

Title: Love your enemy
Text: 2 Samuel 1.1-16
Theme: How grace upends our world
Series: 2 Samuel #1
Prop Stmtnt: Genuine grief at the death of an enemy is from the Lord.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are fascinating narratives filled with drama, tension, irony, suspense, love, intrigue and betrayal. 1 Samuel begins where the book of Judges leaves off. There was no king in Israel. Now, at the beginning of 2 Samuel, the same thing is true. There is no king in Israel. Together these books are asking the question; Who should be king? The initial answer given in 1 Samuel is Saul. But he turned out to be a colossal failure and we watch the unraveling of his life piece by piece as this man, undone by his own sin, refuses to take responsibility for it and therefore rejects the grace of God that would have been his. At the same time, we watch the ascendancy of David. Our hearts, like many in Israel and Judah are drawn to him. He is what a king should be, we think. But, while David's meteoric rise, military conquests and political triumphs are impressive, the crown it seems will weigh too much for him as well. Like his predecessor, David too fails. Unlike his predecessor, David repents.

The page has turned for us. A new year, a new book to study, a new era, and a new dynasty. The opening verse summarizes the setting. The king was defeated and died. His defeat, death at his own hands, loss of the kingdom all stemmed from his failure to obey God's directions. The story is told in 1 Samuel 13 and 15 and it involved the Amalekites. By contrast, here in verse 1, David was victorious and he was victorious over the Amalekites. But the heart of the contrast between these two men and their leadership comes down to this. Saul was a man who was ruled by the fear of man. He was a man after man's heart. David, while far from perfect was a man after God's heart. The results speak for themselves. Saul is dead, David is victorious and they spent 2 days in Ziklag. It would be the last time David would live outside of his native country. But what happened in those 2 days would set a new direction for what was to come in ways that we need to take to heart.

Read Text:

Ding Dong, the Witch is dead. Wake up sleepy head, rub your eyes, get out of bed. Wake up, the Wicked Witch is dead. She's gone where the goblins go. This song was one of the memorable tunes in the 1939 classic, The Wizard of Oz. Who wouldn't celebrate the demise of a wicked and tyrannical ruler? Who wouldn't throw a party at the news that the enemy who stalked your moves, threatened your family, and for years, ruined your life was now himself ruined? If you did, who could blame you? We all have them. We all have people who have tried to ruin our lives or who have caused us deep grief. The closer they are to you, the deeper the pain and the harder it is to forgive. The more they cost you, the more of your life they have taken that you can't get back, the bigger the opportunity for bitterness and revenge. Who is the enemy for you?

1. **Our world assumes revenge.** (1-10)

The ironies in this story are fascinating. 1 Samuel concluded with David and his men victorious in a complete rout of the Amalekites in the region south of Ziklag that resulted in the recovery of bounty that was massive. Overnight, they went from having lost everything to regaining everything and way more. David knew that a major battle was taking place or had taken place and while he was heavily engaged in his own matters, he and his men anxiously awaited any news of what happened up north. Now, it is an Amalekite who comes to David to bring the news that David's enemy, King Saul is dead. The text says, "behold"! But his appearance was not a good sign of the news he would bring.

This Amalekite probably traveled around 80 miles in a couple of days to come to David. His pretense of grief can barely cover his greedy little heart. But he has to play his cards right. So, he looks the part. Dirt on the head and clothes torn are public and culturally demanded signs of mourning. And there is much to mourn over. David and the others find this out based on the three questions that David asks. The army of Israel has been devastated. He tells David that he escaped from the camp of Israel. In other words, I risked my life coming to you. Then he starts with the people have fallen and are dead. Then Saul and then Jonathan are dead as well. But how does David know this to be? Is this assumed? Is this a rumor? So, he asks how this guy knows this (3rd question). David is clearly suspicious of this guy and then he tells him. He tells David a lie, but it is a good one. I just happened to be on Mt. Gilboa in the heat of the battle near Saul who was leaning on his spear. He was wounded and he was not yet dead. He asked me to be merciful to him and finish the deed. He was going to die anyway and he did not want to suffer anymore particularly if the Philistines found him. So, I finished him off. Then comes the proof. Here is the crown and the armband that Saul wore. *"And I have brought them here to my lord."* It sounds to me like this guy spent most of the 80 miles coming up with a really good story to explain why he, of all people had the crown and the armband and how to best take advantage of the situation. What is a guy like you doing with the crown? You've got to come up with something and he came up with a good one.

