

WHEN THE GROUND SHIFTS

What Faith Looks Like in the Dark

1 Samuel 30:6b-24

There are seasons in life when everything is working. And in those seasons, faith feels almost effortless.

You know what I mean. The marriage is strong. The children are healthy. The job is stable. The friendships are deep and dependable. You wake up on a Tuesday morning and there is coffee ready and light coming through the window and enough money in the account and enough time in the day – and without even consciously thinking about it, you find yourself grateful. You find yourself trusting. You find yourself saying with genuine ease, God is good. And you mean it. Because the evidence for it is everywhere you look.

In those seasons, faith is not hard. Trusting God when life is good is not a great spiritual achievement. It is almost the natural response to a life that is clearly being held together by God, the God who is paying attention. When the ground beneath you is firm, you don't spend much time thinking about the ground. You just walk.

And then comes the Ziklag moment.

Maybe you know exactly what I am talking about. Maybe the word Ziklag landed just now with a kind of recognition you were not expecting, because you are sitting in yours right now. Or maybe you have not arrived there yet – but you will. And I say that not to frighten you, but because the story we are in tells us plainly: Ziklag moments come.

- They come for the faithful and the unfaithful alike.
- They come for the spiritually mature and the spiritually young.
- They come without announcing themselves, without giving you time to prepare, without the courtesy of a warning.

A Ziklag moment is when the ground shifts.

It might be a phone call that changes everything. It might be a diagnosis. It might be a conversation you did not see coming, or a relationship you thought was solid that simply was not. It might be a betrayal. It might be a failure — your own failure, the kind that is hard to look at because your fingerprints are on it.

I have had my share of Ziklag moments.

I still remember the day when I began to discover that my son — a son I had raised in this church, who had served in this ministry, who I believed knew the Lord — had been living a life I knew nothing about. A life of broken faith, broken relationships, depression so deep he had considered not being alive anymore. And I had not seen it.

That is its own kind of ash. The city does not have to burn from the outside to be burning. Sometimes the fire has been going for years before you find out. And when you find out, everything you thought you knew shifts beneath your feet.

I did not know what to do. I did not know where to turn. I only knew the ground was no longer where I thought it was.

That was my Ziklag moment, a loss so total and so sudden that you cannot quite believe it is real, and you keep expecting to wake up.

Whatever the form, you know it when it arrives. Because the things you were counting on are no longer there. The people you believed in have reached their limit. The stability that felt permanent has revealed itself to be something far more fragile than you knew.

Last week we stood with David in the worst moment of his life. We watched as every source of human strength was stripped away — his position, his home, his family, his emotional reserves, and finally the loyalty of his own

men, who were talking about killing him. And we arrived at one of the most quietly powerful sentences in all of Scripture:

“But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”

1 Samuel 30:6b

We stopped there. That sentence was where last Sunday ended. And it is the right place to have stopped, because that single act of turning — that deliberate, volitional choice to reach for God when everything else had let go — is the hinge on which everything else in the story turns.

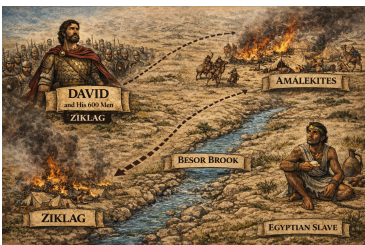
But this morning, the text has more to say. Because strengthening yourself in the Lord is not a feeling. It is not a posture. It is not a spiritual atmosphere you somehow generate in the middle of catastrophe. It is something David actually did. Something specific, something concrete, something the text is about to show us in detail.

And the question that drives everything this morning is this: *What does it look like to move forward in faith when you don't know how things will turn out? What does it look like to move forward in faith in the middle of your Ziklag moment?*

The text answers that question in three steps. And I want to walk through them with you this morning.

(CONTEXT)

Now before we get into the text this morning, I want to orient you to the story with some geographical context, because sometimes seeing where something happens helps you feel why it matters.



What you are looking at is a visual map of the journey we are going to follow together through 1 Samuel 30.

In the upper left, you see David. He is standing in full military armor, with his 600 men arrayed behind him. These are battle-hardened soldiers – the men who have followed him through years of exile, caves, desert, and close calls. They are formidable. And right now, they are standing at a place called Ziklag.

