

Title: Greater Love
Text: 1 Samuel 18:1-5
Theme: How love creates surprising and satisfying friendships
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: Loving the soul of another is the fruit of being loved by and loving God.

We all know that bad news travels fast and good news? Not so much. Have you ever seen "breaking news" man pushes elderly lady in a wheelchair to her doctor's appointment, highlights at 11? No, and you probably won't. Now, if the man pushed the lady out of her wheelchair, and ran her over with it, well, now we have a story, right? So, on the one hand, I half to break it to you, and I am happy to break it to you that our text for this morning does not have bad news. There may be some slight shade in it, as I will point out. Now, for those of you who are disappointed by all the good stuff in this text, don't worry, a bunch of bad stuff returns next week. But this week is good and not just syrupy and sentimentally good, it is really good. In fact, it is head-shaking and really heart-warming good. It is like a cool and gentle breeze good along with a giant Big Gulp container of ice-cold sweet tea on a 98-degree day good. I pray that this text is as good for your soul and soothing to your spirit as it has been to mine this week.

Read text:

1. A mutual trust in God knits souls together tighter than anything. (1-3)

Here is my agenda: I want you to know God, love God enjoy God and reflect God. The reason I want that for you is because that is what God wants for you and the reason why God wants that for you is because there is nothing greater, more satisfying, more enjoyable, more sweet or more wonderful. Since Christ is the means by which we know God, love God, enjoy God and reflect God, Christ is the hero of the Bible. Everything in the OT is tilted toward the manger, the cross, empty tomb and his throne. Years ago, "where's Waldo" was a popular children's puzzle series where kids looked for the character, Waldo. We read the OT and look for Christ and there are occasions when we see him in what we call the Christ-figure. David was clearly that in chapter 17. In this text, our joy is doubled because both Jonathan and David point us to Christ. In fact, Jonathan also reminds us of John the Baptist who prepares the way for the king. We see Christ reflected in David and Jonathan because these two guys had a genuine trust in God.

Psalm 115.8 reminds us that you become like what you worship. You will look like what you lean on. In 1 Samuel 14, Jonathan and his armor-bearer attacked a garrison of the Philistines that resulted in a victory for the army of Israel. Jonathan said, "*nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.*" (vs. 6) We don't know why Jonathan did not step up and fight Goliath since it sounds like something that he would do. My guess (and it is a guess) is that Saul forbade him from doing it. But here Jonathan is now. It sounds like he was there when Abner, the commander of the army brought David back to Saul. We do not know if Saul said anything else, but the text does not mention any adulation, congratulations, appreciation or affirmation, but just business. "*Whose son are you, young man!*" In contrast to that, Jonathan responds to

David with deep affection. His soul is knit to David's. These 2 guys were probably 10-20 years apart in age but were one in their trust in God and zealous for his glory. A mutual trust in God will knit your soul together with someone else tighter than anything.

A. Because it knits souls in God

Think about it, God is love. That means that God is always focused outward. The Father loves the Son and the Spirit, the Son loves the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit loves the Father and the Son and the Spirit loves to showcase the love that the Father and the Son have for one another. There is nothing inherently selfish about God. So, it makes perfect sense to God for God to so LOVE the world that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have eternal life and it makes perfect sense for Christ, the Son of God to be willing to come because he loves the Father and loves to do what the Father wants and loves us because God is love. Those who love God are going to love others. Those who love God, love the glory of God, the fame of God, the kingdom of God and the people of God. They don't care about advancing their own image or reputation, and in fact ultimately do not care about their own lives. This is why Jonathan and David were both willing to lay it on the line for God and in both cases, the Lord used their trust in God to bring about a victory for his people who were immobilized by fear. Now, Jonathan has found a soul-mate and David has found a mentor who shares his heart. He "loved him as his own soul."

David was younger, he was talented, he was popular, he was successful and by all rights he should be viewed by Jonathan as a threat, but Jonathan is not threatened by David. Why not? Why wasn't David a threat to Jonathan? Beloved, if you will get this, it has the capacity to actually change your life, David was not a threat to Jonathan because Jonathan did not believe the lie that being the king, or being esteemed above all others is the source of happiness. Jonathan obviously believed that the honor of God was more important than anything else and anyone who believed that too was his ally and soulmate, even if his ally and soulmate had more skill and more popularity.

What would have happened in the story of the prodigal son if the older brother really loved his father? If the older brother had really loved his father, he would have been thrilled that his younger brother came home because he would see the gladness and joy of his dad explode. When we love ourselves above all, we are threatened by those whom we deem to be better than us. When we love God above all, we can rejoice when the reputation and honor of God is advanced even if it is advanced by someone who is more talented and capable than me.

Let's say that you play 1st chair violin in the DSO and you have held that honorable and esteemed position for several years. But, along comes a once in a generation prodigy whom the DSO is able to sign a contract with. And you know that you will likely lose your position because this person is just flat out better than you and about everyone else in the world. How do you respond? It all depends on what you love. If you love yourself, then you will be ugly. If you love

music and the DSO and the prodigy more than yourself, then you will be ecstatic that your orchestra will be able to perform pieces at a level that few orchestras could even dream about.

Jonathan had this figured out. Life was not about him. It was about God and when he realized that David had that figured out too, they were knit together like soulmates because they were of the same soul.

B. Because it knits them forever

When you have a mutual trust in God with another believer, (which is what being a believer does) you are knit together forever. When you come to faith in God through the accomplished work of Christ on your behalf, you are placed into the family of God-forever. Good friends, deep friendship, trust, acceptance, love, laughter, delighting in one another, building one another up, encouraging and praying for one another are unbelievably sweet gifts. But, over time, people move, people get sick, people pass away, things happen, and those friendships can be broken. But, if you are in Christ, the bonds that you have with other believers maybe stretched by time and circumstances, but they will never be broken, but like a rubber band will only draw you back in glory - forever. Heaven is going to be the eternal delightful discovery of best friends. That is why our relationships in Christ can go deeper and should go deeper than anything else because they are rooted in God and go on forever. We are going to see this in David and Jonathan.

2. Love is the basis for covenant. (2-3)

In these first five verses, the author is describing the dynamics so that we can feel the conflict as it arises and see the contrast. Jonathan loved David as his own soul - vs.1. That is repeated in vs.3. "he loved him as his own soul/" In fact, we are going to see that everybody loves David. But what is love? Love gives. Love gives patience. Love gives kindness. Love does not steal glory or honor through envy or boasting. Love does not steal attention through self-promoting arrogance and rudeness. Love defers and does not insist on its own way. Love gives grace and is not irritable and resentful. Love gives so much affection and attention that it desires the very best for others and is grieved by any wrongdoing of the other and does not delight in their downfall. Love gives, like God. Our world believes the lie that if you take then you will be happy. Push others out of your way. Take what you want. Assert yourself. Look at v.2. Is it some shade? I think it could be, Saul takes David and won't let him return home while in v.3, Jonathan makes a covenant with David. Jonathan loves. Jonathan gives. Saul takes.

This helps us understand a very important biblical concept called a covenant. A biblical covenant is grounded in love and is often formed by a stronger party promising faithfulness, protection and provision on the basis of a sacrifice to a lesser party. God did this with Adam and Eve, then with Noah, then with Abraham then with Israel. The story of God's covenant with Israel is called the Old Covenant or Old Testament. The story of God's covenant with the church is called the New Covenant or New Testament. Here, Jonathan is the stronger party. He is the

one who has standing. In this covenant, Jonathan gives status to David by forming and forging this promise with David. Jonathan is promising to be loyal, to protect, to do everything that he can in the best interest of David. Jonathan did this because he loved David and he loved David because he loved God and loved the people of God and the kingdom of God and was willing to do anything that needed to be in order to advance it. "He loved him as his own soul."

What does it mean to love someone as your own soul? I really want you to give some thought to that and discuss that with someone this week. If you are married, I am going to play the pastor card on you and say, "I think you really have to discuss this." Loving someone as your own soul obviously involves making certain that one's physical needs of food, shelter, and protection are being met, but it speaks of soul care. Do you appreciate and value those around you? Do they know it? Do you have relationships where your soul is cared for and where you even talk about these things? I think that a good question for spouses to ask one another would be: Are we doing this? Are we caring for one another's soul? God describes marriage as a covenant. Is this what your marriage feels like or are you more like roommates, business partners, and dorm parents? Here are 2 questions for you to discuss: 1) How does our marriage reflect a covenant? I.e. Do we really care for each other's soul? 2) What would it look like for us to do that? I challenge you, not to shame you or embarrass you, I want to push you so that you get a deeper taste of what it is to love like Christ and be loved like Christ. After all, that is what awaits us, therefore that is what motivates us. Related to that is...

3. Love is displayed by preferring the other. (4)

Jonathan then takes off his robe, and gives it to David. His robe likely designated him as royalty. Then he gave him his sword, his bow and his belt. We have no reason to believe that at this point Jonathan knew anything about Samuel already having anointed David as the next king. But this is what Jonathan is in effect doing. He is giving David the symbols of power and position that belong to the heir of the throne.

Why on earth would Jonathan do this? Why would Jonathan use his position to give away his authority and celebrate and elevate someone who could be a direct threat to his position? Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Jonathan loved David so much that any success that David had, Jonathan shared in. When you love others deeply, their success is not a threat, it is a celebration. That truth-bomb detonates the lie of the Evil One who says that God is somehow against you or threatened by your success, or opposes any good in your life. God loves you so much and is so invested in you, that any good that you enjoy he enjoys it. God is love and love is displayed by preferring the other. That is a summary of the mission and ministry of Christ on this earth which was powerfully displayed in Christ laying aside his robe and washing the feet of the disciples. He gave up his royal robes in heaven and set them aside and clothed himself as a servant in order to come to this earth and live in obscurity and poverty, only to go public with his heart-awakening and heart-exposing teaching, mercy-displaying, power-revealing miracles, be loved by some, rejected by many, and die as a criminal. Do you know why the soldiers gambled for his robe? It is common for Christ to be portrayed as being covered around the

waist, for the sake of some modesty. He did not die with any modesty. He died being completely disrobed of all vestiges of royalty and basic human decency as part of the price that he paid for our sins. We often think of the physical torment that Christ endured in dying as the payment for our rebellion, and it is clearly beyond what we can grasp, but the prophet Isaiah (chapter 53) also speaks of his soul making an offering for guilt, and the anguish of his soul being the satisfaction of God's justice and the pouring out of his soul to death. The investment that Christ made for your adoption into the royal family is rooted in the deep, deep love of God for you.

Jonathan loved David more than Jonathan loved the throne. Christ loved you more than he loved the throne. He gave up the throne for a cross so that he could share the kingdom with you. This is a biblical theology of leadership. Use your position, authority, strength and resources to advance the godly joy of others. This is what elders are called to do in a congregation. Share your authority and influence as much as possible for the benefit of others.

4. Love paves the road for success. (5)

This is such a beautiful scene. By loving David more than the throne and by potentially giving David the throne, Jonathan loved the people. He recognized the value of David and promoted David because it was good for the administration, good for the army and good for the nation. David enjoyed success, in part, because Jonathan had promoted David. Jonathan could have been threatened by David, but he loved him because Jonathan loved God.

What if the Lord raises up a leader in your area of ministry who, by all accounts has more gifts than you and the character to go with it? Does it threaten you, or excite you? It depends on how much you love and who you love. What if you are a teacher and the Lord raises up a teacher in your area of ministry who, by all accounts is just a little better than you and has the character to go with it? Does it threaten you, or excite you? It depends on how much you love and who you love. What if the Lord raises up a singer or a musician in your area of ministry who, by all accounts has more ability than you and the character to go with it? Does it threaten you, or excite you? It depends on how much you love and who you love.

G. Campbell Morgan pastored the Westminster Chapel in London from 1904-1919 and then again from 1933-1943. He was an excellent preacher. F. B. Meyer was also a good and faithful pastor in London during the first round of the ministry of Morgan. Meyer was older, Morgan was younger. Meyer was a very good preacher; Morgan was probably a little more gifted. Meyer's church was a good church and he was a faithful pastor, but Morgan was the new thing and his congregation was growing significantly faster. Meyer and Morgan would be asked to preach at the same conferences and Meyer began to realize that he had a spirit of jealousy and resentment toward Morgan. And found himself nitpicking Morgan's sermons. So, Meyer made it a point to pray for Morgan and pray that the Lord would pour out blessings upon Morgan's ministry and church. Meyer rightfully reasoned that it is hard to have envy for someone that you are praying for the Lord to bless. As a result of that, Meyer began rejoicing in the preaching

of Morgan and would celebrate it. Also, the Lord answered Meyer's prayers so much that Morgan's church could not handle the crowds that came, so, many of them started attending the church Meyer pastored.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Do I love? Do I really love others? Do I love the souls of others like my own soul?
- 2) Who do I love like that? Or who do I need to start loving like that?
- 3) Do I pray for the good and godly success of others? Do I rejoice in their blessings or feel a twinge of frustration or jealousy?
- 4) Do I take the time to consider how deeply loved I am by Christ? How can I express my thanks to him?