of Christ. We do well to honor pastors and teachers and parents who speak God’s Word even when we don’t want to hear it. We do well to honor the servants of Christ who give of themselves to be sure that our children and youth hear the Word of Christ. We do well to honor those who serve among us to see to it that the Church is able to operate and share the Hope of Jesus. Consider today how you might show unique honor to someone who has shared the most precious message of Christ with you.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for Your servants who bring Your Word of life to me.
Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 25

Trusting God with What is "Mine"

Giving in to anger always creates bigger problems. And how I am tempted! God has given me my possessions, and how dare someone else try to take any of them away, even in the least. And don't forget that my "honor", my "reputation" etc. Should be considered mine as well. And there are so many others who want to pull me down, or at least, as I feel it, carelessly damage my position in life.

But, wait a minute! God gave those things to me. God is the real possessor. I'm merely borrowing them for a short period of time. Why am I so nervous about them? Why don't I want to share them with others?

There I see my fault. I don't trust God to defend me. He gives me things, but I am sure that I can care for them better than He does. I find that am really quite lacking in faith. Surely if I trust my God, for that important problem (the forgiving of my sins and making me one of His children), if He can handle that, He can also handle the protection of what He gave me.

It always comes back to my faith, my trust in God. I do care about Him, and I do want to let Him care for me - but my sinful self suddenly jumps in to bring me to actual rebellion. Anger is a problem. Anger feeds my selfishness since it is an emotion - and like all emotions should be kept under control. Please God help!

Prayer: Thank you my Lord for forgiving my anger. Please guide me away from it. Help me to let You handle such problems. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 26

Saul and David on the Hill of Hachilah

“Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”

1 Samuel 26:24

The Ziphites said to Saul, **“Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah”** (v. 1). Saul brought three-thousand men on the hill of Hachilah seeking and pursuing David. Previously, David had Saul’s life in the cave, yet, David would not kill his enemy, **“I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed”** (1 Sam 24:10). And again, Saul is in the hand of David. Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah after David. Then David brought Abishai to Saul’s camp at night while they were sleeping and entered the camp. Saul was sleeping with his spear in the ground next to his head;

“David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. Then Abishai said to David, ‘God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.’ But David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?’ And David said, ‘As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go” (1 Sam 26:7-11).

David speaks to Abner on the other side of the hill with Saul’s spear. After listening to David, Saul said, **“I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake . . . Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.”** So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place” (vv. 21, 25).

Do we approach our enemies and those who pursue our lives with rage and hatred? We are called to forgive as we have been forgiven, as the nations rage (read **Psalm 2**). Jesus crushed Satan’s head on His holy hill at Golgotha, dying for you and rising from the dead on the third day in victory over the world, sin, death, and Satan. Take refuge in Jesus.

Prayer – “Dearest Jesus, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Grant us due patience with erring brothers and sisters. Amen” (TLSB)

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, June 8, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 27

Becoming What You Don't Want to Be

David is getting tired. He is despairing. David may be a “man after God’s own heart,” but he is also a sinner. In his weakness and exhaustion, David decides, “Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul.” David decides that the only feasible course of action is to live with the Philistines, and maybe “Saul will despair of seeking (him) any longer.” But David is the one despairing that there is nothing that he can do.

In quick succession, David goes to live with the Philistines (who worship false gods and attack the people of Israel), grovels before the Philistine king, he becomes a raider and murderer, lies to the Philistine King about it to increase his position in Philistia, and slaughters men and women who could reveal his lie. The chapter doesn’t endorse or condemn any of David’s behavior. It is just reported. But one thing is clear: nothing about his attitude which was announced at the beginning of the chapter (Saul is going to kill me!) or his actions reflect trust in God. In his despair and surrounded by the Philistines, David becomes one.

This pattern of slowly compounding sin on top of sin will be repeated in his affair with Bathsheba once David is king. But for now, this episode certainly highlights the temptation that when we take our eyes off of our God and His promises and focus either on our problems or the unbelieving world (or both like David!), we will be shaped by sinful despair and quickly become what we don’t want to be. Truth be told, our sinful inclination always leans in this direction. On the one hand, David took matters into his own hands instead of trusting God. On the other hand, he decided to steal, lie, and kill to fit in.

We may not go nearly this far, but the temptation to compromise what we believe in order to “save/help ourselves” is always present. Lord, help us! Dear Jesus, in our moments of despair, turn our eyes to You. Help us look to You as the only One who can actually save us. He alone saves, and remakes us into His image by His grace.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, the world is constantly inviting me to fit in and abandon who I want to be – one who follows You. Help me. Guide me. Forgive me. Restore me. And lead me, especially in difficult and tempting times. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, June 9, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 28

Beware of Darkness - Saul and the Witch at Endor

My Family of Hope, in today's reading we see how far Saul had fallen from the LORD. Plus, his encounter with the witch at Endor warns us to beware of darkness. In 1 Samuel 28:15-16 Saul complains, "the LORD has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by the prophets or dreams." To which the no longer alive Samuel chides, "Why do you consult me now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy?"

We see Saul's desperation and the depths he had fallen away from the LORD, consulting the witch of Endor and asking her to bring up the spirit of the prophet of Samuel from the dead. Earlier, "Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land." (28:3). Yet, he seeks out a witch for help?!? The Mosaic Law said this explicitly (Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:10,11). All built on the 1st Commandment: you shall have no other gods before Me. And the 2nd Commandment: You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God in vain.

Saul, like many in our world today, seek after other voices, idols, and gods whether it be eastern religions, the occult, and what our society puts out as "harmless" like checking your horoscope, palm readers, tarot cards, Ouija boards, and the like. All these items are tools the devil uses to try and pull us away from our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ who is "The Way, the Truth and the Life!" (John 14:6)

In our world and our own society, we see examples of this daily. Jesus spoke of this in Luke 11:24-26. Jesus tells of a man who had been enlightened with the Divine Truth and then shuts out the Light of the Gospel, he falls into a condition even worse than before..." and the final condition of the man is worse than the first." (LK. 11:26)

Saul's end teaches us the importance of keeping Faith in God first and foremost in our lives. Saul's tragic end and fall into darkness should also keep us humble and keep our eyes of faith and our hearts filled with Jesus and His Word. Saul did not fall away overnight but his fall was a slow and gradual one. The same thing happened to the children of Israel when they were told to not intermarry with the inhabitants of the land of Canaan and to not participate in their pagan religions or practices.

How can we avoid the fall of Saul and others and their slow fade away from God? Psalm 119 helps. "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word...Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, a light on my path." (v 9,105). We look to the means that our Loving LORD has given to us: His Word and Sacraments and to gather with our Family of Hope Lutheran Church on a regular basis to be strengthened in our faith, encouraged by our brothers and sisters in Christ and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, may Your Word strengthen us and grant us a vibrant and resurrected faith so we can rightly discern the temptations this world throws at us and remain strong in You, our Savior, Shepherd, and Lord. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, June 10, 2023

Read [1 Samuel 29](#)

“A Strange Place”

Here you are. After a long time under the hot sun, shuffling forward slowly, you’ve finally made it. You’re now at the front of the line, looking down into a deep chasm ahead of you where everyone else has already jumped, and the bungee cord is being strapped to your legs. All you can think is, “what am I doing here?!”

We’ve all taken a dare, or simply wanted to “challenge ourselves”, or just did something without thinking. Something really stupid. Whether it was bungee-jumping, eating a ghost pepper, or accepting someone’s invitation to drive across the country – there’s always that lucid moment when it suddenly dawns on you, “What was I thinking?”

In today’s reading, it’s not clear if David has gotten to that point. Here he is, the champion of Israel who’d killed the Philistine’s giant; the right-hand man of Israel’s king, and the warrior about whom was sung, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands”. But here he is in the Philistine army, marching to war with Israel! Is this some sort of bad dream?

The text doesn’t clearly say, but it seems evident that David had lost his faith that God would keep him safe from Saul. He’d been extremely faithful for a long time, but now he’d grown tired of running and his fear of slipping up and dying had become his reality. He was sure that eventually, Saul would catch up to him.

David was a man of great faith who had done and seen things that had proven the goodness of his God. And even during his 14-month stay in Philistia he kept worshiping God. The Philistines knew he was a Hebrew and had nothing to do with their gods. But his “moment of weakness” put him into this strange place, where he was lining up to fight God’s chosen people.

We, too, believe in the same great God in Whom David believed. We’ve seen and done things that we are certain couldn’t have happened without God’s hand. But despite this, we, too, have sinful moments of weakness where the choices we make put us in places we’re certain that God doesn’t want us to be.

David repeatedly sinned and, in his own words, “deserved to die”. Just the same, our sin calls for our eternal death. But God’s greatest attribute is grace. He describes His Son dying for us on the cross as His greatest glory. We, who are familiar with sin, witness the beauty of God’s amazing grace on a daily basis when He forgives our sin. Not to be encouraged, though, we remember what Paul said about this: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

Prayer: Gracious God, strengthen me by Your Word and Spirit, that I may be dead to sin. When I sin, though, forgive me for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, June 12, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 30:1-15

Strengthened

David and his men have been continually on the run for some time, but upon returning to Ziklag, the town where they had taken up residence for the time being, the situation became worse. The raiding Amalekites (whom Saul should have defeated once and for all, but didn't) rolled into town while David and his soldiers were away. Homes were burned. The wives, sons, and daughters of David and his soldiers taken captive. You can imagine the desperation when David returns home only to find vacant, smoldering buildings when he should have been able to embrace his family. The initial reaction is understandable: "David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep." That all seemed bad enough, but for David it was worse. The soldiers who had followed him were livid and were throwing around the idea of stoning David. He was being threatened with execution because the soldiers had followed him, but now their families were captured.

So how would David respond? He could have taken the situation into his own hands and immediately counter-attacked. He didn't.

He could have complained that he was being treated unfairly by God or by his soldiers. He didn't.

