
Day 92 – April 2

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

David's Rise to Power

Readings: 1 Samuel 21:1-22:2; Psalm 34; 142; 1 Chronicles 12:6-18; 1 Samuel 22:3-5

Reflections:

- The story of the consecrated bread shows that once again God looks at the heart and legitimate needs of his children and places his own rules as secondary. David and his men eat bread that only Priests were supposed to eat. David is confident to ask this because he understands that the mission he is on is one blessed by God. Instead of being struck dead, he is ultimately honored by Jesus as an illustration of how God's heart works. Luke 6:1-5 states, "One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for Priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." In other words, Jesus, as God with us, is above the Law, even his own Law. His will is the Law. So don't worry first about getting all the rules right. Worry about what really matters to Jesus.
- David taking Goliath's sword demonstrates a few things. The tools of your enemy may at times be used for good purposes. Sometimes people label things that the Enemy has as bad and that we as Christ-followers should never use those tools. For example, a bar is a place people hang out for relationship but because it is associated with drinking, many people say Christians should never go to a bar. But you have to ask, can a bar as a tool be used for good purposes? It may be the best place to reach out to people, or a place to have Home Church. David saw in Goliath's sword the best possible weapon he could use. As the Priest said, "There is none like it!" A second thought comes to my mind. The reason David had the option to use his sword now when he desperately needed it was because he was faithful and obedient to God years before. If he had run away from Goliath, he would not have his sword now. Faithful obedience positions us for the

future. If we obey now, God will use the fruit of that obedience to set the stage for his future plans for us.

- It is interesting that although God had been faithful to David (he even had a big sword when he meets up with servants of a rival king), David is still afraid. Fear is something everyone struggles with and it is good to see people who are great leaders have very real emotions and struggles. It helps us all realize that having fears and struggles is a normal part of the struggle of life and leadership. In fact, it gets so bad he pretends to be insane as a way to save himself. His fear shows us how bad it can get and how even people who trust God sometimes have really low moments. I just love that the Bible records these very real, vulnerable stories where God's leaders fail and struggle. It makes me realize you don't have to be perfect or have it all together for God to work through your life. That is one of the repeated overarching themes: God chooses the weak, the foolish, and the humble to shame the strong, self-confident and proud.
- His psalms about these experiences capture it well, "in God I trust, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" "I sought the Lord and he answered me, he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant....A righteous man (or woman) may have many troubles but the Lord delivers him from them all." David reminds himself of the truth and in fact wrote songs that he could sing over and over to help him remain grounded in what was true. We all need those "stakes of truth" we drive into the ground to keep us focused and secured by what is true before God.
- Out of this weakest of moments and crushing fear, David is left hiding in a cave. Although he is destined to be a king, here he reaches one of his lowest of all points. He has just pretended to be insane to save his life and now he is hiding in a cave. Talk about reaching rock bottom. Well it is here that God begins to work. Notice those who start to gather around David and count him as their leader? First his family comes and then "All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him and he became their leader. About 400 men." This is not much of an army. In fact it looks pretty similar to the type of people that would gather around another humble king. Jesus' disciples must not have looked much different. It is interesting that the song David writes for this occasion ends with him saying, "Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness." David didn't look at this beleaguered group and say, "What a bunch of losers you have given me God." He saw their hearts and how God was gathering them to him and he saw their potential to become mighty warriors.
- It appears to be after David has welcomed this less than best army that God adds more to his numbers from the tribes of Gad and Benjamin. Now this second wave of recruits is the best possible warriors. "They were brave warriors, ready for battle, and able to handle shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions, and they were swift as gazelles...the least was a match for a hundred, and the greatest for a thousand." Again his numbers are not great but these are more truly equipped and ready warriors. Could

it be his willingness to work with the outcasts that set the stage for God to give him these more truly equipped warriors?

- David concludes this section with an unusual request. He asks the king of Moab, an enemy of Israel to protect his mom and dad. Obviously because he is being hunted, their lives are in danger too. Apparently, David and his men do remain there but find a forest in Judah as a place to camp. But it does show us that God's provision for David in this phase of his leadership is coming completely from unexpected sources: 1) He is given food that is by Law forbidden him; 2) He is given a sword that was his enemy's sword; 3) He is given an army that at first at least if very unlikely candidates; 4) He has to ask a rival king to take care of his mom and dad. This is hardly the path of success that society at large promotes as the way to the top! Yet, God is showing David over and over that He is faithful and he will provide. That God is both his provider and defender.