

Sermon for ABC 8-4-2024

Series: David: Ordinary Man, Extraordinary God

Title: A story of David in 3 acts

Texts: 1 Samuel 27, 1 Samuel 29:1-11 and 1 Samuel 30:1-19

TOD: When we trust God with our worldview but not our current experience in the world, we are falling victim to the lure of control. – Tyler Staton

Introduction

Good morning, Today we continue our series on the life of King David. Now our story for today is a longer one – it covers 3 chapters – and we won't have time to cover every detail but this account does follow a pattern that I think you will recognize. I'm going to draw it for you here.

(white board illustration.... Good intentions, the lure of control, crash and burn, remorse, rescue – point – David is a man after God's own heart, not because he always makes the right choices, but because he always confesses his sin and turns to God in humble repentance)

As we shall see, today's story follows this same pattern and I would invite you to watch for the signposts along the way. First, let's pray.

God – we come to your scriptures – your love letter to us – seeking to know you better. Please reveal yourself to us in these, the pages of your holy word. May our ears be opened and our hearts softened to receive you into our lives today. In Jesus' name AMEN

Act 1: Good intentions

Our story takes place while Saul is still alive, and David is on the run. You might remember Alex West's message about the time David could have killed Saul in the cave, but he chooses to spare Saul's life. Later on David will have another opportunity to kill Saul and seize the throne, but he again chooses not to – demonstrating God's mercy toward Saul. That is in 1st Samuel 26 - And what David says to Saul is this: *The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.*"(1 Samuel 26:23-24)

David proclaims in this moment that he trusts God to protect him. His faith is strong and his integrity is stout. It sounds like David has it all figured out. And yet... when we turn the page over to chapter 27, we get this:

But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”(1 Samuel 27:1)

David thought to himself. This seems like such a small thing. We think to ourselves all the time right? Our brains are constantly processing what we are seeing and hearing and doing. You know, that voice inside your head. The key here is in contrasting what David JUST said in 1 Samuel 26. He said *As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.* David SAID he was trusting that God would deliver him from trouble. But then in his heart, David doubts God’s faithfulness. One of these days, he thinks, Saul’s going to get me. This is a fatal mistake. It is the original mistake, the original sin. Why did Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit? Because they didn’t trust God when he said they would die if they ate it. They chose to trust in their own understanding, their own experience, instead. That is what David does in this point of his life. Instead of trusting in God – even as he says the right words – David takes matters into his own hands.

Picking up in verse 2

So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath. David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

Trivia time: Do you remember where Goliath was from? Gath? Where did David just go? Gath! The irony! He moves in with the Philistines – Israel’s #1 enemy at this point in history.

Then David said to Achish, “If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?”

So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months.

Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.

When Achish asked, “Where did you go raiding today?” David would say, “Against the Negev of Judah” or “Against the Negev of Jerahmeel” or “Against the Negev of the Kenites.” He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, “They might inform on us and say, ‘This is what David did.’” And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. Achish trusted David and said to himself, “He has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life.”

Ok, raise your hand if when you are reading through these Old Testament stories you gloss over the names and places? David goes to such and such a town and attacks so and so and then he talked to the king about it Blah blah blah when do we get to the good part? Are you with me? I’ve been there. It wasn’t until I was really digging deeply into this passage for today that I realized what is going on here.

Look at verse 8. David is going and raiding the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites –who are they? They are all enemies of Israel, and they are related to or allies with the Philistines. But then David tells King Achish – “I went raiding against Negev (that means the outskirts, or wilderness around) of Judah” or “Against the outskirts of Jerahmeel” or “Against the outskirts of the Kenites” – in other words, he tells Achish that he goes raiding towns and settlements that are in and around his home country of Judah.

He deceives Achish into thinking that he is attacking his own people, but instead he is continuing to battle Israel’s enemies. And just like David would later try to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba, he tries to cover up his deception here as well. When he raids a town he kills everyone. He leaves no survivors so that there is no one left to tell on him. David murders innocent people to protect himself...does that sound familiar? And just like that, David has slid deeply into sin.