Instead, "David strengthened himself in the LORD his God." (1 Sam. 30:6)

In our times of trial, we would be blessed to do the same. Before acting, before complaining, (before anything!) look to the God who gives us life and salvation. Look to the God who has helped us and promises to walk with us through every circumstance of this life. Trials and heartaches come, but our God does not abandon us. In all times, lean on his strength. Look to His Word. Remember His steadfast love in Christ. Pray and seek guidance from another who is mature in the faith. Be strengthened in Christ, for His strength is only lasting support, and His wisdom will guide us through even the darkest of hours.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, like David, help me to look to you for strength and help in all times, but especially in my darkest hours. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, June 13, 2023
Read 1 Samuel 30:16-30

The "Success" of Evil

It's so easy; so easy to give up. It is so easy to see the successes of the evil ones who are all around us. Then seeing them seem to succeed, it is easy to conclude that life is "hopeless". How silly I can be! How can anything be 'hopeless' when God is involved?

God lets the evil seem to flourish, and seem to get all that they want - partly because He gives them time to repent, but also because He wants to give me a chance to trust Him. He wants me to trust Him and when I do, He takes the opportunity to overwhelm me with His goodness and success in not only canceling the evil but also replacing it with even more good.

So easy, I think - but only when I am not really thinking. After all, our God is all-powerful. When it looks to me like He is not doing anything, that merely shows that I am not all-knowing. What looks like success for evil lies only in appearances. They can never do anything well or with any staying power.

So, I find I need to constantly turn back to my God, turn to Him, asking His improvement in myself. I want to be one who trusts God through anything, but I am so tempted. I keep asking God to help me - and He does. I just find more areas in which I need help and a lot of it! When I think of it, don't wait for me to ask. Help me, Lord, ahead of time. I'll need it.

Prayer: Thank you, God. Thank you for giving me the help I need. Thank you for not letting me be deceived by the apparent ease of evil. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Read 1 Samuel 31

King Saul

Yahweh told Saul through Samuel that He would give the kingdom to David and hand Saul and Israel over to the Philistines. Samuel said, **“Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.”** (1 Samuel 28:18–19; see 1 Sam 15).

The next day, the Philistines were fighting Israel, and they fled the valley and were slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and Saul was severely wounded by archers and asked his arm-bearer to thrust him with his sword, but he would not, so Saul fell on his own sword, and the arm-bearer did likewise. All the Israelites on the other side of the valley fled and abandoned the cities, and the Philistines came and lived in them. The Philistines cut off the head of Saul as a trophy and put it in the temple of Dagon (see 1 Chronicles 10:10) and stripped his armor, putting it on display in their idol temple of Ashteroth and his body and his son's bodies on the wall of Beth-shan, marking as a captured city in the valley of Jordan. The men of Jabesh in Gilead went all night to Beth-shan, took their bodies, and burned them in Jabesh. **“And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days”** (v. 13). Their bones were later taken away from there and buried in Saul's family grave in the land of Benjamin at Zela at David's order.

Luther wrote, *“You will find examples enough in all the histories and from old and experienced people. Just examine and pay close attention to them. Saul was a great king, chosen by God, and an upright man; but once he was in office and let his heart turn from God, placing his confidence in his crown and power, he inevitably perished along with everything he had; not one of his children survived. David, on the other hand, was a poor, despised man, hunted down and always on the run, never certain of his life, yet inevitably he remained safe from Saul and became king. These words must stand and prove true, because God cannot lie or deceive. Just leave it to the devil and the world to deceive you with their appearance; it may last for a while, but in the end it is nothing at all.”* (LC First Part 10 Commandments: 44-46).

Prayer – “Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word; Curb those who by deceit or sword Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son And bring to naught all He has done.” Amen. (LSB 655:1)

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, June 15, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 1:1-16

The Death of the Lord's Anointed

A young, Amalekite man stumbles into David's camp after Saul, Jonathan, and the majority of the Israelite army have been routed by the Philistines. This young man comes carrying the crown and the armlet that belonged to Saul. It would seem that he has sought out David with these items in order to collect a reward or at least a statement of gratitude. But not only does he expect gratitude for collecting these items, he seems to believe that he has done something truly compassionate: he assisted Saul in his suicide.

Saul had fallen on his own sword (1 Sam. 31), apparently Saul's armor had not quite allowed his own sword to be the final blow. The young man had happened upon the self-injured King, who now requests that this young man joins Saul in the act. Perhaps the young man saw it as an order. Perhaps the young man thought it was the compassionate thing to do. You know, put Saul out of his misery. So, he finishes the work that Saul had begun.

David's response is anything but grateful. He chides the young man, "How is it you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" And David sends him away to be executed, for having "killed the LORD's anointed." David is executing justice and acting as a proper authority as the leader of the army and the next chosen King of Israel. The young man was an accomplice to suicide.

Two things stand out in this story. First, while God may place punishment (even to death) in the hands of the governing authorities in the execution of their roles, as individuals, we have no business taking God's place and deciding who lives or dies. Saul was wrong to kill himself, and this young man is wrong to have helped. God is the Lord of life and so determines our days. To take such a decision into our hands is not compassionate, it is defiance against God, who calls us to trust Him when (and how) our final hour comes.

Second, all who have played a part in the killing of the LORD's anointed deserve such swift and severe judgment. THE Anointed One (in Greek THE Christ!), was killed on account of our sin. We have been complicit in His death. The justice that David carries out is what we have deserved, but so great is the mercy of THE Anointed One that in His death, He has carried the judgment we deserve.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, the LORD's Anointed, forgive us for our sins and our role in Your death. Help us so to honor You and value each human life that we never see the taking of human life as compassionate. For You have shown us true compassion in giving Your life for the sake of others, even us. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, June 16, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 1:17-27

David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan

My Family of Hope, David's lament over Saul and Jonathan's deaths is very heartfelt. David's lament for Saul is remarkable when you consider everything that Saul did to attempt to kill David. David's lament for Jonathan was touching as he was David's closest friend and ally.

Could we have spoken such words as David did for Saul? Was David just saying, nice or Politically Correct words as a matter of polite form? The answer is that here David exhibited the same spirit as he did when he chose to spare Saul's life when he could have easily taken it. Remember when David spared Saul's life in the cave? (1 Sam. 24:6) or when he again spared him at the hill of Hakilah? (1 Sam. 26:2-27)

David's actions showed respect and reverence for God's anointed King. David showed the spirit of love, goodwill, and kindness to his enemy. How about us? Are we as willing to forgive others as God has forgiven us? Or do we hold grudges and resentments? When we hold grudges, resentments, and unforgiveness towards others who have sinned against us, we are the ones who hurt the most and that bitterness that grows inside us eats at our heart and spirit just as cancer and disease to our bodies when left untreated.

What did Jesus do? From the cross, He prayed; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (LK. 23:24). Jesus prayed over Jerusalem when it had rejected Him, He prayed for those who persecuted Him and accused Him.

We daily pray in the Lord's Prayer; 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' Jesus invites us in Matt. 5:44, "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be called sons of your Father in Heaven." To do such a thing, we need the help of Jesus. So we pray...

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help us to love and to forgive others as you love and forgive us. In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, June 17, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 2:1-11](#)

“Intermission? Nah!”

If the book of Samuel was a novel, today’s reading would be a “transition”. King Saul and most of his sons have died, the Philistines have taken over many of Israel’s cities, and David and his family and army have settled down, living in the towns surrounding Hebron in Judea. David is anointed by the men of his tribe to be their king, and David graciously praises, blesses, and promises the men from Jabesh-gilead that he will treat them well for having honored Saul by rescuing his and his son’s bodies and burying them in their town.

We’re given a glimpse of more conflict ahead, as the remaining son of Saul is made king of the rest of the tribes of Israel. Put in place by Abner, Saul’s army’s commander, we’re told that he would rule as king for two years, so even that suspense kind of loses its strength. For now, everything’s calm and peaceful. Fighting is over, David and all his people are just settling into normal life. If you’re watching this on TV at home, you could probably make a quick commercial break into the kitchen to grab a snack before the action starts back up again...

What began thousands of years earlier in the Garden of Eden, is pausing for a breather. God had promised a Messiah – a Savior for all those suffering under the effects of sin – so long ago. So much has happened since then – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses and the plagues in Egypt. Followed by the Exodus, then years wandering the desert, and so on.

God’s plan of salvation for all mankind isn’t taking a break, though. Even though he’s only the king of his tribe rather than all of Israel, Jesus’ ancestor, King David, is now on the scene. He’s asking God for guidance before doing things. He’s blessing the people with “Shalom!” – peace so beautiful it can only come from God Himself. He’s ruling his people under God the Father, just as his greater descendent would do later.

All history is preparing the way for Jesus, Son of David, Son of Mary, Son of God, to be born in another thousand years in the City of David. Jesus would go into battle – with the Pharisees, with sin, with the devil, and with death. The King of the Jews would rise from those battles, though, and is sitting on His throne in heaven at the right hand of God, now. He’s preparing a place for you, now, and He’s coming to bring you home with Him, soon.

Prayer: Oh, God; You rule over history, always actively guiding Your plan of salvation through Your Son, Jesus. It marches through the years and enters my heart and gives me life. Amen!

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, June 19, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 2:12-32

Shall the Sword Devour Forever?

Saul's uncle Abner has been attempting to retain some power for his family by continuing his command of the Army and placing Ish-bosheth on the throne. So, there is no doubt that Abner is political mover, but as 2 Samuel 2 concludes he is also presented as cautiously seeking to avoid the indiscriminate taking of life.

First, instead of engaging immediately in a full scale battle, he proposes a small group represent each side of this Civil War – 12 of David's soldiers versus 12 of Saul's former soldiers. Unfortunately, this group fights to a draw and the whole armies are pulled back into bloody conflict.

Then, when three brothers from David's side pursue Abner, he tries to show mercy on the faster, but weaker soldier Asahel. Abner knows that he is a superior warrior and doesn't want to keep escalating the warfare by killing this weaker man. But Asahel will not listen, and Abner is forced to kill him. (An action that will ultimately lead Asahel's brother Joab to avenge this death in 2 Samuel 3.)

Finally, when the two armies reassemble, Abner pleads with Asahel's grieving brothers Joab and Abishai, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn from the pursuit of their brothers?" In part, Abner may be trying to save himself, but his questions are still fair to ask. Such questions are often asked by soldiers who have seen a great deal of bloodshed: shall the sword devour forever?

As a temporary answer, Joab blows the trumpet and the battle ceased, but only for a short time before the sword renews its devastation. In this world where might and retaliation are often the only defense against the designs of bloodthirsty and power-hungry leaders, the sword is necessary, but it just keeps devouring.