So look at the lower left corner of the image. That is Ziklag. That is what they came home to find. No longer a city. No longer a home. Fire. Burning tents, collapsing structures, smoke rising from what used to be where their families lived. The Amalekites – you can see them on the upper right, riding camels, raiding freely through the countryside with no one to stop them – the Amalekites had come through while David and his men were away and taken everyone and everything.

Now look at the center of the image. That blue line running through the middle of the landscape is the brook Besor – a seasonal stream cutting through the southern desert. That brook becomes a threshold in the story. On one side of it, 200 of David's men will simply stop. Their bodies will have nothing left. And on the other side, David will press on with 400 of his men.

And then look to the lower right. Sitting alone on the far side of the brook, beside a water jug, is a single figure. Hunched. Exhausted. Alone. That is the Egyptian slave. He does not look like much. He looks like a man a story forgot. But that man, sitting in the dust on the far side of a desert stream, is about to become an unexpected, critical part of the story.

The dashed arrow on the image traces David's journey. From the ashes of Ziklag, across the Besor, into the open desert – toward the Amalekite camp he cannot yet see and does not yet know how to find.

That is the landscape. That is the story. And the question driving all of it is the same question that drives every Ziklag moment: *What does it look like to move forward in faith when you don't know how things will turn out?*

Let's find out.

(POINT I – Verses 6b–8)

Watch what happens the moment after David strengthens himself in the Lord. The text reads:

And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. And David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?” He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”

1 Samuel 30:7–8

Before David takes a single step toward the Amalekites, he takes a step toward God. This is what it looked like for David to strengthen himself in the Lord. But what was the significance of the ephod? What is an ephod?

The ephod was a sacred priestly garment that served as a means of seeking God's guidance in ancient Israel. Attached to it was a breastpiece containing two sacred objects – the Urim and Thummim – used to discern God's direction in specific situations. We don't know precisely how the process worked – but one commentator notes that the biblical writers were always far more interested in the fact and the content of divine revelation than in the mechanics of how it occurred. What matters is not the mechanism. What matters is that David used the means God had provided. He sought God's Word through God's appointed way.

And here is something worth pausing on. The reason David has a priest at all – standing right there in the ash of Ziklag – is significant. Abiathar was the sole survivor of Saul's massacre of the priests of Nob. He fled to David years earlier, and David sheltered him when it would have been politically safer to turn him away. Saul, through his own violence, had cut himself off from the priestly means of seeking God's counsel. David, through his earlier

faithfulness, still had it available when he needed it most. The access David had to God's voice now in his worst moment was the fruit of decisions made earlier in calmer ones.

Now I want you to stop and feel the full weight of the moment described in verse 8, where David inquired of the Lord. Because what happens there is more remarkable than we might realize if we read past it too quickly. Let's remember from last Sunday:

- David is standing in a burned city. The walls are charred. The rooftops have collapsed. Every house he walks past was a home that no longer exists. The smell of ash and smoke is still in the air. Somewhere in that rubble is everything his men built during their years of exile – the possessions, the furniture, the small things that make a foreign town feel like home. All of it, gone.
- His two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, are somewhere in the southern desert in the hands of Amalekite raiders. He does not know if they are alive. He does not know how far south they have been taken or whether he will ever find them.
- Behind him are six hundred men – some of the toughest soldiers in the ancient Near East – and they are not standing at attention. They are in the kind of grief that breaks people who are supposed to be unbreakable. They wept until they had no strength left to weep. And then, in their exhausted, broken state, they looked for someone to blame. They looked at David. And they began to talk about stoning him.

This is the man who is about to pray.

He is not in a quiet room with a clear head and a calm spirit. He is standing in ashes, surrounded by men who want to kill him, with no army, no ally, no strategy, and no idea where his family is. He has lost his position, his home, his family, the loyalty of his men, and very nearly his life – all within the space of a few days. By any human measure, he has nothing left.

And in that moment — with everything gone, with six hundred men ready to stone him, with no human resource remaining — what does David do? Not a strategy session. Not a muster of his officers. Not a survey of what assets he still has. No.

He calls for a priest.

That single detail cannot be ignored. There were a hundred things a military leader in crisis could have done next. There were a hundred directions David could have turned. And the first direction he turned was toward God. Before the plan, before the pursuit, before a single tactical decision was made — David brought his crisis to God.

