

**Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Adult Bible Class
May 24, 2020**

After God's Own Heart - David and Jonathan

"As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul... and the women sang to one another as they celebrated,

"Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day on." 1 Samuel 18:6-9

For the remainder of 1 Samuel, Saul will become increasingly paranoid about David, trying to kill him several times. But woven through the hatred is a story of friendship, respect, and deep trust. In contrast to the hatred of Saul, his son, Jonathan, shows great care for David and that care is returned.

Some Background

Jonathan was the eldest of Saul's 5 children. He makes his first appearance in the Bible at the end 1 Samuel 13 where he and his father are engaged in a battle against the Philistines. The Israelite soldiers have had their weapons stolen by the enemy. Jonathan (who still has a sword) and his armor-bearer sneak away from the Israelite camp and enter the Philistine camp killing about 20 soldiers. The Philistines panic and shortly thereafter the rest of the Israelite army joins the fight and the enemy is defeated. After the battle, Jonathan is almost put to death by his father for having eaten honey in the woods near the Philistine camp. On pain of death, Saul had forbidden his men to eat on the day of the battle and he is fully prepared to kill his son for disobedience. The army, however, protests and Saul relents.

One in Spirit

1 Samuel 18 opens with Jonathan taking the initiative and befriending David. English translations say the two were "knit" together or "became one in spirit." The Hebrew word behind these expressions is one that also implies "conspiracy." Jonathan knows his father's dark heart and perhaps conspires to protect David from death. Their friendship is sealed with a covenant and Jonathan gives David his coat and sword, bow and belt. This may also be a sign that Jonathan now recognizes David as the true crown prince.

The oneness between Jonathan and David is lived out in a series of events in 1 Samuel:

- 1 Samuel 19:1-10 – Saul tells Jonathan to kill David, but Jonathan defends David and extracts a promise from this father not to kill his friend. He also alerts David to the plot against him.
- 1 Samuel 20 – the entire chapter is consumed by Saul's plan to kill David at the New Moon festival, but Jonathan and David conspire together to keep David from the feast. Saul explodes at Jonathan when David does not attend and tries to kill his son. David lives as a fugitive. In 1

Samuel 20:8 we learn the covenant between David and Jonathan was not just horizontal, but vertical as well. Their covenant was made "Before the Lord."

- 1 Samuel 23:15-18 – the last recorded encounter between David and Jonathan. David is still on the run for his life. Jonathan meets him at Horesh and helps David find strength in God. 'And [Jonathan] said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this." And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.'

Sadly, Jonathan never had the chance to be David's second-in-command. In 1 Samuel 31 Jonathan and his brothers are killed in battle against the Philistines and Saul attempts suicide before being finished off by an enemy soldier. David's lament for Jonathan reveals the deep pain of his heart at the death of his beloved friend:

"How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of the battle!
"Jonathan lies slain on your high places.
I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
very pleasant have you been to me;
your love to me was extraordinary,
surpassing the love of women.
"How the mighty have fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!"
(2 Samuel 1: 25-27)

What does this mean for you and me today?

As was the case with David and Goliath there is a temptation to turn this story into a lesson on the principles of friendship. However, the relationship between David and Jonathan was never simply a relationship between 2 people. It was also a covenant made in the sight of the Lord.

The core value of their relationship as singled out in 1 Samuel 20 (v. 8, 14-15) is "kindness." The Hebrew word here is **chesedh** a word that has no real English equivalent but is used throughout the Old Testament to describe God's loving-kindness to his people.

- Exodus 20:6
- Exodus 34:6-7
- Psalm 103: 4, 8, 11, 17

The Gospel of John (1:14) describes Jesus as the one who embodies the very character of God, "full of grace and truth." In a truly unique way Jesus embodied the **chesedh** love of God which would ultimately lead him to the cross. John describes that love as follows:

- John 13:1
- John 15:13

Seen this way, the relationship between Jonathan and David isn't just a model of person to person friendship, but a model of God's love for us in Christ. As Jonathan befriended David so we are befriended by God in Christ and experience his divine steadfast love and faithfulness. One of the ways we respond to this friendship is by living in that love with one another.

- John 13:34-35
- 1 John 2:7-8
- 2 John 5

For his part, David becomes the model of that kind of steadfast love. In 2 Samuel 9, David, who is now King of Israel, searches out Mephibosheth, a son of Jonathan who was crippled in his feet while fleeing the battle in which his father was killed. As an act of steadfast love and kindness (chesedh) David restores Saul's lands and servants to Mephibosheth and invites him to the king's table for the rest of his life.

For David to act this way is nothing less than God himself showing steadfast love through his servant. David fulfills the covenant with Jonathan by showing "unfailing kindness like that of the Lord" 1 Samuel 20:14.