

Title: Rich in Mercy  
Text: 1 Samuel 30.7-30  
Theme: The mercy of God  
Series: 1 Samuel  
Prop Stmt: The one who should be king is the one who knows, believes, receives and dispenses the mercy of God.

Read Text:

Since God made us so that we might know him, reflect him and enjoy him forever, we need to think about God. But we need to think what God thinks about God. This is why we treasure our Bibles so much. The Bible is God's Word. It is God's revelation of himself to us. Here are God's thoughts about God for us to know and believe. Knowing and believing what God thinks about God is called theology. Good theology will amaze your mind and arrest your affections. Good theology will give you big thoughts about God that are designed to give you a big heart for God, a humble posture before God and a merciful view toward others.

A.W. Tozer once said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." How you really think about God will reveal itself in how you think about yourself and how you think about yourself will be seen in how you respond to others.

In Matthew 18, Jesus told the story of a king who had a financial planner who invested \$15 billion in crypto-currency, only to lose it all. Ok, in the story that Jesus told it was actually a king, but he had a servant who lost an amount of money equivalent to that. And when the servant was called in to give an accounting of his work it was revealed that he owed this astronomical amount. The king ordered that the man and his family and all his possessions be sold. The servant then fell on his knees and begged him to be patient and give him some time and said, "I will pay you everything." That's a joke! \$15 billion? Are you serious? There's no way! Inexplicably, the king released the servant and forgave the debt. If the story stopped right there, our minds would be blown. Who does this? Who forgives debts like this? Who is merciful like this? Now, don't miss this. Jesus is the one telling the story. Jesus is the one who identifies the king in this story with "my heavenly Father." Do you realize what that means? God is that merciful! Jesus just taught a very important lesson on big-mind and big-heart theology. God is mind-blowing, heart-amazing, category-exploding merciful! In the rest of the story, the servant who was the recipient of that incredible mercy refused to be merciful toward others. The servant who was forgiven of a debt of \$15 billion refused to forgive a debt that someone owed him of about \$29,000. Jesus called that servant wicked. Why was he, who was forgiven of such an astronomical debt being so wicked? He refused to take the mercy of the king to heart. He refused to be humbled by the mercy of the king. If the mercy of God does not amaze you and humble you, then you don't understand and actually believe in the mercy of God.

Our text is all about the mercy of God. If I was teaching a theology class on the mercy of God it would probably have 4 points: 1) God is merciful. 2) God is generous with his mercy to us. 3)

We are in desperate need of God's mercy. 4) Those who truly receive God's mercy will be merciful. This story line is all through the Bible and this is the story line of this text.

1. **God is merciful to answer prayer.** (7-10)

David had unwisely led his men and their families into the land of the Philistines out of fear of Saul and (let's be honest) a lapse in his confidence in God to keep his promise to David. While David was seemingly "safe" for a season, he didn't belong there and it wasn't too long before David had to choose which side he was on. Philistines or Israel, Dagon or Yahweh? David was siding with the Philistines when God rescued David from that predicament of going to war against his own people. Upon returning to his home in Ziklag, David and his men found that their wives, children, flocks and possessions had all been stolen in a raid by the Amalekites and their entire city was burned to the ground. David lost his wives, family, possessions and could have possibly lost his life. His own men were talking of stoning him. He had led them and this is what had happened!!

Of all the low points thus far in David's life, this had to be about the lowest. This is what a life of faith looks like. Faith is holding on to the promise of God at the lowest points in life. The end of v. 6 says that David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Alexander Maclaren said that David could no longer say, my wife, my home, my possessions, but he could say and did say, my God." And now in v.7 he calls Abiathar the priest who had the ephod from the Tabernacle to come and David prayed to God and asked God what he should do? Should he pursue the Amalekites or not? David may not have known who attacked his city. He refers to them as "this band" in v.8. The Lord responds with a command and a promise. "*Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.*"

We've noted, as Chad pointed out last week that this series in 1 Samuel gives us a split screen view of David vs. Saul. Here is a man after God's heart in contrast to a man after man's heart. When Saul was at his lowest, he inquired of God and God did not answer him. When David inquired of God, God answered him. Did God just not like Saul? Why did God answer David and not Saul? Why was God so merciful to David? Hold on to that question, I will come back to it.

This much is clear. God did not have to answer David's request. David did not ask God about whether or not he should go to the land of the Philistines. David had taken matters into his own hands and made a mess of things and God could have just let David deal with it. Sometimes God does that and when he does, he is not being unfair. He is, in fact, being fair. We are getting what we deserve. God did not have to answer David and could have let David just suffer the consequences of his decision-making process. God could have done that. But God answered David! And the answer was so encouraging!

Call on me and I will answer you!

David and his 600 men took off. Keep in mind, they had just traveled up to Aphek (60 miles), then they came all the way back to Zicklag (another 60 miles), now they discovered that

everything was destroyed and shortly after, they take off again. 200 of the 600 are so exhausted, they don't have the energy to cross the ravine and the brook Besor. They stay back with the supplies. They aren't the only ones exhausted.