And then he asked the most remarkably sane question you could ask in an insane moment: *“Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?”* Not why did this happen. Not how could you let this happen. But: what do I do next? Where do I go from here?

That question could only be asked by a man who still believed that God had a next step for him. A man who, in the middle of total ruin, was more oriented toward the future than consumed by the present. A man who had found something to hold onto when everything else let go.

And God answered with the force of a command: **“Pursue**, for you shall surely **overtake** and shall surely **rescue**.” Three verbs. Each one concrete. Each one guaranteed. God does not say try this out. He says you will. The strength God gives does not arrive as a feeling. It arrives as an imperative word. And it comes attached to a command.

So, let’s think about this: before David called a single soldier to formation. Before he gathered his intelligence. Before he made a single decision about how to respond to the worst crisis of his life — David sought God’s advice, God’s instruction, God’s wisdom. And everything else in the story flows from that one prior act.

In other words, for us:

The first step of moving forward in faith is to seek God's Word before doing anything else.

Not as the second move, after you have worked through your own options. Not as a spiritual habit layered on top of a plan you have already made. First. Before the strategy. Before the phone call. Before you decide anything. Before you move. Let me ask you:

What do you reach for first? When the ground shifts – when the thing you didn't see coming lands on you – what is the first move you make?

The text is not answering that question for you. It is showing us what David did. And God is waiting to see if we will notice.

It is showing us that the first step of moving forward in faith is to seek God's Word before doing anything else.

God has spoken. David has his word: *pursue, overtake, rescue*. Three verbs, concrete and guaranteed. The question now is what David does with them – What will David do before he can see a single piece of evidence that these words are true.

Let's stay in the story.

(POINT II – Verses 9–15)

Verse 9 opens with two of the most important words in the passage. They are easy to read past, but don't. The text says:

So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.

So David set out. No recovery period. No waiting for his emotions to stabilize. No pause to survey additional options. God said pursue the Amelekites, and David pursued the Amelekites. The promptness is not incidental. In a real sense, David's promptness is the point. And on the march to find the Amelekites, two things happen:

First, David learns that obedience costs something, almost immediately.

David and his 600 men march south. These are men who have already marched 60 miles from Aphek, arrived home to find it burned, wept until they had no strength to weep, and then turned their grief into rage against their own leader. They are spent in ways that go far beyond the physical.

When they reach the brook Besor — this seasonal watercourse in the southern desert, a day's march from Ziklag — the body finally presents its limitation. At least for some of them. Two hundred men cannot cross. They are, the text says simply, too exhausted. The narrator does not condemn them. It is not a moral failure. It is human limitation presenting itself at the worst possible moment.

David presses on with 400. He does not recalculate. He does not send a second inquiry back to the priest asking whether 400 is enough. He has the word he has already received — you shall surely overtake, you shall surely rescue — and he moves on it. With fewer men than he started with. With no intelligence on where the Amalekites are. With no map and no plan beyond the Lord's instruction that he already holds. So after setting out, he loses a third of his men. Don't forget that . . .

And then secondly — in the middle of all of this — the story takes a turn that seems, at first, like a detour. Read verses 11 through 15:

They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink, and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And

when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights.

What's going on here? In the middle of a desperate pursuit for the Amalekites, David stops for a dying stranger. He gives him bread and water, a fig cake, two clusters of raisins. The narrator lists each item individually — slow down, pay attention, this moment matters.

One commentator puts it this way: this incident measures the circumference of David's soul. David was wracked with emotional pain, but he was not so consumed by his own problems that he could not see someone else's need.

And notice what happens:

And David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." And David said to him, "Will you take me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band."

1 Samuel 30:11–15

The man revives. And get this, he turns out to be a slave of the very Amalekite raiding party that burned Ziklag — he was left behind in a field to die when he fell sick. You know what this means? It means that he knows exactly where the Amalekite camp is. And he offers to lead David there.

Think about this: The man his own Amalekite master had thrown away turned out to be the key that unlocked God's promise.

- What looks like a detour might just be the route God was always taking.

- What feels like an interruption might actually be the answer to the prayer you prayed before you left.
- What looks like a distraction to you might be the direction of God.
- What you think is an inconvenience might just be where God is hiding the answer.