A true cease fire is only possible when brought about by the One who would lead us to beat swords into ploughshares. Such peace has begun. As Paul wrote, "since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1)." Peace with God through Christ gives us comfort even while the sword still devours, and guarantees us of the day when the sword will devour no more. But it won't be because of us. Such peace will be won, enacted, assured, and kept forever by Him.

Shall the sword devour forever? NO! Not ever again when Jesus comes.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, quickly come. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 3:1-25

God's Ways

There is a problem that God's servants face: When I seek to do the Lord's will, I often find that the world has some easy ways to accomplish that. So, without thinking too much about it, I go ahead and do the right thing, but I do it in the way of the world. The problem then, is that, like you might suppose, the way of the world involves some compromise, some bending, some dropping an inconvenient way of our God.

But you can't skip one or more of God's ways! Our God is totally pure, not changeable, and none of His ways are anything but pure and desirable. When convenience strikes, when I seek to follow God's purposes through the ways of the world, I am no longer following God's purpose. So I find myself sinning while being proud of how easily I am doing God's purposes - mistakenly.

And then, always, I run up against God's will. He reminds me that His ways are so much better than mine. And then I have to repent, come to Him in tears, saying "I did it again. I am sorry. Forgive Lord."

And then He helps me to remove my sin, to change my way of doing, to take back what I did (even at the cost of public repentance), to make public the way of God in my actions. And He does!

Prayer: Thank you God for stopping me when I stray. Please keep doing that even when I dread your correction, because of my pride. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 3:26-39

Yahweh Repays Evildoers

After Abner had left David's feast in peace from Hebron while Joab was gone, Joab is now back from a raid and "believed" that Abner had come to deceive David. So after Joab left David, he sought out Abner and killed him for the blood of Asahel, his brother (see v. 30; 2 Sam 2:23). David mourned Abner's death and told Joab to put on sackcloth and ash. Then, Abner was buried at Hebron, and everyone wept as it was not the king's will to put Abner to death, and David said, Yahweh "**will repay the evildoer according to his wickedness.**" (v. 39)

Moses wrote,

"Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly. 'For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free. Then he will say, 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you; let them be your protection! "'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, As I live forever, if I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me.

I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh— with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the enemy.' "Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land." (Deuteronomy 32:35-43).

Paul wrote, "**Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."** To the contrary, "**if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**" (Romans 12:17-21).

We, who are in Christ, have the love of God and should love all people as He loved us.

Prayer – "Lord, help me always to love my enemies as You have loved me in Your Son, my Savior. Amen." (TLSB)

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, June 22, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 4

The Death of the Lord's Anointed

As those remarkable poets (Herman's Hermits) once opined, "second verse same as the first, a little bit louder and a whole lot worse." David confirms for us that this pattern keeps repeating itself of people killing David's enemies and thinking that he will be happy about it, only to find the opposite to be true. Two of Ish-bosheth's own men slink into the palace and put an end to this "king" who was never anointed. The brothers are sure that David will be thrilled. He is not. He even mentions when the young Amalekite helped Saul with his suicide, and David responded by having the young man executed for his crime. But this is worse. These two have murdered an unsuspecting man. Ish-bosheth was not the rightful king, but he also had not been actively trying to murder David. War may be awful, but it was honorable, unlike the work of these raiders turned assassins.

The death of Ish-bosheth is the final obstacle to David becoming king, but he takes no joy in it. Why? It's not because he is looking to avoid becoming king (as Saul once had done). It is because David trusts the LORD. Perhaps the most striking attribute that David displays through this long period of running from Saul and Saul's men is his patience. The LORD has promised, and other than some occasional dark moments, David trusts that God will keep His promises. Likewise, that means God will keep His promises all on His own, without the "help" of David or these assassins or anyone else.

If you are anything like me, this is a humbling reminder. I often have my ideas about what God is up to (or "should" be up to) and how I can "help" God move things along more quickly. God always seems far more concerned with me trusting Him, than He is concerned with meeting my timetable. And He certainly has no desire for me (or you) to use evil means even to bring about what we view as a good end. More than this, He wants us to trust Him. Oh, He will work in spite of our sinful impatience. (We see this as David will soon become king.) But He prefers us to trust His timing, His help, His mercy for us. Through all that Christ has accomplished, we have every reason to trust Him, no matter how difficult the moment may be. So, lay aside your timetable, your agendas, your "good" intentions, and trust that God's timetable, His agenda, His intention to save you and hold you close to Him is just better.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, You patiently endured suffering in order to give me every eternal blessing. Teach me patience that I may trust in You for all things. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, June 23, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 5:1-16

David Becomes King Over Israel

My Family of Hope, in today's reading we see David becoming King. He was 30 years old when he began his 40-year reign. In Hebron he reigned over 7 years and 6 months and in Jerusalem, then he reigned over all of Israel and Judah 33 years. David's reign as King was not always smooth but God was with him throughout and the people were blessed and the land prospered as God used David to establish Israel and Judah as one.

The LORD said to you, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler." (v.5) These words from the LORD to David pointed to an earlier promise. In Numbers 27, "Moses asked the LORD to appoint a man over the people, 'who will lead them out and bring them in, so the people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.'"

The LORD led and blessed David in his reign as king. From David's lineage came Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, our Beautiful Savior, Shepherd, and Lord. Jesus is our Good Shepherd (Psalm 23/John 10) who leads us to the still waters and restores our soul. Jesus guides us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake and Jesus will lead us throughout this life and someday call us by name and take us home to be with Him in heaven. We are His precious lambs and He is our good Shepherd who leads us and holds us close to His heart.

David was King of Israel for 33 years and when his reign ended, he fell asleep and went to his fathers awaiting the coming of the King of King and Lord of Lords! We are his precious lambs and He is our Good Shepherd who loves, feeds, and leads us today and for eternity. "Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11)

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for being our King, our Savior and Good Shepherd that has saved us, knows us by name, and who always leads us to the still waters that restores our souls. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, June 24, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 5:17-25](#)

“David’s Heartbeat”

We’ve been reading our way through the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel. Filled with accounts of war and strife, friendship and hatred, life and death, it paints the background of human history. Mankind’s story is filled with this kind of conflict, these alliances, the never-ending deception, betrayal, and lies, and yes, even some love as well. But we would be remiss if we didn’t point you to God’s song that winds its way through all this. This is sung in the book of Psalms.

In today’s reading, we hear of some classic human conflict: newly crowned King David, closely following God’s guidance, roundly defeats the invading Philistines, not once, but twice. Great victories, but just plain, simple history. The kind that’s so hard to learn in History class. But in the Psalms, David reveals his thoughts that surround this event, the source of his hope, and the laughter that he joins with the joy of God Himself.

In [Psalm 2](#), considered to have been written by David, we learn of what may have been coursing through his heart after these battles. In amazement, he writes at the futility of his enemies: **“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”**” What is God’s response? **“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.”**

David knows that God anointed him to lead His people; to shepherd them. And he knows that God can’t be beaten. He can’t be denied, His victory over His enemies is a done deal. It’s laughable – people thinking that their meager might can beat the Almighty God! God had made David king, telling David’s enemies, **“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”**

David knows that this was all God’s doing. He wasn’t king because of something in him; God had made him everything he was – because of His love for him. **“The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”**

You and I – with the benefit of hindsight – may see the double meaning here. David was God’s anointed king, and God had made him His “son”. But this only pre-figured Jesus’ birth as God’s Son and anointing as the King of all people. We can join with David and with God at laughing at our enemies and their feeble attempts to overthrow God’s love for us. It can’t be done! Listen to David’s heart beating – it’s sustained by God’s Word rushing through his veins as he sings of God’s victory in this Psalm.

Prayer: Almighty God, my strength on its own doesn’t win many battles. Through Your Word, continue to point me to Your Son’s victory to sustain me when I come under attack. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, June 26, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 6:1-15

God's Presence

To the people of the Old Testament, the ark of the covenant was the visible sign of the presence of God in the midst of the people. It contained the tablets of the Law – a guide to the life that the child of the covenant would live. It contained Aaron's rod that blossomed – evidence of God's hand guiding their life – and a pot of manna, the food for the body that God provided during the trek through the wilderness. When the ark was held captive by others or even hidden away within the kingdom of Israel, the people felt distanced from God. Is it any wonder that they celebrated the return of the ark to their midst.

As children of the New Testament, we know the continuing presence of God among us whenever two or three are gathered in His name. WE can call upon our gracious Father from the solitude of our times of personal prayer or in the company of other believers. We have the Word and Sacraments always before us – the record and evidence of the work of salvation. As David danced when the ark was returned, so we rejoice and celebrate God's presence with us. Just as David did, we live our lives to witness to our Lord.

Prayer: For Your continued presence with us, we give You thanks and praise, O God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23

The Downfall of Pride

My pride continues to be my downfall. I know that what I do is good - well some of it, but that little bit, surely it is alright for me to proud of it. After all, I think I do better than others, and that bit should be honored and renders me a teacher for others.

How pride deceives! Where I am proudly showing my strength, the very fact that I am using my so-called goodness to glorify myself, reveals my true nature. At heart, I am a selfish person, that which I think is good, is shown to be glitter or cover up. Any pride puts God down, and me in His place. Any time I think that I can do better than God will crash with a booming sound. I keep thinking of the house built on the sand!

I fight pride, and, of course, I fail. Whatever I try so hard on my own, fails. With pride I find myself proud that I fight pride. I am so weary of my failures, finally, I turn back to our Lord. I should have done that first! I repent and tell Him that I can't do it. I'm sure to be proud of my repentance. The real problem is not my pride (that is truly wrong) but the concern with myself that gives me interest in pride. Worrying about how I do relative to others. Being afraid that others might find a fault with me. Measuring myself for qualities. How I need to pay more attention to my God - and He finds a way to keep me there.

Prayer: Lord, how I need your help. I keep looking at myself and not at you. Help me. Thank you since I know you will. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Yahweh's Promised Kingdom

"And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

2 Samuel 7:16

Yahweh gave rest to King David from his enemies in the palace (house), and David said to the Prophet Nathan, "**See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent**" (v. 2). So the prophet said to David, "Yahweh is with you, so do all that is in your heart." However, the Word of Yahweh visited Nathan, explaining how He dwelt with His people and would make David a house;

"Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 11:11-13).

