



The Good News Brook

1 Samuel 29:1-30:31

Grace Church | 5.9.21

Here is what we can say about Mother's Day, inasmuch it is a joyful national holiday celebrating something God created:

Not all of us can be mothers. Some of us, because we are men, so that is no mystery there. But some of us want to be mothers, and are not yet, or want to be mothers, and will never be. There is hardship there that we want to realize and acknowledge. God does not call all women to be mothers, even if they desire it. But being a woman is not equal to being a mother. It's much more than that, and in God's kindness he has chosen some for one task and some for another. So today we celebrate mothers, not to show we are less than for not being them, but because we are more because we have them. As it is, we owe at least our existence, and many of us much more, to our Mothers, who by the grace of God carried us to birth and nurtured us to life. Thank God for our mothers—here is one calling among many in God's kingdom—that is a noble and Christlike one. Being a mother, physically, and spiritually, is an echo of the tender and loving care of God. Amen.

This morning marks our last encounter with David in the wilderness. Next week we will conclude the tragedy of Saul, and then move on from this narrative. I want you to remember that the wilderness for David, as it was for Moses, as it was for the people of Israel, and as it was for Christ himself, was a time of testing and a time of proving. Before he is ready to step into his role as ruler of God's people, David must pass the test. David has been struggling so far, but today we have our final example: David has passed the test. By the conclusion of our story today, he will be ready.

What is so interesting is that the place where David is finally shown to us as ready to step into the kingship is a small brook at the end of our passage. It's name is Besor—when used as a verb in Hebrew, the name means “good news”. It's here, at the place where the gospel flows, where we get the clearest picture of the positive work of God in 1 Samuel. He has been bringing his chosen servant, his king, out of the wilderness through his miraculous providence, through trial after trial, to the gospel river. Don't you love that picture? And today, I want to show you how this last wilderness story gives us gospel news for all the places we have been in 1 Samuel—it shows us God's culminating work in bringing beauty for ashes and joy for mourning and good news out of the wilderness. So we have three kinds of “gospel”, three kinds of “good news” in this text, and all of



them will point us ultimately to the good news we have in Jesus Christ, our king who came out of the wilderness.

The Understated Gospel (For The Stuck) 29:1-11

First we see a theme that has been pervasive in 1 Samuel and is not coming to culmination: God's work is often understated. By understated I don't mean overwhelming or lacking glory, rather I mean subtle, sometimes unnoticed. This is the story of David in chapter 29.

Remember last week we left David on a cliffhanger. Achish, who has graciously offered him a place to live in exchange for what Achish believes to be raids against Israel, has informed David that he is calling in a favor. It's time to go to war against Israel, and David must join him. So **verse 1**, that is exactly what happens. The Philistines gathered *all* their forces. This was no mere skirmish, David was being called to total war against his people.

This is not a great place for David. He is stuck between a rock and a hard place, in a lose-lose situation. If he decides to fight for Achish against his own people, he becomes an enemy of God. any grab for power from Saul would be by force, using Israelites enemies against them. Not a smart move for a future king. But if David turns against Achish or refuses to aid him, then he is outnumbered in enemy territory and would pay with his life. For the first time, but not the last, in our text this morning, David is faced with a decision that will literally determine whether he lives or dies, and it doesn't appear there is an option where he has a high chance of living.

But he never has to make the decision. **Verses 2-3**, the Philistines commanders notice David and his Hebrew men. What is he doing here? In a great irony, Achish the Philistine defends David in a way Saul never did. Notice what he says in **verse 3**—I have found no fault in him to this day. Achish has been deceived, and the rest of the Philistines count him as blockheaded. This is David, they say! He cut off Goliath's head, and he will surely cut off ours if we give him the chance! This is the one who we sing songs about in elementary school, the great enemy of our people. We cannot take the chance in trusting him.