An abandoned slave, possessing exactly the navigational intelligence David needed – he was found not before David set out from Ziklag, he was found not waiting around back at Ziklag, no– he was found lying in a field in the middle of the pursuit. God’s provision arrived during the obedience. Not before it.

Now step back for a moment and look at the whole movement of this passage – from verse 9 to verse 15. Count the number of times David moves before he can see how it will turn out.

- He sets out with 600 men before he knows where the Amalekites are camped.
- He presses past the Besor with 400 before he knows if that will be enough.
- He stops for the Egyptian before he knows the man holds the key to everything.

Every single movement in this section – every act of going, pressing, stopping, feeding – every step is made without knowledge of the outcome. There is not a single moment in verses 9 through 15 where David can see how things will turn out. He is moving entirely on the word he received in verse 8.

That is not carelessness. That is not recklessness. That is faith operating exactly as it is designed to operate.

- Faith is not the feeling of certainty about the future.
- It is the willingness to move on the word of the One who holds the future.

And what the text is showing us, step by step, is what that willingness looks like when it is actually lived out — not in a devotional book, not in a sermon illustration, but in the ash and exhaustion of real life.

And that brings us to the second step of moving forward in faith.

The second step of moving forward in faith is to obey God's Word before the outcome is clear.

David had one piece of information when he crossed the Besor: God said **pursue, overtake, rescue**. He didn't have a map. He didn't have intelligence on the enemy's position. He didn't have his full complement of troops. He had three words — and he moved on it. And God's provision met him on the road. Not at the starting line. Not at the end of the battle. During the march. Oddly enough, in the form of a dying stranger no one else wanted.

You cannot see God's provision before you move. You can only discover it by moving.

(A Natural Objection)

Now if you're like me, you are thinking: **but I want to know ahead of time**. If I could just see how this turns out — if God would show me the ending before I had to commit to the middle — I could trust the process. I could obey more fully. I would have more peace.

Believe me, I understand that. But we need to remember something the text has already shown us.

Do you remember Saul?

Saul is the person in this narrative who got what you are asking for. He went to Endor specifically to find out what was going to happen before the battle. And he got it. Complete, accurate, unambiguous advance knowledge. An apparition of Samuel told him everything — the kingdom was gone, the

Philistines would win, and by tomorrow evening Saul and his sons would be dead.

Saul got exactly what we tell ourselves we want. And it put him face down on the floor with no strength in him.

Do we really want the outcome? If the outcome might undo us.

Knowing the ending is not the same as being able to bear it.

Advance knowledge of the outcome does not produce peace. What Saul lacked was not information — he had plenty of that. What he lacked was a relationship with the God who held the outcome. And information without that relationship produced not peace, but paralysis. Knowledge without trust finished him.

The disciples confirm the same thing. Jesus told them He would rise on the third day. He said it clearly, more than once. They had advance knowledge of the resurrection — and they still sat in a locked room on Saturday, undone by grief. The knowledge of the outcome did not prevent their despair. It was only the encounter with the risen Lord Himself that overcame it. What produces peace is not knowing what will happen. It is knowing and trusting the God who brings it about.

We also need to be more honest here about the desire for advanced knowledge. For most of us, it is not really about information. It is about control. What we want when we say I want to know ahead of time is to reduce the risk of obedience before we commit to it — to secure the outcome before we invest the trust. We want to make faith unnecessary by knowing the guarantee first. But faith is, by definition, the conviction of things not yet seen. The not-yet-seen is not a flaw in the system. It is built into what faith is.

The peace God promises is not the peace of knowing the outcome.

Philippians 4 describes it as peace that surpasses understanding — beyond

explanation, beyond what information can produce. It is not the peace of having all the answers. It is the peace of bringing unanswered questions to the one you trust, and leaving them there. God does not promise to show you how things will turn out before you move. He promises to be with you as you move. And that is a better promise, because outcomes change. The One who holds them does not.

David had three verbs. Pursue. Overtake. Rescue. No map. No route. No knowledge of what he would find in that field south of the Besor. He had enough to take the next step – not everything needed to see the end. And enough, it turns out, is what God always gives. Not everything. But always enough.

The question is not: do you have full knowledge of how this will turn out? The question is: do you have sufficient trust in the One who holds what you don't know?