We see from the New Testament that the Word of Yahweh here is fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of God, whose Kingdom is forever and has no end. In Psalms 132:11, "**The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: 'One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.'**" Thus says Yahweh, "**I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son**" (2 Sam 7:14). And in the letter to the Hebrews, "**For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'?"** (Hebrews 1:5)

And the Word of Yahweh is clear from the angel's message to Mary in the Gospel account of Jesus Christ in Luke, "**And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.**" (Luke 1:31-33).

And again, the Gospel account of Matthew connects Jesus as the Son of David promised offspring/seed, "**The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**" (Matt 1:1).

God's Word spoken is a Word that is, done, and is already done; that includes the declaration of righteousness in Christ's blood shed for you, covering your debt of sin and death in His death and has said in Jesus' Name, "Your sins are forgiven!"

Prayer – "Gracious Lord, keep us in the true faith, that we may have the blessed rest and peace that Christ, our eternal King, alone provides. Amen." (TLSB).

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, June 29, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29

Thank You

We are spoiled, but every once in a while recognize it. I should probably just speak for myself, but it is likely true of all of us to some degree. We are spoiled. So much so that when we receive gifts for a birthday or Christmas, we expect them. The particular item might surprise us, but not the fact that we are receiving gifts. We expect them. We get huffy if we don't receive them. But it's not that way when a gift is given out of the blue. The unexpected nature of the gift stops us in our tracks, and (for a moment) we are overwhelmed with gratitude. We are humbled that someone cares so deeply for us. Not only do we not expect the gift, but a surprise, generous gift has a way of showing us that we don't deserve such a gift.

Consider the most surprised and humbled you've ever been upon receiving a gift. Now multiply that by a million, and you might be approaching the sentiment of David. "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" David had intended to give God house (a temple). Instead, God gave David an everlasting household, which would be accomplished in Jesus. The extraordinary gift so blows David away that he begins to reflect on the myriad gifts God has poured out on David. He traces his life, the history of God's people, and more.

At the heart of it all is not really David's question, "Who am I?" But a better question, "Who are You, O LORD God?" Look at your life. Consider how the LORD has worked through time to provide for you, to make sure someone taught you about Jesus, and how He has sustained your life and your faith through all the ups and downs. In humility, you may well ask with David, "Who am I?" In awe, I have often asked the same question. But even better, who is Your God? The Creator who has made you, given you every ability, item, and person in your life. The Redeemer who has bought you back from slavery to sin, death, and the devil. The Sanctifier who has made you holy and made you a part of this everlasting household that is centered in Jesus, but stretches back to David and beyond and joins you to every other person who trust in Christ. We don't deserve it. But such is His gracious love for you.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, June 30, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 8

God's Blessings of Victory for King David and for Us

My Family of Hope, in today's text from 2 Samuel 8 we see God's hand of blessing for King David. We see God's hand of blessing as He grants King David victories over his enemies. (vv.1-14) These victories led to the growth and establishment of his reign. God also blessed him with wise men to serve on his Council and as his trusted advisors for all his decisions. (vv. 15-18)

In my own life, I have seen this in my 30 years of Active Duty in the Military. First, this was evident as a teenager serving in the Army as a Field Artilleryman during the Vietnam War from '72-'76 and then later as a USAF Chaplain from '86 to 2011. Without God we are nothing and without God's hand of blessings, protection, and guidance, we can accomplish nothing. All that we are, all that we will ever be is all by God's hand of blessing and favor.

David saw that his victories and wise Councilmen were because God's hand of blessing was upon him. David shows us how to express his humble thanks and faith. "The LORD gave David victory wherever he went."

God's hand of blessing is with us as well. God gives us victory through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with every breath we take and with every beat of our heart. God's Word speaks to our hearts and lives of Jesus' Victory for us over sin, death, and the devil. Jesus' cry from the cross, "It is finished!" (JN 19:30) gives us this Blessed Assurance. His glorious Resurrection from the Dead strengthens us and assures us of His victory for today and for eternity. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:54,57, "Death has been swallowed up in victory.... He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we thank You for the victory, you have given us through your Life, Death and Resurrection, giving us life today and life eternally. We thank You for blessing us with your Love, knowing that You have overcome all things, because the One who is in us, Lord Jesus, is greater than the one who is in the world. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, July 1, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 9](#)

“The Kindness of God”

King David has been blessed. Beginning as the youngest son of his father, a lowly shepherd, he rose to fame by defeating his king’s enemy, Goliath the giant. He served his king in his palace and led his king’s armies to great victories over their enemies. He survived his king’s personal attacks, and became the King of Israel in the place of Saul. Now, he’s fully defeated what remained of the Philistines and made all his other neighboring nations his “servants”. They’ve paid him tribute, making him and his nation the jewel of the world. God has shown David great kindness, and David appreciates this to the bottom of his heart. How could he not do so?

We don’t have to look very far today to see people who have been similarly showered with God’s gifts. They can barely count the wealth, fame, and fortune with which they’ve been blessed. “How many houses do I own?” “Which car should I drive today?” “Do I want filet mignon or salmon?” “How many million followers do I have?” There’s nothing wrong with this, and I praise God for His lavish generosity. But even some people who have been shown such immense portions of God’s kindness don’t thank God for His gifts.

David wasn’t such a person. He received God’s gifts and showered God’s kindness on anyone. In today’s reading, a potential rival for his throne receives this generosity. Saul’s grandson, lame in both feet and probably a social pariah after his grandfather’s fall from power, is invited by David to have his family’s former lands and wealth restored to him and to dine with David forever. This is gratitude! David has received God’s bountiful gifts and wants to share them with his neighbor – what a great example for us!

But most of us don’t have a palace with gold shields adorning the walls, millions of people at our beck and call, and a crown on our head. God’s generosity doesn’t rain on all of us equally, does it? Sometimes we even have problems, strife, and conflict raining down instead so that we can’t even keep our nose above water.

No one knew this better than David, and that’s why he’s such a good example. He knew that he didn’t deserve any of God’s kindness. He knew that all the trappings of his kingly majesty were his only because God’s grace lavishly abounds, sometimes for no visible reason. But he relishes his job as recipient of God’s kindness to dedicate it to the Lord by sharing it with his neighbors.

And, while earthly wealth and glory may escape us in our lives here, that eternal dynasty God promised to David has begotten King Jesus, who gave us crowns of baptism that we will exchange for crowns of glory in His Kingdom.

Prayer: Lord God, You bless me with a full life and everything I need to sustain me. Thank You, and help me show my gratitude to my neighbor. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, July 3, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 10

Protecting the Embarrassed

I'm going to guess that while you can often not remember what last week's sermon was about or what you had for dinner last night or even why you just walked into a particular room, some memories are always at your fingertips. For instance, can you think of your most embarrassing moments?

Not only can you probably think of those moments, you know who else was there and you immediately know what it felt like. Don't dwell on it for too long. You might start blushing and sweating all over again.

David's soldiers had been shamed by the foolish king Hanun of the Ammonites. He felt threatened by David's soldiers and falsely assumed they were coming spy on his city. So, he embarrassed them. First, he had half of their beards shaved off, which would communicate symbolically that they were half men. Then he had their garments cut off at their hips – the ancient equivalent of having your pants fall down in public.

Upon their return, David spared their humiliation by giving them time in Jericho to let their beards grow out. This might seem like a small detail in the story, unless you were one of those men. To be shown genuine compassion in an embarrassing moment is true gift. You can probably think about someone who came to your rescue in an embarrassing time. You were vulnerable and instead of taking advantage of it, they saw helping you as more important. This is a true friend.

David's kindness is a great example for us: to show kindness when others are vulnerable instead of taking advantage of or ignoring their difficulty. Such is the mercy of Christ for us, who rescued us in our weakness, when we were vulnerable. Such is the mercy Christ desires for us to share – to speak for voiceless, to defend the weak, and (yes) protect the embarrassed.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when I see others who are weak, vulnerable, or embarrassed, embolden me to help and protect them as You have cared for me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, July 4, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 11

Stumbling Easily

I find that I have troubles in life when I consider myself to have done what I need to; that is when I start enjoying myself, doing the things that I want to - and then how could I tell the difference between what is right and wrong? I am only looking at my own interests, ignoring God. The result is always disaster in my life.

But I am God's Child! How can I stumble so easily? Look at how ease of life and empty duties make me forget my Lord and look instead at my selfish desires. How often the lure of the eye, the anticipation of sin, seems too attractive.

I brush my Lord aside; I hasten to plan to get my way; I even carefully plan to hide what I do. Horror! That is part of my sin. Maybe if I can hide it, then God won't pay attention to it. Maybe then my conscience won't bother me either. But there is no way out.

God always comes to me in sorrow, telling me that I have hurt Him. I hurt Him! Who has done so much for me. Now my heart aches because I have sinned, done wrong, and abused my Lord. Sure, I know He will forgive me, but I still know what I really am.

Only His comfort, His presence can help me to forgive myself. I try to blame others, but, no, I did it. In sorrow, only when I allow Him to help me forgive myself can I accept His forgiveness. But oh, I wish I hadn't needed it.

Prayer: Oh, God! Guide me, don't let me fall away. Don't let me find joy in doing wrong. Forgive me and help me not to repeat. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, July 5, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-23

Yahweh Sent Nathan

Yahweh sent the Prophet Nathan to David to confront him for despising Yahweh's commands to "not kill" and "not commit adultery," as David had killed Uriah and took his wife as his own. Nathan told David a story of a poor and rich man.

"There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. "The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. "But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished, And it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat his morsel of bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And was like a daughter to him. "Now a visitor came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, To prepare for the traveler who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As Yahweh lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. "And he must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion" (2 Sam 12:1-6 [Legacy Standard Bible]).

Nathan said, אַתָּה הָאִישׁ (atah ha-eesh), **"You [are] the man!" (v. 7)**—the man who had no compassion and deserves to die. **"David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die" (vv. 13-14).**

Psalm 51 reflected David's heart in this matter, **"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment."** (vv. 1-4).

God is just. God is merciful and forgives David. David fasted and sought God about the child **"Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" (2 Sam 12:22);** on the seventh day, his child died, and David stopped fasting.

Prayer – "Gracious Lord, thank You for putting Jesus away on the cross, that I would not be put away in my sins. (TLSB) "The will of God is always best And shall be done forever; And they who trust in Him are blest; He will forsake them never. He helps indeed In time of need; He chastens with forbearing. They who depend On God, their friend, Shall not be left despairing." Amen. (LSB 758:1).

