

1 Samuel 20

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Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 00] That's what we're going to be looking at tonight, it's page 243. We've been going through the book of 1 Samuel in our evening services over the last few months and seen God's work through raising up the prophet Samuel first, and then we've seen sort of the rise and fall of Saul, Israel's first king, and we've seen David more recently come on the scene as God's chosen and anointed, the future king of Israel.

But now, more recently, Saul has been plotting against David and opposing him. I wonder if you've ever been in a situation where it feels like the world is against you, where the people around you are out to get you.

Maybe you have a fault-finding boss or professor who seems to be constantly criticizing you, constantly ignoring your request for help, trying to fire you or fail you.

Maybe you've been in a situation where you don't trust the people that you're living with. You feel like you wonder if they're stealing from you. They talk behind your back. They undermine you.

They accuse you. Perhaps you've been betrayed by a friend or a family member. Maybe you've been in a situation where someone literally wants to hurt you, where you've literally had to relocate for your own physical safety.

[1 : 35] Maybe you just feel alone and isolated. You know, when it feels like the world is against you, when people in authority over you can't be trusted, where do you turn? This is a situation that David was in at the beginning of this passage tonight.

In the last two chapters, Saul, who is both the king of Israel, the ruler, and also David's boss, David worked in King Saul's court. Saul has tried to pin him to the wall with a spear on three separate occasions.

Saul set him up by sending him out to fight against the Philistines, hoping that they would kill him, giving him no military support. Saul spoke to his son and his servants and told them to kill David.

Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him all night and kill him in the morning. So David's on the run. And at the beginning of this chapter, David goes to the one person that he knows he can trust.

Now surprisingly, this person is also King Saul's son, Jonathan. What we'll see in this chapter is Jonathan's loyalty to David.

[2 : 54] His steadfast, sacrificial loyalty to David. And this chapter is one of the most amazing stories of friendship, of brotherhood, of loyalty, anywhere in the Bible.

So I want to walk us through the story. It's pretty long, so I'm going to read some of it and summarize other parts. And then I'm going to ask us what can we take away from this picture of loyalty and friendship.

So verse 1, David fled from Naoth and Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father that he seeks my life?

In other words, is there any rhyme or reason to what Saul is doing? Is there anything that I need to understand? Is there anything I can do to avoid making him mad at me?

Now at first, Jonathan's a little bit naive. Verse 2, he said to him, Far from it you shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. And why should my father hide this from me?

[3 : 58] It is not so. But David vowed again, saying, Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes. And he thinks, Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.

But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death. Jonathan said to David, Whatever you say, I will do it for you.

So David then proposes a plan for Jonathan to sound out Saul's motives at the king's monthly dinner party while David remains safely in hiding for a day or two.

Verse 8, David says, Deal kindly with your servant. For you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. Now flip back a page for just a second to chapter 18 and verse 3.

It says, Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David and his armor.

[5 : 05] And even his sword and his bow and his belt. Now that might sound a little odd. You might be wondering, What exactly is this covenant between David and Jonathan?

In modern times, some people have speculated, perhaps Jonathan and David had, perhaps there was a sexual dimension to this covenant between Jonathan and David.

But that's actually not what's going on at all. There's nothing sexual going on between them. What is going on is that Jonathan was the king's son.

Which meant he was in line as the heir to the throne. He would receive the power and authority that belonged to his father, King Saul.

But Jonathan also knew that God had said to Saul, Saul, you have disobeyed me. And so I am not going to let your kingdom continue.

[6 : 08] And God had instead chosen David to replace Saul as the future king of Israel. And Jonathan knew this because Samuel had proclaimed it as the prophet of God. And Jonathan says, You know what?

I'm going to be loyal to what God says. Even when it conflicts with my own self-interest and my father's plans for my life.

I'm going to be loyal to what God says, even if it means giving up everything that belongs to me. And so that's why Jonathan takes off his royal robe and gives David his armor and all the symbols of his authority.

He was symbolically transferring his royal and military authority to David and saying, It belongs to you because God has chosen you. Now Jonathan and David do express deep affection for each other.

It says their souls were knit together in loyalty. At the end of this chapter, chapter 20, they embrace each other and weep when they part.

[7 : 16] Their brothers, their comrades, their friends. And you know, just as a side point, deep affection is part of God's plan, not just for married couples, but also for same-sex friendships.

You know, God didn't, in particular, God did not design men to be loners who never express any emotion to each other.

God designed us to flourish in bonds of brotherhood, as a band of brothers. And with brotherly and sisterly love towards one another.