## 2. God is merciful in his providences. (11-15)

So often, God tells us what we need for the next right step. He told Abraham to go to the land that I will show you. That is the life of faith. Go, and I will show you as you go. Do the next right thing. David and his men go and this time, there is no direct word from God as to where the Amalekites have gone, but they find a straggler from the raiding party who was sick and left behind by his Amalekite master. But there is nothing in verses 11 or 12 that tell us where he was from. The men find a guy sick, dehydrated and likely close to death. The man is sick, but not dead. David and his men are kind to him, and then discover that he is willing to give information and is certainly a big help to David, by leading them to where the Amalekites would likely be. He asks that his life be spared, because by his own admission, he had participated in the attacks. But, think of this providence! The man is sick, he is left behind, he is discovered, revived and he leads David and his men right to where the Amalekites are. Even in the days of the prophets and priests who had the ephod, God's usual ways of leading are through providences. God did not give David and his men a google map to find the Amalekites. They pursued and along the way, God gave them what they needed.

God is in details of your life. There are no accidents, just opportunities. Praise God that David and his men did not overlook this guy because he was essential to the success of their mission. Spiderman has Spidey-sense. The comic book hero has an ability to sense and then react to danger before it happens. We are to live with God-sense. We are to live realizing that God is in every detail of our lives and using those details to make himself known, and help us look more like Christ. I commend to you the habit of praying in the morning as soon as you are semi-conscious and asking God to make you aware of his providences. God, open my eyes to see what you are doing so that I can participate in it with my whole heart. Every day is an adventure, whether you are on a stage or on your knees cleaning the floor and making beds. The promise that God made that they would be successful, did not cause them to be complacent, but to be confident and engaged. And this Egyptian servant was not lying. Sure enough, the Amalekites are where he said they would be and the party is in full swing. This raiding party has hit the jackpot and they have a massive haul of spoils from a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites, the Negeb of Judah, the Negeb of Caleb and of course, Ziklag. They didn't just rob 1 Brinks truck; they robbed a fleet of them and already they were reveling in their success. The drinking and partying would become a very dangerous setting for the wives and children taken captive. It also made them pretty useless as soldiers.

## 3. God is merciful to rescue. (16-19)

The Amalekite who discarded his servant and left him for dead, brought about his own demise. We are not given too many details, but what we do know is that this is a sizeable force that David confronts. 400 Amalekites escape. The impression that we have is that these 400 who

escape on camels are a small minority of the larger group. It is likely that there are several thousand Amalekites. They and their bounty are spread abroad all over the land. They are easy to attack, since they are not organized, and obviously because they are partying. All discipline is gone. They are drunk and so wasted that David and his men are able to make fairly quick work of them. It takes them almost 24 hours, but their routing of the enemy and the rescue of their families and possessions is a total victory. Look at v.19 and think of the mercy of God in that. "Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken."

Several years ago, we lost a Christmas ornament that one of our kids made in kindergarten. We all loved to put this ornament in a prominent place on the tree because it had a picture on it that just perfectly captured that child. When we lost it, our tree was just not the same. It no actual value since it was made of green and red construction paper and had a tiny picture on it. But it meant a lot to us. Knowing my wife, she prayed about that. I don't always think about praying about stuff like that, but she does. And when those things show up, it always seems to me to be because she prayed about it. And sure, enough, a year or so later, we found it. You would have thought that the Wings had won the Stanley Cup in our house. We were so happy. We thought it was gone, forever and now we found it. How many times did David and his men experience that in his setting. Everything was recovered. Everything. That means their wives and kids and their kids dolls and blankets, and those little things that are part of your life and your story. God is merciful to rescue.

God did not have to do this. God did not have to answer David, providentially guide him and now rescue everything. But, while this was a major encouragement to David and his men, there is a bigger lesson here. God loves to rescue. God wanted David to know, Israel to know, you to know that God loves to rescue. David was the warrior leading his men to deliver his own from the hand of the enemy. 2,000 years later, the son of David and son of God would be the ultimate warrior who would deliver his own from sin and death and take them out of the camp of the enemy home to live with him forever and ever. God loves to rescue because God is merciful. They not only recover everything; they recover more than everything. They recover way more than they lost. When you add up the days, it is very likely that at the same time that Saul is defeated by the Philistines, David is experiencing one of the greatest victories in his life. The one rejected mercy, the other was rescued beyond belief by it.

#### 4. **God is merciful to give rewards.** (20)

*"David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him and said, 'This is David's spoil.'"*

The bounty is overwhelming. It is so big that the people who are driving the livestock are apparently asked where all of this came from as they journey back toward Ziklag. They say, "This is David's spoil." WOW! David has gone from being threatened with stoning with being exalted as the savior! Once again, David is the hero, but David knows that it was the Lord who

provided this. Yes, Ziklag was burned with fire. Yes, they lost that, but the Lord replaced that with SO much more.

Jesus words – you will receive so much more in heaven

#### 5. **A lesson in mercy.** (21-25)

The 400 victorious and now incredibly wealthy soldiers return to the brook Besor where they are met by the 200 who stayed behind. Many of the 400 were bitter that they were the ones who put their lives on the line for the 200. They were willing for the 200 to have their wives and children back, but that was it. Nothing more. The bounty was so great, that there was plenty to share, but no matter, these men were worthless and greedy and refused to share the spoil with those who stayed behind.

Here is the answer to the question of: Who should be king? Who should be king? The one who most closely looks like the real King – Jesus. What is Jesus like? He is full of mercy. Look at how David handles this. First of all, he treats the 400 “wicked and worthless” with respect. He calls them brothers. He appeals to them to remember where all the bounty came from. The LORD gave it to us.

How does David treat his men who were too tired to go to battle and how do the Amalekites treat their own?

Why did God answer David and not Saul? Why was God consistently merciful to David? David believed God! The evidence of that is seen in how merciful David was to others.

#### 6. **A lesson in generosity.** (26-30)

Conclusion: The church and the spoils of war.