

Title: The LORD is With Him: Forming the Heart of a King
Text: 1 Samuel 16:14-23
Theme: God is sovereign even over kings
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmt: Good leaders learn what it means to serve.

Those of you who were at our Member's Meeting Sunday night, I told you the story of how two of Bobby's (my son) guitars were stolen out of his office in his church. The guy who stole them was someone that Bobby had helped earlier in the day with some food. He stole them to sell them and get money for his addiction. Providentially, Bobby ran into a guy who was counseling this now, former drug addict. He had come to Christ and this man wanted to make it right with Bobby who rejoiced over the prospect. It was not what anyone of us expected. I shared that story with some pastor friends, one of whom told me that there was a guy in his area who used to break into churches for the same reason, but he was caught and went to prison where God transformed his life. Now, years later, the guy who was in prison is now pastoring one of the churches he used to break into. The providences of God are amazing. God does not do things like we would. But later on, we see his wisdom. This theme continues in our text where God uses the tension of Saul's demise to prepare the heart and life of the king who will replace him.

Read Text:

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are answering the question of: Who should be King? The choice of Saul was in response to a demand from the people that they get a king like the other nations. So, they get a king like the other nations. They get a king who does not want to rule under the rule of God. God gave him every opportunity to succeed. But Saul wanted to make his own rules. At this point in the story, the wheels are just beginning to come off.

The big idea of this text is very clear: God is sovereign even over kings. This is demonstrated clearly in two contrasting ways. It is like Saul is on an escalator that is going down and he passes David who is on an escalator going up. This sets the stage for the rest of the book. These verses summarize all that we are going to learn for the next 15 chapters. Saul is coming unhinged, he repeatedly goes off the reservation and is irrational. With every chapter, he descends lower and lower until at the end he engages the services of a medium because God will not answer him. Why is this happening to Saul? Saul wants to be a king who is not under the rule of God. God finally does not answer him because Saul has repeatedly refused to listen. Every king (or leader, or person for that matter) who thinks he is ultimately in charge is delusional.

1. **The demise of Saul: a case study on the fallout of being your own ruler.** (14-18)

A. **God rejected Saul because Saul rejected God.**

God's plan from the beginning of time was to have a kingdom of people from every tribe, language and nation to live with and enjoy with his Son as the King. Israel was the people of God in the OT. Israel was raised up by God because she was intended to be a preview to the

world of what it would be like to live with and under the reign of God. Therefore, the king of Israel was supposed to be a preview of what the ultimate king would be like. Even the ultimate King – Jesus submitted himself to his Father. What earthly king could do that? Well, when Saul was anointed king, the Spirit empowered him to do what the king was supposed to do. This anointing by the Spirit of the earthly ruler of the OT people of God was one of the ministries of the Spirit under the old covenant. Do not confuse that ministry of the Spirit then, with the baptizing and indwelling ministry of the Spirit for believers today. It is the same Spirit, but these are two different ministries that the Spirit does. In Saul's case, he rejected God's Word and the Spirit of God left Saul. The same thing happened to Samson. Samson was the earthly ruler of Israel and the Spirit of God empowered him to do that, but when Samson rejected God, the Spirit of God left him. In the OT, the Holy Spirit had a ministry of authorizing and empowering the earthly ruler of the people of God. As a boy, the Spirit comes on David as the empowered leader. Is this how David was able to kill lions and bears that threatened his flock? (v.36) Hmmm, makes sense to me. But, if the earthly ruler rejected God's authority, then God would reject the ruler and the Spirit would leave. David sees this in Saul. Therefore, years later when David sins so tragically with Bathsheba, he pleads with God not to take the Spirit from him because David knows that he cannot reign apart from God. Apart from being under the rule of God, we cannot even rule ourselves rightly, much less anyone else.

This scene is going to be repeated in 1 Samuel. The king is losing his mind. He is violent. He is out of control. He is in a very dark place. He is gripped with fear and terror. The absence of God brings the presence of harm. Saul cannot handle life without God and everyone sees it. My heart goes out to these servants. They see the real Saul. Saul is tormented. Now, at this point, we know something that they don't know. We know that the Spirit's anointing for power and wisdom is gone because God has chosen David and the Spirit has come upon him. But all that the servants know is that Saul is going out of his mind.

