

## Sermon Transcript for February 27, 2022

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have three passages here that seem a little bit difficult, at least initially, to come together. First, we'll look at the Old Testament passage and we have Samuel who is told by God to pick a new king. Now, why does Samuel need to pick a new king? Why does God want a new king over Israel? Saul has failed and has sinned against God. See, the people, they had the judges for many years. A couple of hundred years, they had judges who basically ruled the people whenever there was a problem. But the people were left to their own lives and their own worship and everything like that and as long as they were faithful, there was peace in the land. When they failed, they would go after other gods, then God would send a judge to help them or he would send Philistines or some other people to attack them and then he would send a judge to save them and then also to tell them, "Turn back to God."

So they had this for a long time, many hundred years, but finally, they got sick of this, for whatever reason. They said, "We want a king like everybody else." Now notice they did not say, "We want a king who serves you. We want a king who will follow you and guide our people and protect our worship and follow you." They said, "We want a king like everybody else." So they got a king like everybody else. He looked like a king. He was tall and majestic, with dark hair, dark skin, everybody was attracted to him. He was a quintessential royal figure. If he came walking in today, you would just go, "Wow, this man commands respect."

Yet he was like every other king of every other nation. He was looking for his own self, his own authority. Eventually he rebels against the word of God. He does not wait for the prophet and for God's word. He does his own actions. He offers his own sacrifices, even though he is told not to. He saves some spoils from a land that he was told to just leave barren. He disobeys God. He does not follow God's commands. He sins against God and so God rejects him.

Then David is chosen. Now at first, David sounds great but if we remember, David also seemed to go his own way and seek his own desires. If you remember the story of Bathsheba, you'll know what I'm talking about.

So king Saul did what was right in his own eyes and sinned against God. David sinned against God as well, later on. So what is the difference between the two of these? What is the difference between Saul, a king like every other nation, and David, a man after God's own heart? The difference is not the fact that David did not sin and Saul did. They both sinned and they both sinned pretty spectacularly. Saul, however, was not repentant. Saul was interested in his own ways and he failed to worship God. His sin was against the worship of God. He desired to worship God in his own way, by his own means, in his own ideas.

David, on the other hand, yes, he did sin but the key to David is he worshiped God in truth. When he was confronted with his sin, he confessed his sin and admitted God's authority and right to punish that sin and he confessed it and trusted in the mercy and grace of his God to forgive him. See, that's the difference between a king, according to the nations and a king, according to God. David did not look like the other kings and Samuel wanted to pick some who looked like a king. Now David was handsome, but he was short of stature. He was ruddy, means he probably had a sunburn. He's out in the fields all day. He smelled like sheep and trust me, now that I have goats on the farm, goats and sheep stink badly. So his appearance, his form, was not something to be impressed by and yet God chose David.

The thing that we need to hear as we are preparing ourselves for the coming of Lent, like the last couple of weeks, we've learned about the nature of God, that He is generous beyond measure, more than we could possibly imagine, that He gives more than we can even ask. We find out that he sows His word. He does not choose to be selective in where He chooses to spread the word. He gives it to all people.

Now we hear in this 1 Corinthians passage, we hear the quintessential love section. 1 Corinthians 13, often used in weddings. I don't know if that's exactly the proper place for it although if we could live up to the standard of this measure of love, it would be great. All relationships would indeed be better. But this, 1 Corinthians 13 is not primarily telling us about a relationship between husband and wife. This is telling us again about the nature of God. In fact, if you replace the word love with God, it would change nothing in this text.

Paul was the quintessential preacher to the gentiles and as far as we can tell, the quintessential preacher of the New Testament. We get more of our New Testament from him than anybody else and yet he considers himself the least of the apostles, calls himself one untimely born, calls himself the worst of sinners. Even says, "The good that I would do, I do not, and the evil that I ought not to do, that I do." So Paul is in good company with David admitting his sin before God and trusting in the nature of God to give him hope and it is the same thing here.

He could brag about being a good preacher and teacher and he was, but if he does not have the love, if he does not love the people, if he does not communicate the love of God to the people, then it's worthless and we can stand on our theology. We can do the right things. We can come to church every Sunday. We can give to the poor. We can fill the Food Pantry barrel. We can give to the CROP Walk. We can do all these things and it's great and marvelous but if we do it without love, in God's eyes, it's pointless.

