April 2/3, 2016

The Good, Bad, and Ugly of Leadership

Courage to Lead Series

1 Samuel 21:1-22:23

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If your desire for the rest of your life is defined as a lounge seat on the deck of the *Love Boat* and cruise into the sunset, I'm not sure I have much to offer you this morning, other than to maybe challenge you to rethink that. Life is precious. You only get one shot and it would be very sad to waste your life that way. But I think most of us gathered here this morning—we understand that. We're serious about being Christ followers. We want our lives to matter. We want to make a difference in the world. We've defined leadership in this series as "influencing others for Christ," so we're saying, "We really do want to make a difference!" So here's the challenge: Often it's very difficult to sort out: What is God's part and what is my part? We can be very sincere. We can be rightly motivated. We're wanting to make a difference in this world, but it can get pretty confusing trying to sort out: But what's God's part and what's my part? For those of us that are wired up as leaders, we don't really like sitting in the bleachers. God has wired us up to get involved, to make a difference. We see problems; we want to solve them. We want to be part of the challenge in influencing others to make a difference in the world—and sometimes it's easy to run out ahead of God. So we try to sort out: What's God's part; what's my part, and how do I really understand that?

That's what we want to wrestle with this morning, but I'll tell you right up front: There's no easy answer to this. As a matter of fact, I think the answer the text is going to give us will be very uncomfortable with many of us. With that in mind, I invite you to turn to1 Samuel, Chapter 21. If you're new with us, we've been working our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. David has been anointed to be the next king of Israel. Saul is the current king. David was probably in his early teens when he was anointed. He fought the giant Goliath; God gave him great victory. That kind of launched David into the spotlight. David has been a commander, a general. Now he's the king's son-in-law and God has blessed him over and over and over again. He's won tremendous victories. He's won the hearts of the people and all of that is so threatening to Saul that Saul can't deal with it. So now Saul has made David—his son-in-law—public enemy *Number One*, and he's determined to kill David. So David is now officially a fugitive on the run. We pick it up then in chapter 21, verse 1:

> **Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?" David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.' Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found." The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women." David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be *holy*?" So the priest gave him consecrated *bread*; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread *in its place* when it was taken away.** (*NASB, 1 Samuel 21:1-6)

That's one of those paragraphs where you read it and you say, "I don't know what they are talking about?" (*laughter*) A lot of strange stuff—as a matter of fact this whole last section of 1 Samuel is full of strange stuff. So David flees from Gibeah of Saul to Nob which is three to five miles—not very far really, and there he bumps into Ahimelech who is functioning as the priest. He and the other priests and their family members are there. It's apparent that the tabernacle has been set up in Nob and they are carrying out the functions basically of the priests there. As far as we know the ark of the covenant is still in Kiriath-jearim and will stay there until David is king. So David shows up and we're told Ahimelech is trembling. Ahimelech would be the grandson of Phinehas, so the great grandson of Eli, if you remember that story previously. But he's trembling and the text tells us why: Because David is alone. David, being the king's son-in-law, David with his role as commander and general would have had an entourage. It's just unimaginable he'd show up like this all alone. So Ahimelech is trying to figure out what's going on here—and it's probably not good.

Commentators are all over the place on this last section of Samuel in so many different ways. So in this case there are commentators that are determined to believe David does nothing wrong. So here they say the king that David is referring to is God as King; therefore, he's telling the truth. In my opinion that's a very difficult argument to sustain. I don't think that is what's happening. I think David is on the run; he's fearing for his life; there's a lot of tension; there's a lot of fear; there's a lot of confusion; there's a lot of hurt. I think David is very sincere. I think he's very rightly motivated, but I think right now he's in survival mode and he's running out ahead of God and so he's lying to Ahimelech. He's telling him something that's not true in order to—whatever the motive would be—to protect Ahimelech or just to get what he's looking for which is bread. So he tells him something that isn't really true and asks him about some food, some bread. Ahimelech says, "Well I don't have any spare bread; the only bread I have is consecrated bread." So in the tabernacle, once a week they would take the bread out of the *Holy Place* and they would replace it with fresh bread. The bread that's removed was considered consecrated which meant it was only for the priests, but the priests could eat it. It is part of what they lived on, so that's what Ahimelech is referring to. The idea of being clean—having not been with a woman—we just don't have time to go into all this, but basically to be clean—to eat the consecrated bread—Ahimelech wants them to be ceremonially clean. David says that's the case, so he gives him the bread.