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, July 6, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 12:24-31

Solomon

Bathsheba had lost so much – a measure of innocence, her husband (11:17), and now a son (12:18-19). Having lost so much the child that God gives to her is an even greater treasure. David certainly recognizes this and gives to his son the name Solomon.

The name is Solomon most likely comes from the Hebrew word “Shalom.” Shalom is usually translated as peace, and it certainly means this, but it is also something more. Shalom is a state of well-being. Shalom means wholeness. Solomon may not always live up to such a name, but his name is statement that God is the One whose forgiveness makes us whole, even when our sin (or the sin of others) has led us to lose so much.

But then the child is given a second name: Jedidiah. Sadly, our immediate association is probably to the Beverly Hillbillies, but the name is meant as a word of comfort to David. The name actually comes from the same root word as the name David. David means “beloved” and Jedidiah means “beloved of Yahweh.”

Two names that speak of the forgiveness of God: Solomon and Jedidiah. The mercy of God is so great that while our sin should cause endless conflict and division between us and our righteous God, He has sent Christ, the Prince of Peace to bring Shalom – peace, well-being, and wholeness in Him where otherwise there would be only pain and loss. And such mercy comes from the fact that despite what we deserve, we are beloved of Yahweh. These names are for that baby, but they speak volumes also to us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, our rebellion may not be as brazen and bloody as David’s, but it is no less serious. Our sin causes loss and hurt and division with You that we cannot set right. We can never thank You enough for being our Prince of Peace who by Your sacrifice has made us the beloved of Yahweh. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, July 7, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22

Amnon & Tamar - God Is Present in the Midst of Tragedy

My Family of Hope, today's reading shows the depth and depravity of sin and its impact on the lives of people. We especially see its impact on the life of Tamar. In these verses we see then what we see, hear, and read every day in whatever news format we follow-TV, Internet, Blogs or the newspaper.

2 Samuel 13:19,20 tells us, "Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went. Her brother, Absalom said to her; 'Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you?'...and Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman."

Tamar was traumatized, abused, raped, and rejected. Yet, during this terrible evil done to her, God saw fit to have her in Jesus' lineage. Tamar was the 1st woman mentioned in Matthew's Gospel account of Jesus' genealogy.

Tamar mattered to God! Tamar's life and Tamar's story reminds us that each of us matter to God! Tamar had a hard life. Yet, God did not let her story disqualify her nor did God shun her.

Tamar's story assures us that God is not ashamed, not afraid of our own imperfect lives and stories. Every life matters to God! You matter to God! Romans 5:8;" While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us..." because we matter to God!

Tamar's story was written to give us hope! Regardless of our shortcomings and shameful past, God wants us to be encouraged and know that we matter to God. God loved Tamar and God loves you! God's love heals our hearts, minds, lives, and memories.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me. Thank You for sending your Son Jesus to die for me, taking away all my guilt, all my shame, and all my sins. Teach me to embrace your love. Let your love fill my heart this day and always. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, July 8, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 13:23-39](#)

“Headlines”

“King David has Uriah Killed so He can Marry Bathsheba”. “King David’s Firstborn Dies”. “King David’s Crown Prince Rapes His Half-Sister”. These are the headlines of the last few chapters of 2nd Samuel. And now, add to them this: “David’s Son Absalom Murders the Crown Prince”. What kind of devotional material is this?!?

I pray that none of those reading this have ever had to face these kinds of problems. These are those monstrous, intentional, Sinful (with a capital “S”) kind of sins that we purposefully stay far away from, right? They don’t touch on our lives, unless we hear about it in the news. But the truth is, while many of us may not ever run into sin of this magnitude, I’m sure that there are also many reading this who have.

King David was the man of whom God said, **“I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.”** But, this same David is also the one in the first headline, above. King David was a monstrous, intentional, Sinner. And, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, right? David’s first son died. Then other sons committed monstrous sins. They, too, were Sinners and suffered from their parent’s sin.

The divorce rate for Christians isn’t much different than for the non-Christian. We experience addiction, greed, selfishness, and hate just like those whose heart doesn’t follow God’s heart. We, or those we know, have abortions, get into fights, and give false testimony against our neighbors. We, too, are Sinners.

But Jesus said, **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.”** And, **“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”** Jesus came for David, and Absalom, and Amnon, and Tamar. Jesus loves sinners – He is also our Physician, our Healer, and gives us His perfect righteousness. Through Him, we Sinners are transformed into Saints.

And that makes this great devotional material, because it shows how even big, monstrous Sinners who commit adultery and murder and rape can be saved and live new lives. How they can weep, and grieve, and hurt, and fall on their knees – broken – before God and be forgiven. And how the family and friends of monstrous Sinners can similarly be damaged and hurt by their sin, but can still show them God’s overwhelming love. That love will include consequences and suffering in this world, but will draw them into His loving arms.

Prayer: Great Physician, heal me of my sins, misery, and despair. Build me up and make me strong to help others who are still lost in their sin. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, July 10, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 14

Absalom

“Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight.” 2 Samuel 14:25-26

I suppose if I had hair like Absalom did (or even if I had some), I might spend a little more time and attention on it than I do. But guys who spend a great deal of time on their hair have always concerned me. Absalom probably confirms my concern.

Long-haired Absalom was ridiculously vain (who weighs their hair every year?!?). He was a man who never met a mirror that he didn't love. Now David loved his son, but Absalom was also David's nightmare come true. Nathan had forewarned him that God would “raise up evil against you out of our own house” (2 Sam. 12:11). By the time this man of celebrated hair was through with his evil, he will be hung by those long, flowing locks.

A much better use of hair was made by a humble, repentant woman who “wet Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head” (Luke 7:38). In this great (and yet humble) Son of David, she found a man of mercy who, hung between heaven and earth, gave to her – and all of us – life everlasting.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, take from my heart all vanity and help me to humbly serve You.
Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Adapted from Unveiling Mercy, p. 219

Tuesday, July 11, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 15:1-12

When Forgiveness is Hard

When my heart begins to be irritated and resentful to my parents - then I begin to try to misuse what God has given me. God gave me parents, parents who should do right by me - but they are sinners as well as I am; but I hold my resentments, I let their sins crush my soul. How easy it is to leave my Lord, to enable, as I think, to enable me to get revenge on one who has hurt me. It was a sin! And I am going to make sure that they receive the punishment that will make me glad?

Oh, Lord, this is so deep in my soul. How could a parent mistreat their child? How could I let that sear my life as I grow up? How tempting it is to act in revenge and not love!

There is my problem! God loves me in spite of my sin, in spite of the way I treat Him. God gives me the ability to live like Him as He lives in me. But, but ... But it's hard. To love another is to open yourself to being hurt, repeatedly. But God does it - and He invites me to live with Him and learn how to love with Him.

It is only His comfort that enables me to accept the hurt from even my parents, and still love them. It is a hard lesson, but a glorious one, as one learns to let the hurt be taken by God, and still keep loving.

Prayer: Lord, don't let me hurt others to hide my hurt. Let your love change me, and in changing me, let others accept your love as they see it in me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 15:13-37

David and Absalom

Absalom had been busy conspiring to take his father David's throne. And David had to flee Jerusalem because the men of Israel's hearts had gone after Absalom and to escape from being struck down by the sword. So all of David's household fled with him. He left ten concubines and, stopping at the last house with all the servants passing by, David tried to convince Ittai to stay, but Ittai said, **"As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be"** (v. 21).

This phrase is echoed in the Gospel account of John, where Jesus answers Andrew and Philip about the Greeks wishing to see Jesus with a promise, **"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him"** (John 12:26).

Jesus is our eternal King and Lord and God-One with the Father and the Spirit-to whom we serve and follow, and where He is, we too shall be as His joyful servant of His righteousness.

Then David persuaded Zadok, the priest, to carry the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem and said, **"If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. But if he says, 'I have no pleasure in you,' behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him"** (vv. 25-26). Then David ascended (up) the Mount of Olives weeping and barefoot along with the people who covered their heads and wept.

David wrote a Psalm about the matter, crying out to Yahweh:

"A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." Selah

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah.

I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah" (Psalm 3).

God has brought all nations salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and ascended for all, deliverance from sin, death, and Satan the enemy, once and for all.

Prayer – "O Lord Jesus Christ, by the blood of Your eternal covenant, preserve our faith and bring us at last into Your Jerusalem above. Amen." (TLSB)

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, July 13, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 16:1-4

Beware...of Appearances

In our reading today, David meets Ziba (the servant of Mephibosheth). Ziba claims to have brought a generous gift for David – presumably to win his favor. But all of these supplies belong to Mephibosheth, not his servant Ziba. Ziba brings these items insinuating that Mephibosheth stands to gain his family land back if Absalom is victorious in the civil war with David. Mephibosheth will later deny this, yet it's unclear who is lying – Ziba now or Mephibosheth later on.

Either way, the gift leads David to the hasty promise to give Mephibosheth's land to Ziba. You'll have to wait until 2 Samuel 19 to see how that story shakes out, but it is clear that David is influenced to buy Ziba's story because of the gifts.

The Lutheran Study Bible points out that, "we are also too easily led to make quick judgments, especially when they agree with our expectations (p. 510)." How true! Also, our opinions can often be swayed by things like flattery or gifts. The old joke is probably more accurate than the original saying that, "flattery will get you everywhere!"

We are often influenced by appearances and even bribes (even if we don't see them as such), but our God is not influenced by mere appearance. He looks on the heart, and know our hearts. In our sin, this would be terrifying! But in faith, He sees our trust in Him and in Christ our Savior. So, we are wise to seek the guidance of the One who alone sees all things clearly.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, forgive me when I am swayed by mere appearances. Help me to be patient and wise, as You are and seek what is true...not just what I wish to be true. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, July 14, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 16:5-14

Shimei Curses David - How Do We Respond to Criticism?

My Family of Hope, in today's reading we see how to respond to criticism. Think of the scenario: King David with his 'Old Guard' of 600 men who had been with him from the beginning (1 Sam. 23:13) were approaching Bahurim the Mt. of Olives, when a man named Shimei of Saul's clan began cursing David and throwing stones and dirt at David and his 600 Men of the 'Old Guard!'

What would you have done if you were David? What could David have done to Shimei? Easily he could have sent one of his men to destroy him as Abishai offered to do. (2 Sam. 16:9) David did not do what his position as King allowed him to do and what other Monarchs of his day then and now might have done.