As we're bound together by a common pursuit of God's purposes in our lives. So that's what we see with David and Jonathan, that they're bound together by a common pursuit of God's purposes in their lives, by their loyalty and their friendship.

And Jonathan being willing to sacrifice his own position and his own future for the sake of what God had said. And God's plan for David. So, Jonathan's pledged allegiance to David as the future king of Israel.

[8 : 23] And Jonathan stands by his word to protect him even when David is in mortal danger. Now go back to chapter 20. Go down to verse 18. Jonathan and David work out a signal.

Basically, David's going to go in, Jonathan says, verse 18, Tomorrow's the new moon, the monthly dinner party, and you will be missed because your seat will be empty. On the third day, go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself.

And basically, Jonathan says, you go into a field, and here's our signal. We're going to have this signal. I'm going to shoot three arrows. And you're basically either going to know it's either going to be all clear or run for your life.

And they're creating this signal so that nobody is able to see, that they're basically to protect David.

So that nobody potentially even have to see them communicating. Anyway, so verse 24, David hides in the field.

[9 : 27] Jonathan goes to the dinner. That day, nothing happens. Saul doesn't say anything. Second day, Saul says, verse 27, he says, Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal? Either yesterday or today.

Now already, in the way that Saul speaks of David, there's a hint of his attitude. He calls him the son of Jesse. In other words, he doesn't even call him by his real name. That son of a farmer.

Verse 28, Jonathan replies, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. He said, let me go. Our clan holds a sacrifice in the city. My brothers commanded me to be there.

So now if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brothers. For this reason, he hasn't come to the king's table. In verse 30, everything comes to a climax. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan.

And he said to him, you son of a perverse and rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.

[10 : 37] Therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die. We see here the darkness of Saul's heart.

His murderous rage. Not just at David, but at Jonathan. For defending David. We see his blame shifting. His jealousy and envy.

And his desperate, fearful desire to cling on to all the power that he has, even if it means killing one of his most loyal and faithful servants. But you know, even more than that, we see what's at stake for Jonathan in being loyal to David.

And the answer is absolutely everything. Jonathan's future career. The approval of his parents. His inherited identity. His very own life.

Everything's at stake. And yet Jonathan is unhesitating and unwavering in his loyalty to David. At the beginning of chapter 19, Saul was angry at David.

[11 : 51] Jonathan tried to step in the middle as a mediator. He sort of got Saul to calm down and got them to be happy and agree together.

Saul agreed not to harm him. But you know, there wasn't any possibility for him to do that anymore. He had to choose. One side or the other. He had to choose to be loyal to Saul and kill and basically abandon David to be killed.

Or to be loyal to David at the risk of his own life. And Jonathan completely identified himself with David.

Jonathan said to Saul, but why should he be put to death? What has he done? Jonathan stands up for righteousness. Instead of holding on to his own self-interest.

Even when everything was on the line, he didn't back down. And so Saul began to treat Jonathan the same way that he had treated David. He throws a spear at him to strike him and kill him.

[12 : 59] Just as he did to David. Basically all the anger and rage that was directed against David was now directed against Jonathan as well. And Jonathan left the king's table. He could no longer have a safe place in his own home.

Now what do we take away from this story of Jonathan's sacrificial loyalty to David? First, I think Jonathan and David's relationship is a model for our human relationships.

Human beings, we were meant to flourish in relationships like Jonathan and David. Relationships characterized by loyalty and steadfast love.

You know, we live in a commercial world. Right? A consumer world where you pay for everything. Right? We have all these sort of short-term contractual arrangements.

Where we enter into relationships with one another as long as it benefits us. Sometimes that's even how people approach friendships.

[14 : 17] Or dating relationships. I'll enter into this relationship as long as it seems to be benefiting me. And then I'll move on. When it doesn't.

Now the Bible is very realistic. Proverbs 20, verse 6 says, Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find.

Let me ask you, is there someone like Jonathan in your life? Is there someone who stood by you even when everyone else has turned against you or left you alone?

Maybe it's a parent. Maybe it's a spouse. Maybe it's a sibling. Maybe it's a friend. Maybe it's a brother or sister in Christ.

If you have someone like that in your life, thank God. Thank God for putting that person in your life. who will stand by you and be loyal to you and take care of you even in your darkest hour.

[15 : 28] Let me also challenge us. Have you been that person to someone else when everyone else has turned against them or left them alone? Dale Ralph Davis was one of the commentators on this passage.

He said something which I think is very wise and very challenging. He says, Life does not consist in achieving your goals, but in fulfilling your promises. You know, we live in a society that defines success by achieving your goals.

But the Bible defines success in God's eyes as living up to your promises. So Jonathan and David's relationship is a model for human relationships.