One side note is, in the New Testament Jesus' disciples are eating grain because they need food and they pick it on the Sabbath. The religious legalists condemn Jesus and His disciples for doing that on the Sabbath, and Jesus launches into this discussion that really the people are not supposed to serve the Sabbath but the Sabbath is there to serve the people. Then Jesus actually references this story from David—that even though the bread was consecrated and meant for the priests, that when you have someone in your midst that is starving, the right thing to do would be to give them the bread. It's kind of the difference between the *letter* of the law and the *spirit* of the law. So Jesus used this story to talk about that.

One thing that I think is interesting to note is: In this whole chapter there's going to be three different times where, in a very subtle way, the message will be presented to David that God has been faithful in the past and God will be faithful. I think, again, in all sincerity David is trying to do the right thing, but he's running out ahead of God, so he ends up doing things that aren't really appropriate. The text doesn't say his lying is right or wrong; it's simply saying this is what he did. But that's certainly not what God would want. So the first one is this idea of bread—the consecrated bread would be a reminder that this is the bread that sat in the *Holy Place* that represented the Presence of God. Jesus identified Himself in the New Testament as, "I am the bread of life." Jesus was referring to the bread that was in the temple in the *Holy Place* that represented the Presence of God and the Presence or God would be our sustenance—would be our bread. It

would satisfy a hungry soul. So here's the first little hint: There's a reminder that the Presence of God will go with you. You can trust Him. Verse 7:

> **Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.**

This is what in a Hebrew narrative would be referred to as an editorial comment. What we mean by that is it doesn't carry the flow of the story but rather it's inserted from the outside and it's just a comment that seems to be inserted right in there for some reason. If this was a movie, the shot would show Doeg off in the corner in the shadows, peeking around the corner, and we would just know at some point in the story, that's going to matter. It's just a reminder of how cleverly these narratives are written. So we're just making a mental note and it will come back later.

> **David said to Ahimelech, "Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent." Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take *it*. For there is no other except it here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."** (Vs. 8-9)

So back in chapter 17 when David killed Goliath, he kept the sword, saved it back. I made the comment then that we need to make a mental note of that 'cause it will come up later. So this is later. David is now fleeing for his life. He asks Ahimelech if there are any weapons here; the only thing he has is Goliath's sword. Now this sword was probably too big, too heavy to be of much use to David, but there's a more significant meaning to this sword and Ahimelech identifies it: *"This is the sword that you brought back when you killed Goliath*." In other words, this is the second reminder that when you were a young teenage boy (David's probably about twenty at this part in the story) so, when you were a young teenager you trusted God and God gave you what you needed to defeat the giant. So now that you are fleeing from Saul and everything looks so desperate, you need to be reminded that the God that gave you the victory over Goliath will be the God that will give you victory over Saul. You just need to trust Him.

Again, I think it helps us understand that what this chapter is about is David now in survival mode as a strong leader, kind of taking this all on himself, making his own decisions, and he needs to remember God is there. He will be your bread; He will be your protector, just like He's been in the past. So this is the second very subtle reminder to David. Verse 10:

> **Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying,**
>
> **'Saul has slain his thousands,**
> **And David his ten thousands'?"**
>
> **David took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath. So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"** (Vs. 10-15)

So David flees from Nob to Gath, which is roughly twenty-five miles. So this is now down in the coastal plain, fairly close to the Mediterranean Sea. Gath is one of the five major cities of the Philistines; each major city had its own king. I assume he's thinking: if I'm in Philistine territory Saul won't chase me there; it will start a war. He feels like he'll be safe there. The city of Gath seems like a rather unfortunate choice. That was the home town of Goliath. For some reason David thinks he won't be recognized there. But as soon as he shows up, they immediately recognize him and they identify: This is *king of the land*, kind of a strange title but they specifically identify this is the one that killed Goliath; this is the one that caused the ladies to dance and sing, *"Saul has killed his thousands; David has killed his ten thousands."* You remember this is the song that celebrated David's victory. This is also the song that got into the head of Saul and really started this whole mess. So this song has a lot of history to it.

This is again a reminder—this is the third reminder in this chapter—because David clearly hears them review the lyrics of the song, and there's a reminder that in the past God has been faithful. God has given David what he needed to be the great general, to kill his tens of thousands. David needs to remember God will be faithful. But now David's got himself in a mess. Achish now has been informed this is David—the one that slayed Goliath, the one who is the champion in Israel and David knows if Achish can, he will kill him. So now suddenly he's got to come up with a plan. Now David is ingenious; David is street-smart. His plan on the spur of the moment is, "I'm going to pretend to be insane." Now, again, the text doesn't say this is a good thing; it doesn't say it's a bad thing; it just tells you this is what actually happened. But one can't imagine this is really the way God wants his anointed king to act, but David's got himself in a mess; now he needs to get out of it. So he pretends to be insane. He's apparently a pretty good actor. He's scratching at the door—whatever he's doing—saliva running down his beard. He's convincing to the king. There was a lot of mental illness in the ancient world, and that is evident by what Achish says: "*Don't I have enough madmen in the kingdom, I don't need another one."* Basically it appears then, they just leave David and walk away, and it makes it possible for him to escape.