David's response sets an example for us to follow. When David was cursed and reviled, he remained silent and did not curse back, even as Jesus did not curse back. 1 Peter 2:23 says, "When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate, when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness, by His wounds you have been healed."

David's response and example was to trust in God for His protection and deliverance. David hoped that the Lord in His mercy would end this affliction that had come on him for his great sins and would replace a man's curses with God's blessings.

Our Savior Jesus sets THE example in His words and His life. Jesus says in Matthew 5:44, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." St. Paul also shares in Romans 12:14, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, forgive us when we lose our temper and say things in anger. Please give us Your patience and love to bless, forgive others when they hurt us, and to ask their and your forgiveness when we have hurt them. Lead us to pray just as You prayed from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." In Your Name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, July 15, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 16:15-23](#)

“Book of the Chronicles of the Kings”

In the books of 1st and 2nd Kings, immediately after Samuel, the phrase “Book of the Chronicles of the Kings” is used 34 times. The deeds of Israel’s kings are told in the Biblical book with the apt title, “Kings.” They relate whether or not a king was a “good king” or a “bad king” and other details of their reign. Then, 34 times, the account of a king ends with something like this: **“Now the rest of all the acts of Asa [a king], all his might, and all that he did, and the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? But in his old age he was diseased in his feet.”** Just the important stuff in Holy Scripture; God doesn’t waste space on mighty accomplishments – great cities, military victories, valiant deeds – those go in that Chronicles book. The bad feet go in the Bible!

No, this “Book of the Chronicles of the Kings” is not in the Bible. We don’t have any record of it – it’s lost to history. All those important human accomplishments – gone. No one remembers them today. Why? Maybe because of the sordid nature of human accomplishments. Maybe God didn’t put them in His Book for a reason.

Today’s reading relates the story of King David’s son, Absalom entering Jerusalem in victory. He’d stolen the love of the people away from his father, had built an army of followers, and had been declared their king. Now, entering the capital with all his subjects practically worshipping him must have made his head grow three sizes. David’s chief advisor seemingly joined Absalom’s staff (deceptively, though), while another advisor recommended that the son take the place of the father by publicly going into his father’s home to sleep with his concubines. Why couldn’t they save that detail for the book of the chronicles of the kings?

But David knows that this is a consequence of his sin. He’d committed murder and adultery. And, he’d failed to discipline Absalom often enough that he’d grown to scorn his dad. David was receiving the fruits of his deeds. We learn of the victories and failures of David and others in the Bible not as a history book. By seeing the crass political maneuvering, deceit, and human imperfection of these, the best of Biblical heroes, we understand our need for a better King.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, fresh from His victory over Lazarus’ death. Excited, the people hailed Him as a new king, ready to restore the glory of King David and Solomon. But, as we know from our reading, those flawed, human kings were insufficient for God’s plans for us. Jesus rode into Jerusalem to be lifted onto the cross, to pay for the sins of all His sinful followers, then and now. This book, the Bible, is the Chronicles of the King of Kings.

Prayer: Lord of History, the greatest human kings are powerless to save themselves. But thanks be to Jesus – He did so for me. Alleluia! Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, July 17, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 17

The Danger of Pride

Absalom's arrogance is his downfall. He is not the first to be brought to power AND to fall from power because of his pride. And he certainly has not been the last.

Absalom is certain that he should be the king of Israel, even at the expense of his father's life. Yet, his own vanity will lead to his own demise.

His trusted servant Ahithophel tells Absalom to send a large army immediately and finish David and his army off while they are exhausted. The advice is sound in terms of military strategy, but Absalom seeks a second opinion – big mistake!

Hushai is posing as an advisor to Absalom, but is actually loyal to David. In order to save David, Hushai advises Absalom to wait in his pursuit (often a bad military strategy) and then to personally lead the troops into battle (a very dangerous strategy – as we will see). Hushai's advice will lead to Absalom's demise, so why does Absalom listen? Pride.

Absalom can be the conquering hero at the front of the battle (even if it was unnecessary to do so). Pride and personal glory is a dangerous drug that dooms Absalom.

Across the Scriptures, we are warned against pride and encouraged toward humility – both in relationship to God and one another. Christ (the eternal second person of the Trinity) exemplifies humility in counting us more significant than Himself in His death and resurrection. Following our Lord, we are not to seek our own glory, but to humbly consider others. To do otherwise, can clearly have disastrous results.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me follow You in humility. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, July 18, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 18:1-18

The Source of Joy

Pride is always seeking to pull me down. I find that if I say at least, I am not proud – I see that I am proud of not being proud! Pride keeps pulling me down – the very thing I place my joy in turns out to be the source of my downfall. Pride is a true weapon of the devil.

When I come before God, when I talk to Him, I face the truth – I am not worthy of anything. I feel so useless, so unworthy. So, it makes me feel better, or at least think I'm feeling better when I look at something and tell myself, "I have something good. I have something to be proud of." But that is self-deception. The devil wants me to take my eyes off of Jesus and place them on something of myself. The very thing that I think makes me "worthy" is the very thing that causes me to stumble.

My heart is so prone to wandering! There is not joy in that, no lifting of myself before God. Rather, I want to look at the cross, at what my Savior did for me. In appreciation of that, I find something that lifts me up. So rather than let my looking at myself turn my activities to trouble, turn my nature into traps for me, rather I look to Jesus. There I see my value; there I see that His cross and resurrection are my joy.

Prayer: Thank you God for giving me something to rejoice in, that I can be proud in what You did for me and others. Thank You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 18:19-33

David Grieves Absalom

“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” 2 Samuel 18:19-33

The news of Absalom’s death grieved David even though his son was his enemy.

What more is there to say? Grief is real, difficult, and complex here and now as Christians in the world, and God’s wrath over enemies has its place. Paul Kretzmann commented,

“[David] was more deeply afflicted by the death of this rebellious son than by any event in his life. It is a blessing of God if dangerous and rebellious people, who lead others into temptation and destruction, are destroyed by God’s wrath. In such cases the believers have all reason to thank and praise God for the justice of His punishments” (Kretzmann Commentary).

A Psalm of David

“Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground! For your name’s sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble! And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies, and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul, for I am your servant” (Psalm 143:9).

As those who are in Christ and forgiven by grace, we rejoice in His deliverance and pray for those who do not know the Truth of the Gospel (sometimes this is our own family), those who also persecute us so that they would turn from their evil, and in faith and repentance, have life in His Name.

Prayer – “Lord, grant us grace to rejoice in Your salvation, and to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, that we may be merciful, even as You are merciful. Amen” (TLSB)

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, July 20, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 19:1-8

Good Grief!

How many times have you heard Charlie Brown say, "Good grief!" when things went wrong? But is there grief that is good? Grief may not feel good, but it can be for our good.

Despite Absalom's betrayal against his father, David still grieves for his son. His grief bleeds over from 2 Samuel 18 into chapter 19 and our reading for today. David grieved for him inconsolably, which made sense as a parent, but as a King, David was betraying his own people.

Joab, the head of David's army, point out to David that if Absalom were still alive, everyone around David would be dead (including David!). David's mourning unjustly shamed those who had protected him. David repented and went to meet his people. Repentance is good grief.

Repentance, relief – this is the pattern of the Christian life. We are cloaked in sin and perpetually in need of God's constant forgiveness. And God's mercy delivers! As David puts it in Psalm 32:10, "Steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD." The Lord shows His steadfast love in Jesus, who takes away our sin! God provided Baptism and the Lord's Supper to give us Christ and His mercy. He forgives any and all sins, saying, "Repent and be saved." There is good grief! Repent and be saved.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we repent of our sins and beg your forgiveness. Thank You for steadfastly loving and forgiving us. Overcome the evil in our lives, and keep us close You, now and forever. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, July 21, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 23:1-7

David's Last Words

My Family of Hope, can you remember a retirement speech? Maybe your own or another's that has stuck with you? One that comes to my mind is from the film, 'The Pride of the Yankees,' about Lou Gehrig's life. The actor, Gary Cooper played Lou Gehrig. Lou Gehrig was known as the "Iron Horse." He played 17 seasons and is regarded as one of the greatest baseball players of all time. It is a very heartfelt, inspiring, and moving film. I would highly recommend it and you can watch it with your children and grandchildren!

In Lou Gehrig's retirement from the New York Yankees on July 4, 1939, knowing he would die from A.L.S. (now known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), he gave a heartfelt, moving, and powerful message. Knowing he was dying, he told his fans gathered at Yankee Stadium and the world the following, "Today, I consider myself to be the luckiest man on the face of the earth." Let that sink in.... having a terminal illness, being 35 years old and at the top of his game as a New York Yankee and knowing he would soon die, he states, "Today, I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth."

King David also has last words for us. He is looking back at his life and all that God had done for him and what God had promised to do thru him in sending the Messiah, Jesus, to be our Savior, Shepherd, and Lord! Imagine the thoughts and feelings that David had as he prepared to speak to his son, Solomon as he was to be anointed King over Israel. (1 Kings 2:1-10).

My Family of Hope, as you read these 7 verses for today, King David has a promise and a prayer for us today. It is my heartfelt prayer for each of you as you look back on your own life, look at your life today and what legacy and memory you want your children, grandchildren, family, and friends to remember when you join Jesus in Heaven.

2 Samuel 23:4,5, "He is like the 'Light' moving at sunrise, on a cloudless morning, like the 'brightness after the rain' that brings grass from the earth. Is not my house right with God? Has He not made with me an everlasting covenant?"

Are not each of us; 'THE most blessed people on the face of the earth today and every day? Has not God sent His only Son, Jesus to be only His for today and for eternity? (see John 3:16) Has not God promised to be with us always to the end of the age? (see Matthew 28:20) Absolutely! Jesus is our Good Shepherd and we are His precious lambs for today and for eternity!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus to be our Savior and Shepherd. We thank You for shining the light of your love into our hearts like a beautiful sunrise after the rain. As you have blessed us with the Light of your Love and rained your blessings on us, may we, in turn bring your light, your love and Your blessings to all, for all our days in all our ways." In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, July 22, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 19:16-43](#)

“Sucking Up”

Years before the end of World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill already saw the next war on the horizon. He’d been ignored for years before the current war had begun, as he warned of the evil designs of Adolph Hitler to people who didn’t have “ears to hear”. But, eventually, even America listened to him and joined forces to defeat the Nazis. But to do so, we allied ourselves with the Soviet Union. Churchill understood the immediate need to do so, but knew that after the war was over, we’d next be fighting the Soviets. The ensuing Cold War lasted the next 30+ years. Churchill was right, and I’ll bet that utterly depressed him.

