

1 Samuel 24 Sermon

24 When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, ‘David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.’ 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to look for David and his men in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. 3 He came to the sheepfolds beside the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself.[a] Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. 4 The men of David said to him, ‘Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, “I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.”’ Then David went and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul’s cloak. 5 Afterwards David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul’s cloak. 6 He said to his men, ‘The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the Lord’s anointed.’ 7 So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way. 8 Afterwards David also rose up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, ‘My lord the king!’ When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. 9 David said to Saul, ‘Why do you listen to the words of those who say, “David seeks to do you harm”? 10 This very day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared[b] you. I said, “I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is the Lord’s anointed.” 11 See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak, and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life. 12 May the Lord judge between me and you! May the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. 13 As the ancient proverb says, “Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness”; but my hand shall not be against you. 14 Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A single flea? 15 May the Lord therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and you. May he see to it, and plead my cause, and vindicate me against you.’ 16 When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, ‘Is that your voice, my son David?’ Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, ‘You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. 18 Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands. 19 For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away? So may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. 20 Now I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 21 Swear to me therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my father’s house.’ 22 So David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Introduction. Have you struggled with the way God seems to take a long time answering prayer, even when it is for something God wants for you?. Why does God think patience matters so much?

Well we know patience forms us into the sort of people we need to be, about learning wisdom and not taking matters into your own hands.

Studies show that children who have learned patience to better in all areas of life. So don’t be surprised that times in your life feel like wilderness, that you need patience of a saint. You do. It is the making of you. And when you look at the time it takes - isn’t that a waste? No.

And even when it seems like what God has for you is in reach don’t grasp at it, especially when it means forcing it or taking it by illicit means.

But there is more than that going on in this story. Something much more sophisticated. It is actually about one of the most important and little understood aspects of Christianity, and will lead us to turn the other cheek, love those that hate us and pray for our enemies.

So the story. At the end of long years on the run and in the wilderness. Remember that this is in the aftermath of Sauls slaughter of the priesthood and their city. He is unambiguously corrupt and evil.

Saul is literally delivered into David hands. Saul pauses his army to go and ‘cover his feet’. Take a comfort break. But by a crazy twist of fate or providence David and his 400 men are hiding deep in there.

Imagine the scene, furious gesturing and trying not to make a noise.

v4 *The men of David said to him, ‘Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, “I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.”’*

So what is David going to do? The Lord *did* give him into his hand - see v10 But the critical question is “*to do to him as it seems good.*”

He sneaks up and cuts off a corner of Sauls Robe.

And then as Saul leaves he speak out. v8 ‘My lord the king!’

And so after all these years, David and Saul come face to face

v9 *David said to Saul, ‘Why do you listen to the words of those who say, “David seeks to do you harm”? 10 This very day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared you.*

David could have ended this with violence, and it would have been okay.

And given the context - this is a bronze age text. It is exact what you and they would expect. But he ended it in peace and that is an unprecedented moment.

Well it is not because he is naturally non-violent.

Look at Davids anger. v12 *May the Lord judge between me and you! May the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. 13 As the ancient proverb says, “Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness”*

The years in the wilderness have given David the capacity to hear wisdom. I think that is the problem with youth, it is amazing but we think we know best. (When I was 18 joke...)

Note the ancient proverb. This isn't a bible proverb (they haven't been written yet). All wisdom is Gods wisdom, It is wisdom from God passed down.
"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

David might have been justified in killing Saul, but it would leave a legacy of division and violence. David could not have united the nation if he had won his crown by violence.

It is insight into when Jesus says Turn the other cheek, Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.
The kingdom of God isn't about triumphing over enemies, it is about winning them over.

No bigger example of this than the slow work of God. of the kingdom of God. All the time in history have people had the opportunity to advance the kingdom by force. Crusades, inquisition, religion wars in Europe, forced conversion of native Americans. And how much hatred and legacy of bitterness and division has this left.

Think of other examples of this. The slow work of finding common ground in politics, giving people time to understand, instead of the quick fix of fear, division and polarisation.

The desire for victory and vengeance - think of the bombing of Iraq after 9/11 and its consequences. Or in relationships - the desire to win an argument by any means rather than win the person over. God's way is to win people over. Slowly, prayerfully patiently.

And Saul gets the significance of this.

v18 Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands. 19 For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away?

Returning hatred with Love, violence with kindness is unprecedented and still profoundly radical. Loving your enemies It is the strong way, not the weak way. It is the way that believes that God can change people and hopes for true justice.

It is one of the most profound Christian ideas. And of course it leads to the Cross.

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Conclusion - How this ends

v20 Even Saul confesses David as king. But even then he won't do the right thing and step down from power. He goes away, but his days are drawing to a close.

Ch31 The corrupt king Saul falls on his sword and lies dead on a battlefield. The nation is united behind the newly crowned and righteous king, and Israel begins a golden age that is celebrated and remembered to this day.

How will our story end? Well we must inhabit this wilderness for some time yet, but the corrupt powers of this world will be defeated, those deceived by them will be won over and every knee will bow before the righteous king of love, and we will see the dawn of a golden age without end.

And isn't that worth patience and time in the wilderness? So turn the other cheek, choose love over hate, pray for your enemies and be part of slow work of God in the peaceable kingdom of the Shepherd king..