So now in a subtle way there have been three reminders: God is the bread. God is his protector with the sword—that's kind of his trophy reminder—and now with the lyrics of this song, God has been faithful. David needs to remember; David needs to trust God. What's interesting about this chapter is there's nowhere in this chapter where David seeks God's direction, seeks God's wisdom, really determines what God wants from him. Again I would suggest to you, David's not rebelling; he's not trying to be bad. He's not like Saul—determined to do his own thing—but he's fearful; he's wounded; he's hurt; he's confused. David's a leader: He's taken charge; he's in survival mode, but he's struggling with: What's God's part; what's my part, and he's making some really bad judgment calls. And this is part of what he's going to have to learn before God can put him on the throne in Israel.

Oh, by the way, there are a number of psalms that were written out of the incidents in these chapters—just kind of keeping you posted on those if you are interested. This whole situation where David pretends to be a madman: Out of this circumstance he wrote Psalm 34 and Psalm 56. Now starting in chapter 22, it's the story about what happens in the cave of Adullam and Psalm 57 and Psalm 142 were written out of this cave part of the story.

> **So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard *of it*, they went down there to him. Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.** (1 Sam. 22:1-2)

This is about halfway back between Gath and Bethlehem. So they kind of meet halfway in this cave; they must have somehow organized a meeting point. It would make sense that David's family would have to flee. Saul is now just completely nutty. I'd make the case he's now struggling with mental illness; he's become so paranoid, so fearful, he's out of control, and so it would make sense that he would wipe out every one of David's relatives, so they needed to get out of town. But then, also, kind of those that had lost their way, those that were in trouble, those that weren't fitting in society—kind of the misfits and losers and strugglers—decide that this may be a chance, a second chance. "Let's side up with David," so all of the strugglers and trouble-makers are now on David's team and so David has about four hundred men that have gathered together with him. Verse 3:

> **And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come *and stay* with you until I know what God will do for me." Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.** (Vs. 3-5)

So they leave the cave; they go all the way down below the Dead Sea, come up in Moab and there David drops off his mom and dad. So the logical question would be: Why Moab? The answer is two-fold: One is because he knows Saul won't go into Moab looking for them. But second of all you remember David's father, Jesse, is the grandson of Ruth, the Moabites. So Jesse is part Moabite; David is part Moabite; without question they have family there. So it makes sense that David's mom and dad would go and stay with relatives because of the danger back in the land of Israel. David and company leave there and they find a stronghold. The Hebrew word is *metsuda* which is the word by which we get the word Masada. Almost all scholars believe that's where they ended up—the stronghold there—is Masada which is right on the edge of the Dead Sea. Last year when many of us went to Israel, we actually spent about a half a day at Masada. It's really quite a remarkable place—certainly a place where you could feel fortified. You could see if anyone was coming; at least for a time period they would feel quite safe. But then word comes from Gad the prophet that they are not safe there anymore. They need to move, so they move up to Judah to the forest of Hereth.

One interesting note about Gad: Gad must have come with the group of strugglers that came down and became part of the four hundred men. Gad at this moment—just kind of picture him at Masada, wondering if he will survive—could not have possibly known he would actually live to see David anointed king; he would live through the entire reign of David. He would live into the reign of Solomon, and he would be present when the temple of Solomon was dedicated to the Lord. So it's really an interesting perspective. At this point he's got to wonder: *Will I even live?* and he will live to see some of the most glorious future for the nation of Israel.

So before we go on, we're going to throw a map up on the screen—and sorry for turning my back on you, but I have to point to the middle map or everybody can't see. So this is Gibeah of Saul right here; so this is Ramah where Samuel is. This is Gibeah of Saul. This is Nob. So that's about three to five miles. So that's where Ahimelech is and then David leaves and goes all the way to the coastal plain. This is Gath, one of the five major cities of the Philistines. This is the whole "madman" episode. Then they leave. So if you look from Nob to Gath—that's twenty-five miles—you can see this whole area is relatively small geographically. So about half way back to Bethlehem, which is there, is the cave of Adullam. From there they go all they way down below the Dead Sea to Mizpah of Moab, all the way back up to Masada which is right here on the edge of the

Dead Sea and then all the way up to the forest of Hereth, which is in the land of Judah. So that gives you a little bit of a perspective on the map and all these different locations.