Think about that for a minute. What happens when the leader loses it? Ever been around when the boss goes nuts? Have you ever seen your mom or dad go off? The instinctive response is to duck, hide, get out of the way, put your head down and mind your own business, right? In order for the servants (plural) to go and be willing to talk to him means that this had to have become a very serious problem leaving the servants with no other choice. You want to pretend that whatever just happened, did not actually happen. Maybe this was a complete fluke. If we all just carry on, maybe it won't happen again and we won't have to deal with it. Maybe the problem, whatever it was, will work itself out. Have you ever seen a pothole, over time, refill itself and become like fresh pavement? Some of you know exactly what I am talking about. You are facing problems that you have get involved with and you SO wish that they would just fix themselves. They don't.

This was a dangerous and courageous thing for the servants to do. The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul. What does that look like? Based on what Saul does later on, we can assume that Saul was full of fear, he was paranoid, he felt threatened, was irrational and was turning on those who were loyal to him. Who is going to talk to him about this? "Your honor, you have not been yourself" would have been easy to say, but the problem was, he was exactly

like himself. Himself is the problem and the removal of the Spirit of God made it apparent that this is what he really was. Who's going to talk to the big guy about this? Surely, he knows – right? “You go, no you go, no way, you go, uh-uh, you're crazy, he'll kill me, he's going to kill all of us! I've got two more weeks and I get to retire; I'm not jeopardizing that. Great, you go retire and we all die. Well, we can't go on like this, (silence) ok, let's all go. Alright. But, what do we say? Uh, your honor, we've been thinking that you need to see a shrink. No, that won't work. What about, hey, you seem to be under a lot of stress, what they come up with is an attempted solution. The problem is...

B. Saul settled for a pain reliever instead of surgery.

Soothing music, even soothing worship music is no substitute for repentance. In the moment, the music may calm him down, but it won't change his heart. Music is emotionally powerful. It is nostalgic, it is soothing, it is energizing, but it cannot change reality and it cannot change your heart. Only God can do that. Attending a church service, and other related things can be your distraction to really addressing the heart of a matter. Getting counseling can be good, if you actually follow the counsel. Finding people who will agree with you, or affirm you, or assure you that you are ok can be nothing more than a distraction from really addressing the heart. A pain reliever can only mask the symptoms. Pain relievers are no substitutes for surgery. Is there an issue that you need to finally address and you have been avoiding it, masking it? The music would help for the moment, but the change was never permanent, therefore, neither was the hope.

Saul goes for the plan. He orders that they find a man who can play well and bring him to me. Look at the language of v.17. “*Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.*” That sounds similar to v.1 where the Lord said “I have provided for myself a king.” And here, is where the scene in Bethlehem of Judah (David's anointing) and the scene in Gibeah of Benjamin converge in a way that no one would ever have imagined. V.18 is not coincidental. In the descent of Saul, we are about to witness the rise of David. And Saul has no idea that he just invited the biggest threat to his throne right into his home. The man anointed by God to take his place, is being invited to not only to come and be near him, but to be with him in his darkest moments. It is fascinating and it is terrifying. A ruler who refuses to rule under the authority of God will in the end not be able to rule, even himself. *The sovereign hand of God arranges it all.*

2. The rise of David: a case study on preparation for godly leadership. (18-23)

David, who was just secretly (and with much fear) anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next king, has now been commanded by King Saul to come to the king. How on earth did Saul find out?! Who betrayed the family? And not only is David dead, but the entire family is going to be killed. Unless, unless it is merely coincidental. And that would be an incredible coincidence. Seriously, how did this guy even know David's name? After all, David is not even named until vs. 13 and the second time that David's name appears in 1 Samuel is when he is named by Saul. In fact, Saul is the first character in the account to actually call David by his name. If we are only reading this text from the perspective of the seen world, our hearts are in

our throats and it is like we are holding our breath as our eyes get big and our hearts thump as we wonder how this is going to play out.