I don't know about you but as I was looking at this passage of love, there was a passage that kind of struck me. Verse four and following. Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. So far, that helps me understand the nature of God. Think about this. Is God not patient and kind with us? Thank God, He is. Because how often do we wander astray? He's not arrogant or rude. He is right and He is just and He judges wrongdoing, but He is not arrogant. He is not rude. He simply says, "This is the truth."

The next message, it does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. When I first read that, I'm going, "God does not insist on his own way? Hold on a second. I thought God insisted that we had to believe exactly as He taught us." But then I read it again. He does not insist on his own way. In other words, He does not force us to follow Him or believe Him. He allows us to walk away from Him if we so choose. He desires us to come to Him in joyful thanksgiving for our salvation, in the hope and the promise and the confidence that He is the one who forgives sins. He wants us to be drawn to Him because of his nature, because of how He demonstrates his love towards us, but He does not want us to come because we have to or because if we don't, the judgment is upon us. He does not want us to come to Him out of fear. We are called to fear God, but we're not called to stay in fear.

We're called to respect His judgements, but that's not what draws us to God. What draws us to God is His love and His grace and His mercy, His kindness, His generosity. He's walking by Jericho and He hears a blind man yelling out to Him, "Lord, son of David, have mercy on me." So Jesus asked him, "What do you want?" and he said, flat out, "I want to recover my sight." Absolute blind faith, literally. Absolute faith that this son of David, who was the fulfillment of all prophecy, would be able to do what He promised. Now, how many blind people were there in Israel at this time? Probably quite a few. Did Jesus heal everyone? No, at least not of their blindness, but through His death and resurrection, He did heal us all from the malady that we all suffer, the spiritual blindness of sin that we, without the power of the Holy Spirit and without the love of God, have rejected Him.

But through the cross, as He described to His disciples, through the flogging and through the shameful treatment, through being spit upon and being mocked, finally, He will be killed and then rise again on the third day and that death has healed us all. The physical healing of the blindness was simply a foretaste of what more He has to offer. When we think about healing a blind man, he's blind one day and instantly somebody says, "Receive your sight," and suddenly he can see, for us, that seems tremendous and amazing and miraculous and we would be talking about it for days, if not weeks. Yet that is nothing compared to what happened on the cross. How often do we forget to think and talk about that?

We've been talking about the generosity of God throughout these past three weeks as we prepare for Lent. Lent being that penitential season, where we reflect upon our sin, but for these three weeks, we've been talking about God's generosity and His love and His grace and His mercy, so that we might understand as we dwell upon our sin, as we go through this penitential season, that we do this trusting in the grace and mercy and love of our God because that is the witness that we have for the world.

This world is in more chaos this week than it has been in a long time and we're not just talking domestically, of course. We're talking internationally and all over the place. There's a lot of fear, anxiety and uncertainty in this world for a lot of different reasons. What brings hope and comfort in this world? What is the sure rock? What did we say in our introit? Be my rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress, for you are my rock and my fortress. That sounds pretty strong. What do we stand upon? We stand upon the death and resurrection of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. That is the rock that is firm, that cannot be shaken by any virus or war or rumor of war or anything else that may come our way. A fortress will defend us against any chaos and eventually we will be and know peace. Perhaps not in this world, but most definitely when He comes again. See, we do not look with human eyes, just as Samuel was called not to look with his own human eyes to seek after the king that looked right, that looked appropriate. Samuel was called to look at the word of God and to trust the word of God.

So also are we called not to trust in the strength of nations or the strength of our own will or anything else, but the strength of God and to be confident that, come what may, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. We cannot know the height, the depth, the width or the length of the love of God for us.

Let us walk in faith. Let us cry out to God for mercy and trust that He will and has saved and that is what we are called to bear witness to the rest of the world. Let us share with the world, with the excitement of finding out somebody received their sight miraculously. Let us go with that enthusiasm and share that God has opened our eyes to His love and His forgiveness and His Grace. May that grace, mercy and peace be and abide with you always, now and forever more, and unto life everlasting. Amen.