Then starting in verse 6, it's kind of a "meanwhile back at the ranch". So while all of this is happening with David, what is happening with Saul? Saul is becoming a madman. He's becoming a very evil man.

> **Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered.** (So that's probably why they moved from Masada to the forest) **Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes *a covenant* with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as *it is* this day."** (Vs. 6-8)

So Saul is back in Gibeah; he's under a shade tree on the height (basically saying this is the place where he would hold court, spear in hand.) You have to imagine all of his servants around him have no idea he's become so predictable in what he's about to do. And then Saul kind of goes into this desire to win the influence of his servants. You remember Saul is a Benjamite. When Saul was anointed to be the first king, I talked about the tribe of Benjamin. They have a very colorful history —you might say they were on the wrong side of the tracks. So now to be in power was kind of a big deal. So he's saying to his fellow Benjamites, "Do you think the son of Jesse would give you vineyards? Do you think the son of Jesse would give you crops...would give you farmland? Do you think he would put you in charge?" Basically he's trying to somehow manipulate or influence his fellow Benjamites to be loyal to him, because clearly he now fears that David is lurking somewhere in the shadows and is going to kill him. So then he goes into this thing that: "Nobody loves me. Nobody cares about me. Nobody cares enough about me to tell me that my son entered into a covenant with the son of Jesse." You know they're probably thinking there's no way we're going to tell you. You've turned into some sort of a madman. You would kill Jonathan; you would kill David. Then Saul says, "Nobody even felt sorry for me or told me that my son had so stirred up the son of Jesse that now he's waiting to ambush me." So Saul's having a bit of pity party; he's trying to get the servants to vote for him. "You know I'll give you all this stuff if you just stay loyal to me," because he's fearful David's about to kill him. You get this sense he's constantly living in fear. Well, then, who then sees the opportunity to step forward and this is his moment? Answer: verse 9:

> **Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. He inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."** (Vs. 9-10)

So Doeg comes forth and he sees this as his moment. Now there's question as to whether or not David inquired of the Lord from Ahimelech. This may not seem like a significant matter to us; but the priest was only to inquire of the Lord for *the king*. The ordinary people couldn't come to the priest and ask that. So Doeg seems to be lying about that because he knows that will really get Ahimelech and David in trouble. Verse 11:

Then the king sent someone to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as *it is* this day?" (Vs. 11-13)

You'd have to imagine this was just kind of shocking news to Ahimelech. He doesn't know what Saul's talking about. Suddenly he's being accused of conspiring with David and again you get this sense that Saul has become so paranoid that he's just living in fear every day that around the next corner David is lying in wait and he's going to ambush him and he's going to kill him.

Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house? Did I *just* begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair." (Vs. 14-15)

So clearly Ahimelech has no idea what's going on. This is all just confusing to him. He doesn't know if this is some sort of a trap or what? Very delicately he supports David. David has been honorable; David has been faithful. David is the king's son-in-law. David was the captain of your body guards. And then he denies ever having inquired of the Lord for David. Now scholars go two different directions here. Some think David did inquire and Doeg was telling the truth; and so what Ahimelech is saying in verse 15 is, "*Did I just begin to inquire of God now?"* Meaning, "I've done this all along; you knew that. I didn't just start." To me that doesn't really make sense. We aren't told that David inquired of the Lord. It seems likely Doeg is lying and so if you notice the word *just* is in italics which tells you that's not in the Hebrew; it's added. If you take it out, I think it's correct: Ahimelech is saying, "Did I begin to inquire of God for him today?" In other words, he has been faithful and loyal to the king. He only does this for the king. "Do you think I all of a sudden started doing this for David now?" And he clearly says, "Absolutely not!" So he's begging Saul not to do anything to him or to the rest of the family. I think he gets the sense he's really in trouble now. Verse 16:

But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!" And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the Lord to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD. Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep *he struck* with the edge of the sword. (Vs. 16-19)

There is a psalm written out of this—Psalm 52—which is the psalm about this absolutely horrific moment in Saul's reign. I mentioned several weeks ago that when bad leaders have position and power, they can do a lot of damage. History records this has been true over and over and over again. Now you have more than that. Now you have an evil leader who still has position and power and he can do a significant amount of damage—and he does. This is absolutely horrific. This is one of the most horrific moments in the Old Testament. It is so far over the line that even

Saul's own soldiers won't do it! He tells them to do it and they won't! They just refuse. So the only one left is the pagan—the Edomite—Doeg. He sees this as his moment and in cold blood he slaughters eighty-five priests in their priestly robes. If that isn't enough, then he goes to the city of Nob and he slaughters men, women, children, infants, and all the animals. It is just an absolutely horrific moment in Israel's history.