In Israel, the civil war that had divided the nation and its tribes and families was over. Absalom was dead and the reason for fighting was gone. In today’s reading, it seems that everyone who thought they might have ticked off the victorious David, fought to be the first to make amends. They wanted to re-tell their story; spin it differently to sound more favorable to him – essentially, they were “sucking up.”

And King David was overflowing with grace – he refused to execute people who’d turned against him, while splitting the “spoils” with some whose stories didn’t agree with each other. Finally, the 10 tribes squabbled with Judah before David about who deserved more of his favor. David was from Judah, so they considered him family, while the other tribes were 10 in number and so deserved “ten times more” than did Judah, so they argued.

Yes, the war was over. No, human conflict continued. Lies and deception flourished while social intrigue grew. David was no fool, though, and probably realized that many were dishonestly exploiting his generosity, while knowing the inter-tribal quarreling would only lead to bigger problems. The disagreement between the tribes would be made official in a few short years, as Israel split from Judah. David probably felt a little like Churchill – victorious, but a somewhat empty victory.

But grace is the biggest lesson here (it always is). David knew that he was the “chief of sinners” and that from God he deserved nothing but death. David experienced God’s grace fully as he rejoiced over God’s forgiveness. And his response is just as ours should be – seize our God-given calling to serve others, forgive those who trespass against us, and generously help those who can’t help themselves.

Prayer: Gracious Father, when I get depressed by the ceaseless conflict around me, remind me of my Savior, Jesus, Who saved me while I was yet His enemy. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, July 24, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 20

Worthless

A man named Sheba arrives in 2 Samuel 20 with the ominous description of being “a worthless man.” Whenever this term is used to describe someone in 1 & 2 Samuel, it is not merely someone unhelpful or lazy, but this is someone actively evil and destructive. In fact, Paul uses a Greek version of this term in 2 Corinthians 6 to describe Satan.

Certainly, many people in Israel and Judah were dissatisfied with the chaos of David’s latter years as King. But God had chosen Him, not just to rule, but also as the line that would one day see God’s everlasting kingdom come in Jesus, the Christ.

With this in mind, you can see how diabolical (of the devil) Sheba’s call to rebellion truly is, “We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.”

It is true that full peace and salvation will not come in David, but our inheritance is absolutely won and delivered by the greater David, the Son of Jesse, Jesus.

This is always the temptation for us: to be so dissatisfied with the current condition of things that we ignore God’s Word and promise and seek to take matters into our own hands. Such a choice is worthless...in every sense of the word. Trusting in God’s promises, even when we are dissatisfied with the conditions of the moment? Priceless.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive me, when I rebel because You are not acting on my timetable or in the way I would choose. Grant me patience to trust in You and set aside all worthless desires. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, July 25, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 21:1-14

Consequences

God believes in consequences! He makes me fall down, when I jump off a bed (well, when I was three!). When I sin, there are consequences. Sin has results, more than just blocking me away from God. Sin affects my life, it affects those around me, even my family, who are so close to me in this life.

Even my good intentions, when poorly (falsely) acted on, hurt those around me. My pride gets in the way of my living the life God gives me. My certainty that I know what God wants, without bothering to see His Word, leads me to teach, to lead my family astray.

As I read God's Word, as I realize the totality of His goodness, and the way He expresses that in my life, I find myself going back over my actions, looking at my motives - and pleading with Him. Please God, don't let my sinfulness, be the cause of my family's sin. Please preserve them from the consequences of my pride.

A wonderful part of reading His Word is that assurance that He does indeed forgive. And that in forgiving He spares others my consequences also. Surely, He is a wonderful God. He preserves the universe, maintaining consequences in life, while also forgiving, preserving, and granting mercy. I am so blessed that He has come to me, I am so blessed that He forgives me, sparing me many consequences, taking them on Himself. I am so blessed that He teaches me in His Word all those truths.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for forgiving me and sparing me and my family. But also Lord, be in my life that I not keep doing such wrong. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 21:15-22

David's Servants Strike Down Giants

"These four were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants" (2 Samuel 21:22)

And it came to pass, again, Israel and the Philistines were at war, and a descendant of the giants was pursuing David to kill him. One can't help but think of David's killing of Goliath in his youth (see 1 Samuel 17). Here David is much older and grows weary. Ishbi-benob is a descendant of the giants of Rephaim, to which Goliath belonged, and seeks to kill David. Ishbi-benob pursued David with an eight-pound spearhead, and Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, struck down Ishbi-benob. **"Then David's men swore to him, "You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel" (v. 17).** As King David was regarded as the light and life of Israel as long as he was alive, especially in battle.

Again, it came to pass; there was another war with the Philistines at Gob, and Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, a descendant of the giants. Again, it came to pass, there was another war at Gob against the Philistines, and Elhanan (אֶלְחָנָן - *God has been gracious*) the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down another giant (some say the brother of Goliath the Gittite). And again, it came to pass; there was another war at Gob against the Philistines, and another descendant of the giants of great stature with six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot was taunting Israel. **"And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down. These four were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants" (vv. 21-22).**

Even though King David could no longer go out to battle, his servants, slaves, and armies were victorious for Israel in battle, and therefore, it was his victory. As we battle the temptations of the flesh and fiery darts of the devil today, we, the Baptized into Christ, have The Holy Spirit in battle, in spiritual warfare, and are victorious through our Lord, God, and King Jesus, who overcame sin, death, and the devil for us in His death and resurrection!

Prayer – Thank You, Jesus, for loving me even though I am a poor miserable sinner. You overcame sin and death and give me life, forgiveness, and salvation. Your life and Your Peace forever. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, July 27, 2023
Read 2 Samuel 22

The Rock

“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.” 2 Samuel 22:2

When we first moved into our home, we started clearing out some overgrown trees that were behind our house. It took several years. As the trees were cleared, we tried to grow more grass and extend the yard. Towards the back of the yard, I discovered a rock that was in the way. I decided to dig it out and move it. As I started removing dirt, the rock seemingly just kept growing. There was no way that I could possibly move that boulder that is clearly much larger than I am. The trees, grass, flowers, and other plants could come and go, but that rock wasn't going anywhere.

In the Bible, there are numerous references to Christ, the rock of our salvation, and many hymns tell us about standing firm on this rock. A rock (as I have learned!) has permanence and assurance of stability and security. It affords protection and refuge.

The ravages of sin are all around us. Things come and go with little sense of permanence. We fight against the world and its temptations. Without Christ, our rock, we would permanently fall into sin and be lost forever. The rock of Christ offers protection from the destruction of sin. His strength alone can protect us from its permanent damage. His death and resurrection have secured this protection. We can rest in His strength. Even when we are afraid and in danger., we know that Christ our rock is with us to be our strong defense...permanently.

Prayer: Lord, help me always look to Christ, the rock of my salvation. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, July 28, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 23:1-7

David's Last Words

My Family of Hope, can you remember a retirement speech? Maybe your own or another's that has stuck with you? One that comes to my mind is from the film, 'The Pride of the Yankees,' about Lou Gehrig's life. The actor, Gary Cooper played Lou Gehrig. Lou Gehrig was known as the "Iron Horse." He played 17 seasons and is regarded as one of the greatest baseball players of all time. It is a very heartfelt, inspiring, and moving film. I would highly recommend it and you can watch it with your children and grandchildren!

In Lou Gehrig's retirement from the New York Yankees on July 4, 1939, knowing he would die from A.L.S. (now known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), he gave a heartfelt, moving, and powerful message. Knowing he was dying, he told his fans gathered at Yankee Stadium and the world the following, "Today, I consider myself to be the luckiest man on the face of the earth." Let that sink in.... having a terminal illness, being 35 years old and at the top of his game as a New York Yankee and knowing he would soon die, he states, "Today, I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth."

King David also has last words for us. He is looking back at his life and all that God had done for him and what God had promised to do thru him in sending the Messiah, Jesus, to be our Savior, Shepherd, and Lord! Imagine the thoughts and feelings that David had as he prepared to speak to his son, Solomon as he was to be anointed King over Israel. (1 Kings 2:1-10).

My Family of Hope, as you read these 7 verses for today, King David has a promise and a prayer for us today. It is my heartfelt prayer for each of you as you look back on your own life, look at your life today and what legacy and memory you want your children, grandchildren, family, and friends to remember when you join Jesus in Heaven.

2 Samuel 23:4,5, "He is like the 'Light' moving at sunrise, on a cloudless morning, like the 'brightness after the rain' that brings grass from the earth. Is not my house right with God? Has He not made with me an everlasting covenant?"

Are not each of us; 'THE most blessed people on the face of the earth today and every day? Has not God sent His only Son, Jesus to be only His for today and for eternity? (see John 3:16) Has not God promised to be with us always to the end of the age? (see Matthew 28:20) Absolutely! Jesus is our Good Shepherd and we are His precious lambs for today and for eternity!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus to be our Savior and Shepherd. We thank You for shining the light of your love into our hearts like a beautiful sunrise after the rain. As you have blessed us with the Light of your Love and rained your blessings on us, may we, in turn bring your light, your love and Your blessings to all, for all our days in all our ways." In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, July 29, 2023

Read [2 Samuel 23:8-39](#)

“By Faith”

I know that our Viet Nam veterans have stories otherwise, but I believe that today in America we honor our veterans very well. We have national cemeteries around the country to honor those who fought for us. We remember them at Veterans Day, July 4th, and Memorial Day. Many businesses give discounts to veterans. Our military services honor their members with medals and other recognition, including those Medal of Honor recipients who receive that recognition directly from the President of the United States on television before the entire nation.

But today’s reading “raises the bar” for honoring a nation’s war-fighters. King David records [here in the Bible](#) 37 of the top soldiers who served him during his reign. He starts with his top three: “Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite”, “Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi”, and “Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite”. Yes, this is a hard reading, as every one of the 37 is identified by name and where they’re from and/or who their father was.

