

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are called the 'History' books in the Bible but, unlike those we may remember from school, these 'histories' bring their main characters to life by demonstrating their character. The nearest comparison I could find was 'Bad King John' [the Magna Carta man] and he got a very bad press.

By this time in the story of Saul and David they are each 'out to get' the other – nothing very Godly in either's behaviour, and yet at the crux they can be both brought back to reason and experience shame and grief at their own actions [see Vv. 5, 16-17 eg.]. Is this where we ask; 'Where is God?'

David and Saul are both in command of many armed [and dangerous] men and, as always in such conflicts, it is rarely those who lead who suffer. Remember that there were no 'standing armies' at this time so the 'soldiers' were made up of ordinary, untrained people who had survived previous skirmishes and battles. They were paid by loot from battle and armed by the same method. David and Saul, in contrast, would, at the very least, have owned good armour and weapons.

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-22

I expect most of us know what happens to both Saul and David as this story progresses to its conclusion. I have sympathy for both of these Kings of Israel. Both were chosen to serve God yet both must have asked, more than once; 'Where are you Lord?'

1. Many of us will have experienced a period in our life when we have asked where God was as we struggled with pain, grief or some other life altering situation. Read Psalm 13. Have you prayed or felt like this?
2. Saul comes across as 'the villain' in this story. Is that fair? How else could his behaviour be explained or was he really 'mad, bad and dangerous?'
3. There are a number of characters in the Bible who are 'presumed to be bad', Pharaoh in Exodus for one. Who else can you think of and why are they seen to be bad?
4. Twice David has had opportunity to take Saul's life, but each time he has refused (24:1–15; 26:7–20). What reasons does David provide for sparing Saul? See specifically 24:6, 10, 12; 26:9–11, 23–24. Why should we choose mercy over vengeance? See Romans 12:19
5. David and Saul and then later David and Johnathon start off united but then fall out with each other. Is any one of these three worthy of the reputation that they end up carrying? How do you deal with friendship or family fallouts? What advice could you offer others?
6. Read verses 17 – 22 again. There are a number of significant statements made which, at the same time, raise questions. Is David more righteous [Vv 17]? Verse 20 suggests that God's plan for Israel can only happen through David. Why would that be? David gave his oath to Saul [vv.22] was he right to do so? Should we make oath's today?
7. There isn't much mention of God in today's passage and what there is comes across as incidental, part of the argument rather than part of any solution. Is this God 'ramping up' the situation? Compare with when God hardened Pharaoh's heart [Ex. 7:3, 13, 22, 8:15, 32 etc. etc.]. How do we understand God's silence?

Prayer Points

Please pray for all those in the church who are currently receiving cancer treatment or continuing to recover after surgery and medication. Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen, lead and comfort each person.

Please pray for the ongoing response to the devastating Syria-Türkiye earthquake. Pray for essential support, especially for clothing, food, clean water, and protected shelter for women made even vulnerable by the disaster.

Sermon Notes



BIBLE STUDY

June 4th 2023

The Life of David:

Mercy and Vengeance

1 Samuel 24:1-22

David is an extraordinary person in the Bible. He was a skilled musician, he was a formidable warrior who won a legendary battle against a great champion, he attracted the greatest soldiers of his day to serve under him. He was a poet, writing Psalms that expressed the deep longing of the human heart for God. His words were so personal and powerful that thousands of years later, they remain. As much as all the things listed earlier are impressive to other human beings, God was far more interested in David's heart. A close study of the life of David will open our eyes to both how much God cares about the condition of our hearts and the foreshadow of Jesus who truly redeems our hearts. The world spends a lot of time pressing us to focus on exterior issues but God looks on the inside.

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001