God asked Saul to do something very similar. As a matter of fact the language is almost identical to the evil, wicked Amalekites, and Saul refused. He wouldn't do that to evil, wicked people for judgment but now he's willing to do it to innocent people—the priests of God, families, women, children, and infants. It just shows you now how evil and mentally ill Saul has become.

There are evil people in positions of power around the world who, this very day, are doing similar behaviors to Christians in the East, Middle East and other places in the world. This kind of horrific blood-shed continues in our lifetime and most of it is targeted toward Christians. Verse 20:

> **But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about the *death* of every person in your father's household. Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me."** (Vs. 20-23)

So one son escapes, finds David, and tells David what's happened. One detail is now David will have traveling with him a priest and so David can inquire of the Lord, so we will see what happens in the chapters to come. But the other significant detail is David now realizes when he went to Nob, he put the entire city at risk. He should have known better. And when Doeg saw him and reported to Saul, he should have known Saul would slaughter the city. David is realizing, "I have made some foolish choices and this is my fault," and he owns that. This is an absolutely horrific moment and David bears some responsibility and he knows it.

Where this story goes, we will have to see in the weeks to come but this is one of those sections where it's like, what could this possibly have to do with us? I agree. It's very difficult. I think what the story is telling us is this is the moment in David's life when David is going through the wilderness school of leadership. David is very sincere. He's a man after God's own heart. He's wanting to do the right thing. I don't think that's in question. But he needs to remember: Where is God in all of this? So there are these subtle reminders with the bread and with the sword of Goliath and with the song the ladies sang, and David is starting to learn that. But in this part of the story, he's made some very bad decisions, probably well intended. He's a leader. He's a problem solver. He's a survivor. He's a street-smart guy. But it has cost people their lives. He had to fake being insane which certainly can't be what God wanted. A whole city now has been violently put to death and David is realizing, "I have to trust God; I have to surrender to God. I have to figure out what's God's part and what's my part, and how to do we do this together?"

It is entirely possible that David could end up being like Saul. To prevent that God is going to take David through the wilderness school of leadership—roughly ten years in the wilderness fleeing from Saul, where David is going to be broken again and again and again. He is going to struggle; he is going to feel pain; he is going to be broken; he is going to have to surrender. He's going to reach out to God. Somehow, someway, in the school of leadership he's going to have to figure out: What does it mean to trust God? What does it mean to surrender to God? And what is God's part and what is my part? And how do we do this together?

I really wish this morning I could tell you that the way to figure this out, is a 1, 2, 3 formula, check off the boxes, have a lovely day! It isn't like that. I think it is true to say, oftentimes if God is going to use you greatly, He has to allow you to be wounded deeply. There is no other way to learn some of these lessons. We have to figure out in the wilderness of life, what does it mean to trust God? What does it mean to surrender to God? What does it mean to be dependent on God? What does it mean to lead for God? Part of the dynamic of being a spiritual leader is: I have to be a good follower. I'm not in charge. Jesus is in charge. So to be a good leader, I have to be a good follower and what exactly does that mean?

I don't think you learn it in a book. I don't think you learn it by studying about it. You tend to learn it best in the wilderness. I have no doubt that some of you here this morning would say, "I think right now I'm in *Wilderness School*. I don't understand my life right now. I don't understand why these things are happening. It confuses me; it hurts me. I'm just trying to do the right thing. Where is God in all this?" And you may find yourself in God's wilderness school of leadership. God is trying to teach you: What does it mean to trust Him? What does it mean to depend on Him? What does it mean to surrender to Him in the most difficult moments of life?

At this moment in the story, this could not have made any sense to David. David has tried to do the right thing and this is now so difficult, so hurtful, so confusing—and it is going to be that way for ten years in the wilderness. David could not have possibly known that this would be the wilderness training necessary in order to end up being the greatest king in the history of Israel. It is entirely possible that God wants to use you greatly, but to do that He may have to allow you to be hurt deeply and in the wilderness, sometimes, all you can do is just trust Him.

Our Father we are reminded by the story this morning that sometimes You allow us time in the wilderness that's very confusing and very painful to teach us what we need to know in order that You might use us greatly. God, I pray for my brothers and sisters here this morning who right now feel like they are in that wilderness. God, speak to their hearts. Remind them with the bread of Your Presence, with the trophies that are reminders that You have been faithful in the past, the lyrics of the songs that remind them of what You have done in the past, all to remind them that You will be faithful today and tomorrow. God, give us the courage and the faith we need to trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen

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