Act 2 - Crash and Burn - Samuel 29:1-11, 30:1-7

Is God happy with David's choices? Of course not, so now let's see how God gets David's attention.

Now it so happens that the time comes when the Philistines muster all their forces for a big offensive into Israel. And King Achish, who trusts David, brings him and his men along as part of the army.

Picking up in Chapter 29: The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. The commanders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?"

Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him."

But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men? Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands'?"

In other words, they aren't buying it. David is a liability to their campaign. He could so easily turn on them and swing the battle toward his own people. And so they turn David around and he and his men start the three day march back to Ziklag.

Flash forward now to Chapter 30:

David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites (That's one of the peoples that David has spent the last year raiding) had raided the Negev and Ziklag. (UH OH) They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, and had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.

When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep.

You can just imagine the scene. David and his tired men, worn out from a three day march, see smoke over the horizon. I imagine they felt their hearts drop right down to their stomach. They hurry into the town desperately calling out the names of their wives and children... and getting no answer. Oh how devastating that must have been. But notice here an interesting contrast: we read that the Amalekites have captured everyone alive. They don't kill any of them... What did David do when he attacked the Amalekites? He killed everyone. They just take captives. This ironically shows that the Amalekites are more merciful than David has been.

Next it says that David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God.

Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?"

Did you catch it? Did you see the signpost? But David found strength in the Lord his God. David has not been talking or praying to God this whole time. Since David started doing things his way he hasn't been asking for God's guidance. David remembers now, in the depths of his grief, what he needs to do, and so he finally reaches out to God and asks what God wants him to do.

"Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?"

"Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."

Act 3 - Rescue - 1 Samuel 30:8-19

And so David and his men give chase, and it isn't long before they "just so happen" to find an abandoned Egyptian slave along the road who agrees to show them the way. Isn't it funny how answers to prayer come from strange places? We'll pick up in Verse 16:

He (the Egyptian) led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back.

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Conclusion

As we wrap up today I want us to chew on this quote from Tyler Staton that is on the front of our bulletin: “*When we trust God with our worldview but not our current experience in the world, we are falling victim to the lure of control.*”

This is a really good description of David at the beginning of our story today. He trusts God with this worldview – he says all the right things – but he doesn’t actually trust God with the details – with his current experience. Instead he decides to do things his way. He seeks out his security by taking refuge with his enemies – the last place Saul would go to catch him, and he takes drastic, deceptive, and violent measures to maintain the façade for King Achish.

So what is the lure of control for us? Do we trust God with our worldview, but not the details? We live in a world that is so large and complicated that we really can’t control much can we? But we as humans like the illusion of control. We like thinking that we have choices and that we have the power to shape our little private universes.

The thing is that when we try to go our own way we inevitably end up hurting other people in the name of protecting ourselves. Maybe we are not out murdering whole villages, but if we stop to think about it, how many times do we put our comforts ahead of the needs of others? How many systems of violence or oppression do we tolerate in the name of our own security or in the name of protecting what we see as ours? How far are we willing to go in order to feel safe? How much money do we need to hoard before we feel like we have enough?

As we study the story of David, it is critical that we see this journey that he takes. It isn't a black and white story. David isn't always the good guy, he makes mistakes. The takeaway for us is that even though David is sometimes unfaithful, God remains faithful. Even when David fails to show mercy, God shows mercy to David. The reason this story is preserved in the Bible isn't so that we can try to live like David, but so that we can learn to know the character of God who refuses to give up on his people.

And it is through David's line that Jesus triumphs finally over the lure of control. Jesus who is able to pray "not my will but thy will be done". Jesus whose resurrection exclaims "Yes! God will certainly overtake and succeed in the rescue of this world." He is the extraordinary God. You can trust in his unfailing love.

Amen

Benediction

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust, Trust in the Lord
Lean not on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.