Achish, however, still trusts David. In **verse 6** he repeats again: "I have found no fault in you. But, rules are rules, David. I'm really sorry about this, but you have to go now, and do so peaceably, don't disturb the other Philistine lords." You can imagine the scene: David knows he is basically dead meat: either he will have to betray Achish or betray God and his people. And here is Achish, apologetically offering him the golden ticket out! I picture David having to restrain his jaw from hitting the floor. **Verse 8**, I suspect, is David's way of doubling down on his bluff, but also a way of determining if he has somehow upset Achish and is in possible danger. Again Achish affirms David's character, unaware that David has been tricking him this whole time. In **verse 9** he calls David an *angel*. But sorry David, it's out of my control.



Previously at the “Rock of Escape” in chapter 23, God miraculously saved David from Saul by the hands of the Philistines. Now he saves him again by the Philistines stubbornness, rescuing him from the wedge he created between the ultimate lose-lose situation. As Saul goes out of the cave of En-dor by the dark of night, David escapes in the morning in broad daylight with his reputation and his honor intact.

I want you to see the primary character of this chapter is not David, but Achish. Notice too the absence of God in this text. Where is the only time he is mentioned? **Verse 9**, Achish the pagan brings him up. Here we don’t find David praying and pleading with God—he barely has time to. He does not find his deliverance in the spiritual high of the temple or in the spiritual low of the cave, he finds it in the naivete of a brutish Philistine. David was stuck, but God wedged him out with artful and masterful sovereignty, as only God can.

So often this is how God works his greatest graces. When Jesus was faced with the accusations of his own people, just as Saul accused David, who was it that called him “without fault”? The pagan Pontius Pilate, ignorant of God’s plans. Through the hands of Achish, God rescued David. Through the hands of Pilate, God rescued us in Christ. Remember what Pilate does as he releases Jesus over to be crucified? He washes his hands. Don’t you see the irony? He is representing what will happen at the cross: the people of God will be washed clean. Pilate is the unknowing servant of the gospel, and even gives us a gospel picture as he does it. So Achish too is a servant of God, leading David to the gospel without him even realizing it. Both of these servants of the gospel are not righteous, but God uses all means for his glory. But if we are not careful, we will miss it. We will miss the fact that the gospel of Christ is often preached in subtle, understated ways. Sometimes he awes us with the severity of his grace, but more often that not he is using normal days and means to pull us in, to awe us by the details of his grace.

God is constantly getting you out of lose-lose situations. In your sin, you were stuck. Two choices were before you: strive to serve God religiously, and never have enough good works to be righteous before him, or serve your sin, leading you to enslavement separation from God. But God broke in, in Christ, and pulled you out. And if we aren’t careful, we forget. We miss it. We When you are stuck like David, look for the gospel in the understated places: In the normal conversation around the dinner table, in the gentle breeze of a cool day, and even in those who, like Achish, you would never expect to deliver to you the gospel.

The Relentless Gospel (For the Overwhelmed) 30:1-10

The sad reality of David’s story here is that it doesn't end on this note of deliverance. David and his men hike more than two days from the battlefield straight back to Ziklag where they have set up their home. On the third day, what do they find in **30:1**? To their horror, their city has been burned and all their women and children have been taken to be sold into slavery. **Verse 4**, you can feel their agony. Already tired from their near disaster with Achish, they step out of the frying pan and into the fire. The sorrow never lets up, they weep and lament until they collapse on the ground



with no tears left to cry. See how the text describes David in **verse 6**. He has just been saved from his brush with death, and now new enemies are knocking at his door: his own men, angry for what he has allowed, are *bitter* in soul and ready to stone him to death.

The constant emphasis in the Davidic psalms on enemies makes more sense now, doesn't it? David is overwhelmed. Surely this is the last straw. The raiders that have taken their women and children and their possessions are Amalekites, only still living because of Saul's disobedience in leaving some of them alive years earlier. The attack of this ancient enemy is as much Saul's fault as anyone else's, and you can imagine David's capacity for rage and bitterness. But while his men feel it, what does David do? **Verse 6**, he strengthens himself in God. From there he goes straight to Abiathar to consult God, and when he receives the answer, he strengthens his men to set out immediately to pursue this band of raiders.

David has not mentioned Yawheh since chapter 26, and he has not consulted God since chapter 23. In a very real sense, he has been lost, overwhelmed with the realities of the wilderness. He has been clever and cunning, yes, but his foot had almost slipped. He is close to letting the waves of hardships and sorrow wash over him. But he doesn't. Notice again **verse 6**, he strengthened himself in the Lord *his* God. Here it is again, the difference between David and Saul, Saul knows of God, David *knows* God. This is *his* God. What does it mean to strengthen ourselves in God? Remember back when David was in the cave in chapter 23, and Jonathan comes to him? The text told us Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God by reminding David of the promises of God. When we are overwhelmed, we remind ourselves of the promises of God in the gospel. We go to our priest, Jesus Christ, and we preach to ourselves the realities that all of God's promises find their yes in Jesus, and by faith we are united to Jesus. All his promises are ours because we are his.

This kind of good news overwhelms our being overwhelmed because of its relentless nature. Here is what I mean: God is pursuing David. He is doing it by testing him—David is lost, overwhelmed. So in his providence God sends wave after wave of trial—not to crush David, but so that David has no other choice but to be strengthened in God. Christian, God loves to send waves of hardship to your life—not because he wants you to suffer, but because he wants you to become so weak that you quit relying on yourself and instead strengthen yourself in him and his promises. He is relentless in this work: not one moment will God allow you to slip backwards. He is willing to send whatever it takes to bring you back to dependence on him. The gospel is so clearly telling us this: God poured out his love to the nth degree, a relentless stream of mercy flowing from the wounds of Christ.

And notice that when we are overwhelmed with this relentless love in the gospel, our demeanor changes. Before, David is distressed. After strengthening himself in the promises of God, he himself is relentless. Finding a band of raiders in the wilderness was not easy. They intentionally travelled fast, spreading their numbers out, so they could not be easily tracked or hunted. There was little hope David would ever see his family again> But God said he would, so he rounds up his weary men for a pursuit. The relentless Gospel changes us from overwhelmed and apathetic to courageous and full of faith. God did the unthinkable: leaving the 99 sheep to get the 1. His relentlessness is the gospel when you are overwhelmed with sorrow, pain, and struggle.



The Extravagant Gospel (For The Weary) 30:11-31

The rest of the text portrays David as a man on a mission. He is not passively receiving the salvation of God through Achish, nor is he distressed and on the verge of being the victim of a murderous mutiny. Rather, he goes on the offensive. Along the way, we see several characters who can be described as *weary*.

First, a third of David's men are too tired to continue. They come to Besor, the stream of good news, but it's not good news yet. After marching for several days straight and crying their eyes out, they cannot go any longer. Secondly, they find an Egyptian who is on the verge of starvation, dehydration, and death. He has been left by his master, an Amalekite, because he was too sick to continue. The Amalekite treated him like property, but David retreats him with dignity. He clothes and feeds him, weary as he is.

Notice how both of these weary examples receive good news. First, the Egyptian gets good news that he has found water and food. Someone has provided for him in his weariness. But also, once he gives David and his men information about the Amalekites that will lead to their destruction, he receives a promise of life and freedom in **verse 15**. For no good deed he has done, this Egyptian, cast off by his cruel master, has received grace upon grace.

I want you to see as well that this receiving of grace also brings about more grace. Without the Egyptian's intel, it was likely David would have never found the Amalekites. They sneak up on them the morning after they were eating and drinking and enjoying their victory. Through the weary Egyptian, notice the emphasis of the text. David's smaller force of four hundred men defeat a much larger force. They strike them down from twilight to evening, a whole day—and still four hundred remain, implying that there are much much more than that. And then **verse 18-20** is so important. Again and again, the text emphasizes *all*. There is totality here, extravagance. David's name too, is mentioned several times, "this is David's spoil" say the people, implying that his reputation has reached its full height again. He is ready for kingship. All of this extravagance, this totality of victory, because of one weary Egyptian who receives grace.

Secondly, David's weary men also receive undeserved grace. **Verse 21**, David returns from the battle to the gospel brook with gospel news. All the men have rested and now come out to meet him, ready to celebrate, ready to partake in the spoils of David. But there is a spoiler waiting, some *wicked and worthless fellows*. Notice what they say in **verse 22**. Perhaps they are greedy, perhaps they are proud—but either way, the text describes them rightly. They are not extravagant, they are not full of generosity and grace, like Eli's sons and like Nabal, they are described as *worthless*.

David will have none of this. Although these men did not fight in battle, they are just as much a part of this as anyone else. "They shall share alike" he decrees. The weary ones receive extravagant, undeserved grace. And this grace of David brings about more grace, just as the Egyptian did. What



is David's rationale for giving equal spoils to the men who were too tired to continue? **Verse 23.** It's not your spoils. Although they claimed the spoils belonged to David, he knows who they really belong too. This has been given to us by God. This is God's extravagant blessing. How could we not be generous with what God has generously given us? See, the weary baggage watchers give us an opportunity to revel in the extravagant grace of God. David attributes his victory rightly. And without the weary baggage-watchers, they may have never attributed the victory to God. Not only that, but David's generosity doesn't stop with these men, it extends further. **Verses 26-31** give us list of elders of Judah, places where David and his men had roamed, trying to drive out Israel's enemies. These places had no doubt been likewise plundered at different time. David is restoring to them what has been lost, out of his own spoils. Grace breeds more grace, gospel breeds more gospel.

So again, amongst the backdrop of weariness, notice the grace of God in this passage:

It is extravagant grace that they come across the Egyptian.

It is extravagant grace that they rescue every single woman and child.

It is extravagant grace that they recover all of their possessions taken.

It is extravagant grace that the "baggage watchers" receive the same cut as the warriors.

It is extravagant grace that the plundered receive the spoils as a gift.

There are no doubt two places we might feel this morning. First, we might identify with the men who followed David into battle. They were tired too, but they pushed through. We've been battling our sin for so long, we've been faithful to Christ's church when others have left, don't we deserve the lion's share of the blessings of God? Aren't we more deserving of grace! But God's word does not have kind words for this kind of attitude. It can easily seep into our hearts, but it is deadly. It's Pharisaism, it makes us into white washed tombs: dead on the inside, clean on the outside. This is the trap of the older brother in the story of the prodigal son—we miss the opportunity to enjoy the extravagance of God's grace when we are jealous that the weary and weak receive it in equal measure to those who appear strong.

You may also be in the spot of the weary warriors. You feel like more often than not, your struggle behind while others go and get the kingdom glory. But you are not less than, you are not second rate. There is no Christian junior varsity. See, your weariness preaches to us the gospel of extravagant grace. Be careful not to use your weariness as a license for sin, but do not despise your weakness either. To be weary in the kingdom of God does not imply inferiority. Your share in the inheritance of life is beautiful—use your weakness, don't despise it. In the kingdom of God, watching the baggage is just as glorious as being out there on the front lines. This is all because of God's extravagant grace .

And friends, the gospel river of Besor teaches us a universal truth: God is not stingy with his grace. None of us are deserving. Sometimes we feel strong, sometimes we feel weary, but all of us were dead in sin. None of us were undeserving of the spoils that Christ purchased at the cross. They were his. He took back *all* of it, everything that sin and Satan thought they stole. None of it was lost



or ever will be, God suffered no loss of glory by the fall of man. And none of that glory we deserve, but the grace of God is so good and so extravagant! Jesus Christ is the great David, who picks us up off the road when we are starving and thrown off by our slavemaster Satan, and feeds us and frees us. He is one who leads us into battle and gives us his victory even when we are too tired to fight. And he is the one who restores to us all the lost years and lost blessings of our lives when we come to him, the friend of sinners.

This is David's last testing before becoming king. He is ready, and how is his readiness shown? At the brook *gospel* here is the gospel. Remember when God promised a king for Israel back in chapter 8? The people cried out for a king, and God said he would give them one. Here is what he said that wking would be marked by, the king after their own liking:

He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young me and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."

The kind of king we think we need is a king who takes, takes, and takes. But there is a different kind of king, a king that only God can bring, a king who is formed in the wilderness, a king who is marked not by his taking but his giving, a king who is not marked by hoarding the spoils of victory but by sharing them with the undeserving. David was a king like that, and so pointed to a future king who would come after. Jesus Christ is that true king, the generous king, the good news king. And if you are his, he is your king. Come and behold this king.