For friendships. But also, Jonathan and David's relationship is more than that. It's also a picture of our relationship with God. On the one hand, God requires our undivided devotion, our loyalty, our steadfast love.

Love, what's the first and greatest commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. Without holding anything back.

[16 : 46] Jesus Christ calls for undivided loyalty. He says, no man can serve two masters. You can't serve God and money.

He says, don't be anxious about your life, about clothes, about food. The nations of the world seek after all these things, but as for you, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

He also says, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Strong words. Just like Jonathan's sacrifice in order to be loyal to David, God's anointed king, we're called to sacrifice in order to be loyal to Jesus.

You know, sometimes following Jesus will be unpopular. You might lose the approval of some of your peers or even your parents or extended family.

[18 : 05] There's a guy who went to college with me. He became a Christian his freshman year. He was from another country, from another religious background.

And when he became a Christian and told his mother, his mother threatened to commit suicide. You're dishonoring the family. You're abandoning the religion of our ancestors.

You're rejecting the way we brought you up. She prohibited him from going to church or Christian meetings. He was patient and for a while he honored her request.

In the meantime, the Christians he knew would come to his dorm room and pray with him. He wasn't going to any Christian meetings, but the Christians came to him. It's a good thing to do.

But eventually he decided that since he believed, since he had trusted in Jesus Christ, that he couldn't stay, he needed to meet together with other Christian believers.

[19 : 15] And so he went back to church. And he, it took a long time and he always did what he could to honor his parents. He was an excellent student. He was really a genius, more than almost anyone else I've known.

He was patient and honoring toward his parents, but his loyalties were first and foremost to Jesus Christ. Gradually his parents became more open to learning.

What was this thing that had made such an effect on his life? In our story tonight, Jonathan, he was on track for a high-level leadership position, the highest of all, to be the king of Israel.

And the rug was pulled out from under him for no fault of his own. It was his father, Saul, who disobeyed and messed everything up. And yet he wasn't envious.

When God chose David, he gladly gave his full loyalty to the person that God had appointed to take his place. It's pretty amazing. It's not what people normally do.

[20 : 35] In the New Testament, this is exactly what happened to John the Baptist. Right? He was called by God to be a prophet. He gathered a group of followers. He was the leader of a movement.

movement. But when he saw Jesus, he said, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He says, I'm the voice of one calling in the desert.

Prepare the way for the Lord, but he's the Lord. And so he said, he must become greater and I must become less. John the Baptist said, don't follow me anymore.

Follow him. There's a cost of following Jesus. But you know, there's also an even greater reward.

Because this passage isn't just about the cost of being loyal to Jesus. It also is about the cost that Jesus paid to be loyal to us.

[21 : 38] You know, most of this chapter is about Jonathan's steadfast love for David. When David was in trouble, but actually later on, the roles would be reversed.

Because David would rise to power and Jonathan and his descendants would be completely vulnerable and powerless.

Go to verse 14. There's this speech that Jonathan makes from verse 12 to 17 that sort of sticks out in the middle of the story.

And I didn't read it as we were reading the story. I skipped over it. But if you read the story, these verses stand out. And so it's what I want to end with.

Particularly, go to the end of verse 13. Well, I'll read the whole thing. Verse 12. Jonathan said to David, the Lord, the Lord, the God of Israel, be witness. When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you?

[22 : 46] But should it please my father to do you harm, the Lord do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away that you may go in safety. So basically, he promises his loyalty to David.

May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. Then verse 14. He says, If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord that I may not die.

And do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth. And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David saying, May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies.

And Jonathan made David swear again. By his love for him. You see, when David would one day ascend to the throne, everyone who was a potential rival was liable to be eliminated.

In the ancient world, that's the way it normally went. There's even examples of this that happened in other places in the Old Testament. Some king comes to power, a new dynasty.

[23 : 52] What does he do? He kills off every male associated with the old dynasty. He cleans house. Fires everyone.

Kills them. That's what they did back then. The Bible talks about a lot of things not approving them. It just, that's how it happened. But it was different between David and Jonathan's household.

David says, As you have been loyal to me, I will be loyal to you. And you will have a place in my house forever. And in 2 Samuel chapter 9, David keeps his promise.

By then, Jonathan has died, but David takes care of Jonathan's descendants, of his family. He doesn't wipe them out, even though they were part of Saul's family.

Potential rivals. He takes care of them and gives them an honored seat in his kingdom. And, just like David, Jesus Christ extends to us his steadfast love, his loyalty, by including us in his kingdom.