Of course, we are like, "what, wait a minute" that's not what the end of 1 Samuel said. Could this be true? No. 1 Samuel 31 is clear. Saul fell on his sword and died. When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, the armor-bearer fell on his sword as well. This Amalekite is lying. "By chance, I happened to be on Mount Gilboa at the precise moment when Saul had fallen on his sword and no one else was around. He spotted me, and we had this little conversation, just the two of us with no witnesses in the middle of this battle. I did what he asked me to do, I didn't want to do it, but it was the honorable thing to do and I did not want the crown to fall into the hands of the enemy so I got them and brought them to you. Wow. The first person to bow before David as king, is an Amalekite who brought David the crown from Saul and is the one who calls him, "my lord."

What is likely the real story is that this dirtbag was creeping around stripping bodies of any treasures before the Philistines came the next day when he came across Saul's body and took the crown and armband but had to come up with a story that explains how he got possession of it. Now, David does not know this and this Amalekite assumes that David will appreciate the

protocol, the appearance of mourning (dirt and torn clothes), but in his heart he will be thrilled to hear that Saul is dead and now the crown is literally his for the taking. The path to the throne has now been cleared of a major obstacle. David would surely relish this news and would reward this Amalekite greatly for his service. The Amalekite devises a lie in order to advance his own standing. For most people, lying is an acceptable and normal part of life. Everyone does it in order to get what they want. For this guy he does it because he assumes that David will at least secretly be pleased that Saul is dead. It's how our world thinks.

2. Our hearts are attracted to revenge. (1-10)

The Amalekite pretends to grieve and he pretends to be honorable. It's all for show. If the guy was really honorable, he would not have stripped Saul's body of the crown and armlet and "risked his life" bringing them to David, he would have actually risked his life by taking Saul's body out of harm's way so that he could not be dishonored by the Philistines. But this Amalekite assumes two things: 1) He assumes that David will want to make a show of grief because that looks like the honorable thing to do. 2) He also assumes that David is motivated by revenge and beneath the pretense of grief David will truly be thrilled. Why does the Amalekite think this way about David? Because he assumes that David thinks just like he does.

It was the Amalekites that Saul was ordered to kill. I am speculating now, but I think that it is entirely possible that this was this guy's opportunity for a little revenge himself. It is clear that he didn't kill Saul, but think of the secret glory he could get for himself from his own people when they learned that an Amalekite, was the one who actually finished Saul off. He could get some revenge for his own without overplaying his hand. Our hearts are drawn to revenge because revenge, like all sin, makes a promise. If you give in to me, you will be satisfied. If you give in to me, you will get what you wanted. But revenge does not deliver what it promises. In fact, it creates a culture that is never satisfied and never at rest. But for people who do not know the Lord, what else do they have when they have been wronged? And yet, revenge is a

A young wife was unfaithful to her husband. She confessed to him and he forgave her. They were new believers and I was their friend and was trying to help them work through this heartache and reconcile their relationship. But there was a wrinkle that I had not faced before. In his culture, this infidelity brought shame upon the family's name and it was up to him, to restore the honor of his family's name by murdering the man who had seduced his wife. If he did not kill the man, then someone in his family would come after him. This violation was punishable by death and he was expected to carry it out. But it doesn't work. He admitted that his act of revenge would trigger another then another in response to that and on and on it goes. If our hearts are bent on revenge, are we ever satisfied? What happens then, when a king is hell-bent on revenge? That is what is so scary, right? This is a major part of the story of 1 and 2 Samuel. The nation of Israel wants a king who can protect them from their enemies. But when you give all this authority to tax and to wage war to a king, what protection do you have that this same king won't turn that on you? A king who is strong enough to defend you is strong enough to abuse you with complete impunity. Who wouldn't assume that David would do unto others as it has been done to him? Revenge is attractive. Our hearts are drawn to it.