God has already chosen another king. The nation does not know it – yet and it will be a while before they do. God has set his plan into motion. So, politically, we are witnessing the demise of one king and the rise of another and it is fascinating drama. But there is another layer to this. If David is a man after God’s heart, then we need to look carefully at David. What is it about him that God sees? The LORD told Samuel not to worry about the outward appearance, because God sees the heart. So, what does God see? God puts David into situations where his character bubbles to the surface even as David is exposed to situations which will help prepare him to be the king and to be the beginning of a dynasty that will last forever. Saul was not ready to be king and it became clear. Now, David can watch the inner workings (and failures) of Saul’s reign and learn. But David also gets to see what happens to a king who started out with great promise, but whose heart turned away from God.

A. Success is when character and competence meet opportunity. (18)

The servant in v.18 does not refer to David by name, but somebody knows him or at least is able to investigate and find out how who he is. But look at how he is described.

- Skillful in playing – that is the main thing they are looking for. David’s was full of skill because he practiced. There is no shortcut. “I wish I could play like Mark or Heidi or Jerome or Marty or Derek.” You really don’t unless you practice. David had skill that created an opportunity but he would have lasted in that opportunity if he didn’t have the character to go along with it.
- - Man of valor, man of war – courage, discipline, integrity
- Prudent in speech – careful with words (much to say here)
- A man of good presence – he is a benefit to those who are around him.

B. You are not ready to lead until you have learned to follow. (19-20)

“This job is so beneath me. My skills are so underused. I am not valued or able to reach my potential. This job is so boring. I am so much better than this.” That boring job may be the best thing for you. David went from watching sheep to being anointed king and then, went back to watching sheep. From there he was assigned to be with the king, until the king went to battle (next chapter), and David was sent back home to watch sheep. David is at the mercy of his authorities. He listens to his dad even when he has to do the job that no one else wants to do – watch sheep. Sheep herders was not a prestigious line of work. Back in Genesis 46 and 47 Joseph was prepping his brothers for their introduction to Pharaoh and he told them NOT to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds because shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. Tell him that you are keepers of livestock. So, Pharaoh asked them their occupations and they said, “oh we are shepherds!” David was the youngest and the youngest has to do the jobs that no one else wants to do, all of which prepared him to be king. David knew what it was like to be at the bottom of the chain of command. He was cleaning toilets on the midnight shift. He was

at the mercy of the orders that were given at the top. This would help prepare him for being a good king. A king after God's heart realizes that every position matters, every job has significance, every person is a person and not a pawn. If you are not willing to follow orders, then you will never learn how to give them.

C. **You learn to follow by doing the tough jobs, well.** (21-23)

David was on call and he was called when Saul went berserk. That was no fun. He was a shepherd and now he was the personal musician to a lunatic. But the way David handled himself caused Saul to care for David. I think David truly cared about Saul. These hours of playing and singing and comforting Saul were ways in which David poured his affections into a giant of a man who was in such distress. This was not a gig for David. Saul was his king and David always honored him, even in death. Whatever else it means to be a man after God's heart it certainly involved doing tough jobs, and doing them well.

Think of what seemed to be random parts of David's life. He is a warrior. He is a musician. He is a shepherd. He is anointed king. How is God going to put all of the pieces of his life together in any way that will make sense? Does David have his answer now? His musical skill was to help the king. Is that it? Oh no. We are still singing David's songs today. In fact, we use David's songs to sing about David's greater Son. One could do a leadership seminar from the life of David. These are good things to learn and principles to follow. But there is more.

3. **David always points to a greater King.**

Christ was:

- A. Anointed by the Spirit. – He was identified as the empowered ruler of the kingdom.
- B. Served faithfully behind the scenes. – The Creator with omnipotence in his hands obeyed his earthly parents.
- C. Learned obedience – He learned (experienced) obedience through suffering. He knows all about our sorrows.
- D. Served under poor leaders – Every leader he served under was infinitely beneath him, yet he served faithfully.
- E. Was a threat to those leaders – like David, Christ was a threat to the other leaders. Unlike David, Christ died, but rose again.

Even David is ultimately not about David, but is part of the road that leads us to Christ. He is the king who descended, not in shame, but in humility to be like one of us, that he might bear our sins in our place by his death on the cross and purchase, once and for all the salvation of every single person who would ever believe. This is the point of David's life. This is the point of the Bible. This is the point. Don't miss it.