[25 : 13] You know, this is how God is described in the Old Testament. Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, same words that are used in verse 14 and 15. And this is how Jesus Christ is described in the New Testament, full of grace and truth.

Now, sometimes when we hear that, we think, we think of truth as sort of an abstract thing. But it's the same idea, full of mercy, of grace, and full of truth and faithfulness because he keeps his word.

He holds to his word. And Jesus keeps his word to us. Now, earlier I quoted two verses from Jesus where Jesus talks about the cost of following him, but I actually only quoted half the verses because at the end of the verse, there's a promise.

So when Jesus says, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he also says, and all these things will be added to you as well. And when he says, whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me isn't worthy of me, he also says, whoever finds his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus is saying, whatever you have to give up to follow me, I'm going to give you something far better and far more enduring.

[26 : 41] Jesus said to his disciples, truly I say to you in the new world, when the son of man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

That's a promise to the twelve disciples. And then he gives a promise to every one of his followers who has had to leave something in order to follow him. He says, everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

You may need to give up, maybe a lot, to follow Jesus. I don't know what that's going to look like for each of you. But if you join yourself to Jesus, there's one thing that you will never lose.

You'll never lose a place in his kingdom, a place at his table, a place in his house, a place where you belong as part of his family forever. And there's a peace in knowing that you belong to him.

Go to the conclusion of chapter 20, verse 41 and 42. basically Jonathan goes out to the field, shoots the arrows, gives a signal to David that all is not well with Saul and that he needs to flee.

[28 : 17] As soon as the boy who had gone to fetch the arrows had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most.

Then Jonathan said to David, go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord saying, the Lord shall be between me and you and between my offspring and your offspring forever.

And he rose and departed and Jonathan went into the city. We see a tearful parting of two close friends. David still running for his life, Saul still out to get him, he's still facing great trials and tribulations, his future is still completely uncertain, at least from his own experience.

experience. But Jonathan says, go in peace, because the Lord is between us forever. Have you ever felt like the world is against you, you don't know who you can trust, but there's at least one person in the world that you know you can trust, and because of that person being there, you have peace.

in the midst, in the midst of all the turmoil, in the midst of all the uncertainty, there's a peace in knowing that someone is there for you, and isn't going to leave you.

[29 : 35] And Jesus says, I am that person who will never leave you, who will never die, who will never betray you, more than anyone else in the world, because everyone else, at the very least, they'll one day die, and they won't be able to help you anymore, or they might move away, and circumstances might change, and sometimes people disappoint you, even closest friends.

But Jesus said to his disciples, I've told you these things so that in me, you might have peace. In the world, you'll have tribulation, but take heart, I've overcome the world.

So whatever trouble, you may be facing, whoever else may be against you, or seeking to undermine you, Jesus is offering you his friendship, his peace, his steadfast love.

And if you receive him, and if you trust him, he will never leave you, nor forsake you. Tonight, we're going to celebrate communion, where we see what Jesus sacrificed to bring us into his kingdom forever.

we're going to take the bread and the cup that remind us of Jesus' death on the cross, his body that was broken, his blood that was shed for us.

[31 : 10] It's a reminder of Jesus' steadfast love for us, the price that he paid, the sacrifice that he made, so that we could be included in his family, so that we could know his love, so that we could be forgiven.

It also calls us every time we take the bread and the cup, it calls us to reaffirm our loyalty to him as well. You know, the apostle Paul says, he says, before you take the bread and the cup, examine yourself.

And it's good to do that, periodically. The Bible says if you're living in what the Bible calls unrepentant sin, that means if there's some era of your life where you're shutting God out, and you're saying, I don't want you, I'm not going to listen to you.

Don't come in. Paul warns us, don't take the bread and the cup with that kind of attitude. But if that's what God is showing you, if God is showing you some part of your life where you've been disloyal to him, where you've fallen short or failed, this is an opportunity to not just stay in a place of guilt and shame.

Don't just stay isolated and feeling far away from God, draw near to him. Because Jesus has drawn near to you and he is drawing near to you tonight. So Jesus is inviting you to admit your sin, admit where you've fallen short, ask his forgiveness, receive that promise of forgiveness, and receive his renewing power through the Holy Spirit.

[32 : 55] And when you take the bread, remember just as surely as you hold that piece of bread in your hand and put it in your mouth, you can know that surely, that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins if you turn and trust in him.

So if you're trusting Jesus, come and be renewed. If you've fallen short, we're just going to take a moment of silence.

If you need to confess the sin to the Lord, if there's something God's brought to mind, if you need to renew your commitment to Christ, let's just take a moment of silence to do that.