But David doesn't do what the Amalekite nor us (right?) thought he would do. He does not reach out and take the crown and hold it in anticipation of his coronation by the high priest. Instead, he reaches out and takes hold of his own clothes and rips them and begins to mourn. The writer of this account arranges the material in such a way that verses 11-12 are really the focal point of this scene. Look at and try to hear and visualize and feel these verbs.

"then David took hold of his clothes and tore them and so did all the men who were with him."

"And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan...for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword."

This was not the response the Amalekite expected. The grief was intense and the justice was swift. Even though he lied, he confessed to murder. And his murder was met with justice. He had no right to kill the king, even if the king asked him to, he had no right to it and the Amalekite received justice for what he confessed to have done.

Now, there's a good deal that I could point out here about lying and the evil of being deceitful in order to get ahead, or to pretend to be something that you are not. And that is certainly true, but as you can see from the outline, I think the real heart of this account is found in the issue of revenge. It was the Amalekites assumption of revenge on the part of David and perhaps some of his own that motivated his lying and I think we need to look at this.

3. Vengeance does not belong to us.

Romans 12.14-21

Vengeance does not belong to us. It is not on your plate. But it is easy to think that it is and in recent years it has become a rather common thing among some professing Christians and honestly, it blows my mind. Think about this with me. Saul was a political enemy of David. Saul was playing politics at the dirtiest of levels. Saul was also a personal enemy of David. He personally tried to kill him. He personally pursued David's death. He gave his own daughter in marriage to David in order to keep David close. He took David's wife from him and gave her to another man. Saul was clearly the lesser man, a terrible leader and was taking Israel in a bad direction. Some of you look at certain people in the government as if they are your personal enemies. You see them as political adversaries, and clearly, there are people in positions of political influence whose values I do not share. But I fear that if one of them died, some of you would be tempted to rejoice.

Based upon this text, how do you think David would have responded to the men who plotted the kidnapping of our governor? Why is David called a man after God's own heart? Because while he does not do it perfectly, his responses so often are a preview of Jesus. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Jesus never asks us to do something that he doesn't himself do for us. This is exactly what Jesus did on the cross.

A Ukrainian official said this week that Russian President Vladimir Putin has cancer and will not live much longer. I think Putin has done much evil. I pray for him to be removed from power so that he cannot continue to do so much evil. But, if he died, what I rejoice? No. I should be relieved that he cannot continue to do evil, but I should mourn that he died in unbelief and will face a hopeless eternity. There is no joy in the death of the wicked. If God has no delight in the death of the wicked, then neither should we. But how can we not rejoice?

4. **Seeing the bigger picture will guard your soul from revenge.** (11-16)

What do I mean by the bigger picture? Your life and my life are about Christ, not us. The questions I need to ask are not, how can I advance myself, protect myself, get revenge or get my way. Think about what we sing. Our lives are here to spread the fame of Jesus. We spread the fame of Jesus by trusting in Christ and reflecting Christ. We spread the fame of Jesus in part, by loving our enemies and praying for them. But you cannot love your enemy unless you have the heart of Christ. There is nothing supernatural about wishing ill upon your enemies. There is nothing godly or other-worldly about delighting in the demise of your opponent. But, when you return good for evil, when you turn the other cheek, when you pray for those who spitefully use you, when you mourn at the death of the man who sought your life, then people realize that you have a heart that is not of this world.

Your life can only be about Christ if you know and believe the gospel. And then it begins to make sense. God calls us to love our enemies, because God loved us even when we were his enemies. We were the ones who deserved his justice and instead of treating us how we deserved and getting revenge for our rebellion, God sent Christ to live in our place (do what we could not do, including loving enemies perfectly, including us) and then dying, literally dying in our place. He died on the cross in order to pay in full for the sins of every single person who would ever believe in him. Jesus laid down his life so that you and I, who were his enemies could live. We are forgiven, declared righteous, adopted, redeemed and forever given a home with Christ because he loved us when we were his enemies. We are here on this earth to spread the fame of Jesus by living in a way that reflects the very gospel that saves us.

Two ways to live:

- Look for revenge and lose your life
- Look at the sins of others through the lens of Christ and pray that they, like you, another enemy, find forgiveness and a home.