Many great stories are told of the valiant, selfless acts of bravery these men committed on the battlefield, turning the tide of a conflict from a rout to a victory. One man, it is recorded, “wielded his spear against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.” When David’s hometown of Bethlehem was occupied by the Philistines, he wished out loud that he could drink from the cool waters of the well in that town. Three of these men took that as a challenge, and broke into the Philistines’ camp, drew some water from the well, and brought it back to their King!

As happens in all human activities, politics enters even here, as the King significantly did not include the name of Joab, the commander of his armies, possibly because he’d not fully supported David at all times. But, all in all, a great list honoring an amazing group of warriors who fought for God, king, and country.

You and I didn’t make this list, though. But the Bible does mention us quite a few times, if not by name. After Jesus acknowledged Thomas’ recognition of Him, He said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” His Sermon on the Mount is full of blessings that describe many of us – “blessed are the poor in spirit...those who mourn...the meek...the merciful”. And Hebrews 11 explains why we’re included in the Bible: “By Faith”. By faith Abel...by faith Noah...by faith Abraham...”

By faith you and I get up in the morning. By faith, we know that God created a new, beautiful (and hot!) day for us. We believe He will provide everything we need for this day and the next. And, by faith we know that Jesus died to pay our debt, so that His Spirit could baptize us into His family and write our name in His Book of Life.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank You for giving me this faith that saves. Renew and strengthen it every day, that one day I will hear with my own ears my name read from Your Book of Life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, July 31, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 24:1-9

More is Not Always Better

Go ahead and read the title again. It's true, but we don't necessarily always agree with this sentiment. After all, in terms of this world, more is often better. A few more dollars, a few more soldiers, a few more options. Lots of things put you in a better worldly position when you have more.

But when David goes about counting soldiers (which is likely what Joab was ordered to do), the commander of the army questions the king, "why does my lord the king delight in this thing?" In other words, it's great if God gives us plenty of soldiers, but the number of soldiers (or the size of the soldiers...remember Goliath) is not what matters. If Yahweh fights for you, you have all that you need.

Keep the same thing in mind! Our hope is not in numbers, but in just one – Yahweh – the Lord who was and is and is to come. Our God, Father-Son-Holy Spirit, is all we need to help us now and provide life forever. And since we can have only One God, "more" than Him would be disastrous. It would be to lose all that truly matters. We are better off with less, if what we have is Him.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from trusting in the idol of "More." Shape my heart to trust in You alone. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, August 1, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 24:1-10

Keep My Eyes on You!

I have been blessed by God. He came to me, made me come to Him, forgave my selfish ambition, and has made me a living picture of His people. Yes, that's true, but I tend to immediately decide that what God has done with me, He did because I really deserve it. I look at what God has done – and then I want to see more of how He has made me wonderful – which, of course, implies just the opposite. I have blessings, but they are not my personal property, come because I deserve them. Rather they come despite my lack of deserving anything but punishment.

One of the reasons God lets problem come to me is to remind me that I only succeed when I let Him do whatever I do. Sure, I do the motions, but the impetus for the motions come from God and He is the one that makes those activities succeed. As Proverbs tells us, pride comes before a fall. My very delight in what I see of God's activities tempts me to accept those activities as proof of my personal value. I delight in looking at the reflected value of successes and putting my pride on a pedestal.

So easy to fall. The more I succeed – the faster I fall. Why? Because I keep forgetting to keep my eyes upon Jesus. Success feels like me, and off I go. How I need to let success be a doorway to focusing on Jesus and not on myself.

Prayer: Help me, Father! Help me to keep my eyes on You. I appreciate what You do in my life. Let me never forget that You are who did it. In Jesus name, Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, August 2, 2023

Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25

David Did as Yahweh Commanded

“And David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.”

2 Samuel 24:25

During a plague and judgment against David’s census, 70,000 men were slain by the angel of Yahweh. David pleads to Yahweh in repentance and asks for His hand to be against him. Then, David was approached by the prophet Gad, and he told David to raise up an altar to Yahweh **“on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite”** (v. 18). So, David did as Yahweh commanded. David wanted to buy the threshing floor from Araunah, and Araunah at first tried to give it to David (perhaps for the plague to subside quickly) but then accepted the price of oxen after David’s insistence.

“I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel” (vv. 24-25).

Restoration with Yahweh required a sacrifice, and today, Jesus atoning sacrifice for our sin costs God His blood that has paid for our sins and cleanses us all from sin and death that once plagued us. You have restoration in Jesus Christ our Lord, God, Savior, and King, now and forever. Amen

Prayer – “Lamb of God, pure and holy, Who on the cross didst suffer, Ever patient and lowly, Thyself to scorn didst offer. All sins Thou borest for us, Else had despair reigned o’er us: Have mercy on us, O Jesus!” Amen. (LSB 434:1)

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, August 3, 2023
Read 1 Kings 1:1-10

Strange, and Yet Not Strange at All

There is no doubt that 1 Kings opens with a weird little story. The now elderly King David needs lots of clothes, but is never warm. It is suggested that a young woman named Abishag lie with David to keep him warm. She took care of him and kept him warm, but “the king knew her not.” The relationship is strange (and by modern standards completely inappropriate), but not sexual.

Yet the strangeness of Abishag serving as a human blanket for King David highlights something that is not strange at all – King David is mortal. For the King, Abishag is the ancient equivalent of home health care. He can’t take care of himself. Not only that, like many elderly people, he can never get warm. If he could, King David would have on sweatpants, a robe, six pairs of socks and turn the furnace up to 85 degrees. And that still wouldn’t be enough!

We have seen David’s weakness when it comes to temptation. We have seen his sorrow over the death of multiple children. But now we see age catching up to him. In David, we are reminded of our mortality. We are reminded of the mortality of sinners. David will not go out in a final blaze of glory in battle. In old age, he will slow down, break down, and sleep in death.

This progression is not strange, but only because it is common. In fact, the slow descent of age is strange in comparison to God’s intention in creation. Aging, diminished capacity, weak knees, and constant coldness from poor circulation are signals of our sinfulness and reminders of our need for a greater David. Our hope is not merely in following great and yet greatly flawed men like David, but in being rescued by the son of David, our Savior Jesus. In Him alone is everlasting life and strength and warmth. Every ache and every chill is a reminder of our need for a Savior who promises a new life forever with a need for ice packs on our knees or 5 blankets to lessen the chill. In Him we find our certain peace and hope.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, use the aches and pains of this life to point me back to You, my true Hope for healing and wholeness forever. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Friday, August 4, 2023

Read 1 Kings 1:11-53

Solomon Becomes King – Chaos to Calm

My Family of Hope, in today's reading from 1 Kings 1:11-53, we see conflict, chaos, confusion, and eventually calm as David worked to have his son, Solomon anointed King. In verses 43-48, David's world is not much different than our world now - political intrigue, plots, and plenty of behind the scenes action. Yet, during David's world then and our world now, one thing is very much the same - God is in control!

The LORD revealed to David that Solomon would be his successor on the throne, in accordance with this, David vowed to Bathsheba that her son Solomon would succeed him. (1 Kings 1:13,30). But once again we see conflict, chaos, and confusion from David's own household. It came through Adonijah, the 4th son born to David at Hebron. Adonijah proclaimed himself King, rebelling against both God and his father, King David. He enlisted Joab, the commander-in-chief and Abiathar, one of his high priests for his cause. All this was done behind David's back. Political infighting and intrigue at its best or worse!

Nathan the prophet sent Bathsheba to David informing him of Adonijah's conspiracy and reminded him of his oath to make Solomon, his successor as King. David responded immediately and had Zadok the high priest anoint Solomon King. (v.39) For a period there was 'conflict, chaos, and confusion.' The LORD then guided David and Solomon and calm returned.

In our world today that often is filled with conflict, chaos, and confusion, it's good to remember that God is in control! When we experience turbulence in body, mind, or spirit, we know and believe that Jesus who calmed the stormy sea calms our hearts. Jesus takes our fears and gives us His peace. Jesus takes our pain and gives us His healing. Jesus takes our hurts and gives us His love! Regardless of the storms of life, Jesus brings us His peace, healing and love! Jesus gives us His Word, "I will never forsake you and I will never leave you." The Empty Cross and the Empty Tomb are the proof that Jesus has conquered all our enemies, real or imagined. He is Risen and reigns at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and He reigns in your heart!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, as you brought calm to David and Solomon's life situation, we pray that You would give us Your calm and peace in body, mind, and spirit as you hold us in the palm of Your calm and loving hand, In Jesus' name, AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek

Saturday, August 5, 2023

Read [1 Kings 2:1-12](#)

“King David’s Time to Die”

“When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, “I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God.” What better advice could anyone pass on to their child? “Throw yourself with gusto into your Godly calling and follow the Lord your God.”

David had lived a full life. Starting out as the runt of the family, he nevertheless followed his own advice from his youth, and God used him to lead His people, Israel. Fearless before both lions and giants, David’s faith taught him to trust in the Lord and that God will then use your deeds to bless His creation. Steadfastly, he served King Saul even as Saul attempted to kill David. Forty years he ruled over Judah and Israel, conquered their enemies, drove out invaders, and established God’s children in the Promised Land as a nation.

But like all of us, David was very much a sinner. And, since sin has disastrous consequences for the people around you, when you’re king, you hurt your entire nation when you sin. David’s adultery led to the death of Bathsheba’s husband and David’s own son, and doubtless weakened the faith of his subjects. His wayward son Absalom, whom David had seemingly not disciplined during his youth, started a civil war in which tens of thousands were killed. Most recently, David’s desire to feel like the ruler of a large, important nation, inspiring him to order a census, caused 70,000 of his people to die.

And David was a “good” king! But, can any of us claim a better life? No, we all have our “moments of weakness” or times of outright gluttony that we later try to hide in the back of our biography. But, like David, we know that, thanks be to God – our righteousness is assured by the grace of God through His Son, Jesus.

King David ruled Israel for two thirds of one percent of the history of the world. That’s just the blink of an eye! But he left a legacy that endures to this day. In the 110th Psalm, David wrote, “The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” David’s Lord – Jesus – his offspring 1,000 years removed, lived a sinless life, died to pay for our sins, and now invites us to eat with Him at His royal table in His kingdom forever.

Prayer: Lord of all history, lead us by Your Spirit to learn from Your Word of people like David, teaching us to follow Your will and look to Your Son to bring us home to You. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson