

Title: When the Shoe is on the Other Foot
Text: 1 Samuel 25:1-22
Theme: Justice belongs to God
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmt: Every savior needs to be saved, except one.

The Bible is God's Word. It is the breath of God. It is the revelation (the revealing) of the heart of God to his creation. Recently, some people got into some legal hot water because they stole the diary of Joe Biden's daughter, Ashley. From our perspective, a diary is a private journal that is not intended to be viewed by anyone without the author's permission. There is some really private information there. But the Bible is God's diary. It is full of personal information that is not intended to be kept private. God wants you to know his heart. That is why the Bible is ultimately about Christ. In his 1st letter to the Corinthians, Paul references the events recorded in the OT and said that these were "written down for our instruction." In some cases, we see examples of Christ in the lives of some of the OT characters. We see ways in which they pointed to Christ or events that pointed to Christ. The internal testimony and consistency of the Bible is fascinating. But there are other times when we see examples in people's lives and OT stories that reveal how much they need Christ. Sometimes, the very people who are OT examples of Christ, are also OT examples of broken people who need Christ. Such is the case with our text.

Read Text:

The funeral of Princess Di in 1997 was a massive event. The death of a major figure usually means a very public funeral where the A-list appear and protocol and ceremony are employed. 1 Samuel 25 begins with the abrupt announcement that Samuel had died. The last of the judges and the proto-type king, the even-handed, fair-minded, God-loving, Israel-serving, prophet, priest, leader, savior, king-maker, trusted advisor had died. His influence on the nation was seen in the next statement. "*All Israel assembled and mourned for him.*" Everyone had been influenced by Samuel and now everyone was impacted by his death. The funeral gathering was national. "they (all Israel) buried him in his house in Ramah." His house became his resting place. Did all Israel include Saul? Probably. Did Saul speak? We don't know. The text doesn't say. He may have. Did all Israel include David? After all, Saul and David had an agreement. Was it safe for David to come? While the text does not say, we are led to believe that David and his men did not go to the funeral. The end of chapter 24 says that David went up to the stronghold.

I think that the stronghold is probably a reference to Masada (picture). You can see why David is described as going up to it (24.22) and then going down from it (25.1). Masada was a fortress, built on top of an imposing rock formation that seemed to rise straight up out of the rock. It was made famous by the Jews who held out there in 73/4 A.D. after the fall of Jerusalem as the last remnant of Jews against the siege of Roman soldiers and when their capture was finally imminent, chose death over defeat and capture. In David's day, Masada was a stronghold based on its topography and did not have all the elements of a fortress that it would have years later. While this location was a safe place for David and his men, it was desolate and a long way away from life. Did the death of Samuel and separation from a major national event weigh heavy

David? I think that is how we are to understand this. When David originally ran for his life from Saul (chapter 19), he ran to Samuel and Samuel protected him. Now, Samuel is dead. David is in a very lonely place. The wilderness is not a week of roughing it, or even the bootcamp with a graduation ceremony in a few weeks. The wilderness has become life with no end in sight.

The stronghold of Masada may be a safe place to hide from your enemies, but there isn't a Kroger or fruit market close at hand and 600 men can go through a lot of food. David led his men to the wilderness of Paran which isn't the crossroads of civilization, but it is at least closer to food and other people. David's men have to eat. He must have had scouts who were on the lookout for sources of food. This is a bid deal. Anyone sympathetic and helpful to David and his men would be considered to be an enemy of the king. Word gets back to David that there was a potential source of food. A very wealthy man by the name of Nabal was shearing his sheep in the nearby city of Carmel.

1. **Money, power and opportunity reveal the heart.** (1-11)

Saul had power and we are tempted to think that the power made him bad. The power corrupted him. Not true. The power simply gave him the ability to express what was already in his heart. Nabal had money. But verse 3 says that he was "harsh and badly behaved." What is an idiot like that doing with so much money? Doesn't make sense, does it? Later on we find out that his name, Nabal actually means fool.

Most of you have not raised sheep. One sheep can produce anywhere from 2-30 pounds of wool (also known as fleece) a year. 90% of sheep are wool producers. Nabal had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. If you are in sales, you know that you try to call on people around the first of the month because most people get paid around that time. David sends 10 young men to find Nabal at Carmel. Nabal should be in a good mood, should be grateful and generous because he has 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. David's men did not take any of the sheep when they were in the area and could have just done it because they were stronger, but they also protected the shepherds and the sheep. Nabal's flocks and profit margins enjoyed the protection of David's men. The time of shearing sheep, was like the time of harvest and like the Christmas season for us. You mark the year by these events. A shepherd would look at how much he had gathered compared to last year. A farmer would look at how much he had harvested compared to last year. It is customary for many people to receive Christmas bonuses and reflect on their earnings over the year and be grateful. That gratitude usually results in people giving to charities. You all do it and it is sweet. You are very generous around the end of the year which, honestly usually helps your church finish the year financially healthy.

David knew what it was like to be a shepherd and his men had been well trained. They did not take advantage of their position of strength and take what didn't belong to them. Instead, they loved their neighbors and protected them. David and his men were a blessing and benefit to their neighbors. That is how your neighbors should see you. You need to be one the lending a hand, loaning tools, offering an extension cord from your generator to your neighbor's fridge when the power is out.

A gal in my neighborhood had flooding in her basement and was overwhelmed with the mess and needed help getting stuff to the curb before mold set in. She was working two jobs and was desperate. She put out a plea on a neighborhood app and I went over and took a look. I could see why she was overwhelmed, but she just needed some help. I called a couple of our young men who went over and took care of it for her. What they did was a billboard for the gospel. David and his men had that reputation. One of Nabal's shepherds said of them, "*the men were very good to us and we suffered no harm.*" David and his men had a very good reputation.

David sent 10 of his young men to Nabal to ask for some provisions. The request is valid. Their approach is humble. They are to go with a kind and generous spirit. "Peace be to you, and peace to your house, and peace be to all that you have." That is a wonderful greeting, blessing and prayer. May you, your home, business and entire estate enjoy the favor of God in all that you do. Then they humbly and respectfully ask for some provisions. Nabal came from the line of Caleb who was in the tribe of Judah like David. David expected a favorable response from Nabal. David had helped him out and Nabal now had an opportunity to return the favor.

Nabal is not grateful, humble or generous. Now, to be clear, Nabal does not have to give David's men anything. He really should though. He benefited from them and he should show some appreciation and neighborliness, but Nabal is not thankful nor neighborly. He is a jerk and he is offensive, demeaning, and hostile. He scorns David and refuses to help. Why is Nabal a poster child for the Grinch? Why is he so disdainful and miserly? Why is money such a curse to him instead of a blessing? Look at verse 11. "MY bread, MY water, MY meat, MY shearers" There you go, that's all that you need to know. Nabal sees everything that he has as ultimately belonging to him instead of ultimately belonging to God.

We are not done with Nabal and will return to him next week, but one final thought about him before I move on. You may know the saying, "Happiness does not come from money, but it sure keeps the kids in touch." Seriously, you have seen this just like me. Happiness does not come from money; it comes from God who directs his happy people to express that happiness through generosity. I have been in some of the poorest regions of the world, like Haiti and have been invited into homes where there is almost nothing and have been invited to eat and share in what they have. It is humbling, sweet and beautiful. Their God-driven generosity is an expression of their love of and trust in God. I've seen the same thing in people who have much more than that. They have a truck and want others to use it. They have a generator and want others to use it. They have a cabin and want others to use it. They see themselves as stewards of what God has entrusted to them. It is not my bread, my water, my meat and my shearers, but his bread, his water, his meat and his workers that has been entrusted to me.

David's men are refused, shamed and humiliated. They tell David. David had taught his men to be respectful and they obeyed him. He restrained them from killing Saul and they obeyed him. He modeled trust in God when life was woefully unfair. He wrote Psalms that expressed the agony of his soul, the loneliness of his heart, the confusion in his mind as he awaited the vindication of God, and he consistently did that. He waited on God. But this time, David snaps!

2. All saviors need to be saved, except One. (12-22)

I recently saw a large replica of the U.S. Constitution that someone posted in their yard, which said, “We the People” have had enough! David has had enough. That’s it. He can’t take this anymore. There are many times in David’s life where he points us to Christ because of his character, but not here. David is in a bad place. He is in a dark hole. And like Saul, he has power. He has men who will do exactly what he says. That can be a dangerous thing. His orders are chilling. Look at v.13. *“Every man strap on his sword.”* The order is repeated throughout the ranks and the noise of metal clanging, leather belts fastening, and the focused din and hum of battle preparation reverberates in the camp punctuated by the commands of officers getting their squads in order and ready for what promises to be a bloody day. The text then ominously states, *“And every man of them strapped on his sword.”* And then we are told, *“David also strapped on his sword.”* Do you see what the author is doing? He is writing in a way that captures what took place by building the intensity of the situation. 200 of the men are charged with guarding the supplies while the text says that *“about 400 men went up after David.”* It's like they have to catch up to him. He is on a mission. David was lit up. This was unfair. This was over the line. He had had enough.

Derek suggested that just before the message we sing that great hymn of the faith, “We’re not gonna take it.” Based on Psalm 151. That’s not true, I made that up. And there is no Psalm 151.

But now, we the reader are wide-eyed and holding our breath because this does not look good and this does not look like it is going to end well. Don’t you want to shout at the text? David, no! Don’t do this. David, you grab our hearts when you show us Christ. You put rebar in our backbones when you refuse to take justice into your own hands and leave it up to God to handle it. We need a leader like that. We need a leader who says, *“May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you.”* We are amazed and in fact, a bit in awe of David’s mercy to Saul in chapter 24. It looks so much like Christ. Here in chapter 25, we are not amazed by David’s anger because it looks so much like us. David is not our savior. David needs a Savior. In chapter 24 David responds in mercy to his authority and here in chapter 25 he responds with vengeance to one under his power. In chapter 24 David looks like Jesus and in chapter 25 David looks like Saul. David is not Jesus. David needs a Savior. He needs Jesus, just like you.

A. **Passing one test doesn’t exempt you from the class of sanctification.**

David’s response of mercy to Saul in the cave was amazing, but his season of testing was not over. When you endure through a tough season or come through a difficult test it is easy to breathe a sigh of relief and let your guard down thinking that you made it. But just because you passed on test does not mean that the class is over. So, be ready. Be on guard. David needed to know what was in his heart and what he was capable of doing given the opportunity. He needed to be on guard and fear what he was capable of doing with power. We don’t know our own hearts. David goes from mercy to vengeance. According to verse 21, David was prepared

to kill every man in the household. That wasn't justice, that was vengeance. Every man in Nabal's household wasn't worthy of death. Nabal was being a selfish jerk, but that didn't merit execution. In the cave, David used his authority for good. He persuaded, he forced his men to stand down from killing Saul, but here David is using his authority for evil. In the name of justice, he is about to commit an egregious injustice. In this instance, David not only looked like Saul, he looked just like Nabal. He was using his position for himself and came up with his own justification for it. He passed the first test in the cave, beautifully, but the semester is not over. And just because we handle one situation well does not mean we don't have anything else to learn. David, you, me, all of us need to be reminded about what we are capable of doing, so that we learn over and over not to trust ourselves, but continually trust ourselves to God and let his justice rule. Related to that is the point that...

B. Just because you get one thing right doesn't mean you get everything right.

David's response was right in chapter 24, but it was wrong here. Just because you are right on one thing does not mean you are right on everything. Be humble. Peter is a classic NT example of this. Jesus asked, who the disciples thought he was and it was Peter who said, "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God." He was spot on! Then Jesus told them that he was going to suffer and die and Peter had the audacity to tell Jesus that he was wrong and that would never happen. Peter, what did you just say? You just said that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, and now you, Peter, are going to correct him? You know better than him? The Son of God has to conform to your council? What happened? Peter was right on the first question and apparently it went to his head and he assumed that he was right about everything. I can relate to that. You can ask Cathi, she will tell you that I may not always be right, but I am never in doubt. What a warning this is. In the moment we can react because our sense of justice has been offended, and we may be right, but we may not be. We need to be convictional but humble. We must be convictional about what is right and be humble because we are capable of being convictional at times about things that we actually get wrong.

C. Be merciful even to those who run out of mercy.

Psalm 103 is a song of David. In vs.13-14 David sings, "*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*"

David had come to the end of his rope. David had run out of mercy, but God did not run out of mercy for David. David and his men were not the only ones mobilizing for a confrontation. One of Nabal's men, that David was planning to kill, ran and told Nabal's wife, Abigail what had happened. This man, never named was an agent of mercy to David and his men and to Nabal and his household. This young man was a gift from God to David. His warning to Abigail set in motion an interception designed by God to save David from David. This is an amazing account of how God brings salvation (rescue) from an unexpected place. When David is incapable of saving David, God gives him a way out, just like he has for you.