You cannot see God's provision before you move. You can only discover it by moving.

So, the second step of moving forward in faith is to obey God's Word before the outcome is clear.

Well, the Egyptian leads David to the Amalekite camp. And what happens next is not simply a military victory. It is a revelation – about who won, about who the outcome belongs to, and about what that changes for everyone standing on the other side of it.

(POINT III – Verses 16–24)

The Egyptian brings David to the Amelekite camp, and verse 16 describes the scene:

And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great

spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

1 Samuel 30:16

The Amalekites are celebrating. No guards. No defensive formation. No one is watching. They raided the entire Negeb, and they have come home convinced they are untouchable. They are throwing a party! And their arrogance has made them careless. And it will cost them everything.

David strikes. Verse 17:

And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled.

1 Samuel 30:17

Nearly twenty-four hours of sustained combat — by four hundred men who were already exhausted before it started. But tired is not the same as finished.

- The 400 were exhausted when they crossed the Besor.
- They were more exhausted when they found the Egyptian.
- They were most exhausted when the battle started.

And they won. Not because they had more in the tank. Because God's word was enough to keep moving on, and because something beyond their own reserves is carrying them forward.

And when it is over, the text delivers the fulfillment of God's promise in language that leaves no room for qualification. Verses 18 through 20:

David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back

all. David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, “This is David’s spoil.”

1 Samuel 30:18–20

Nothing was missing. Not most things. Not almost everything. Not a few things. Nothing. The God who said you shall surely rescue meant exactly what He said, to the letter, down to the last person.

Now — at this point in the story, you might expect the chapter to end. The crisis is resolved. The families are restored. The mission is complete. But the narrator is not finished, because what happens next reveals one last truth the text has been moving toward all along.

This next part happens on the way back home to Ziklag. Remember they have recovered everything for everyone and they are taking their families and all their stuff back to Ziklag. And on the way back, they had to cross back over the stream of Besor. Watch what happens.

Verses 21 and 22:

Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the brook Besor. And they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near to the people he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, “Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may lead away his wife and children, and depart.”

1 Samuel 30:21–22

Wives and children are reunited. The mood was pure relief and joy. What an occasion! But then some of the men who fought — the text calls them wicked and worthless fellows — open their mouths.

Notice three words, in our english: **we have recovered.** *we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered.* In their minds, the victory was something they produced. The spoil is wages for services rendered. They did the work. They take the reward. It sounds reasonable. In most human economies it is reasonable. You earn what you work for.

But there is something else happening in their words that is worth noticing. They are not just making a financial, transactional argument. They are creating a hierarchy. They are dividing the community into two tiers: those who fought and those who did not. First-class members and second-class members. Contributors and passengers. The men who pressed past the Besor, in their minds and assessment, are more valuable to the mission than the men who stayed behind. And more valuable members get more of the reward.

That logic sounds entirely natural. But I want us to notice David's response to them, because David's response exposes the error buried in that logic. Verses 23 and 24:

But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the Lord has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us. Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike."

1 Samuel 30:23–24

David's words shift everything. The wicked and worthless men said "look what "we have recovered." David says, "Look what the Lord has given."

Same battle. Same outcome. Two completely different understandings of where it came from.

If the victory was something they produced, then a hierarchy of contribution makes sense. Those who worked harder deserve more. But David is not

operating from that framework. David is operating from the framework of gift, not merit. The victory was something God gave — all of it, to all of them. The battle always belonged to the Lord. And when you receive something as a gift rather than a wage, the rules of distribution change entirely.

Do you see what David is actually doing here? He is not just making a generous policy decision about the division of spoils. He is refusing to let the community fracture. He is insisting that the people who stayed at the Besor are not second-tier members of the community just because they were not in the battle. They belong to the same community. They serve the same God. They received the same rescue. And the God who gave the victory did not give it only to the fighters. He gave it to all of them.

There is only one tier. All share alike.

Because the moment you allow contribution to determine membership standing — the moment you let what someone did, decide how much they belong — you have stopped being a covenant community and started being a transactional club. And clubs and cliques fracture exactly the way David's men were about to fracture.

And this is the third step of moving forward in faith when you don't know how things will turn out.

The third step of moving forward in faith is to hold the outcome as God's gift rather than your achievement.

When God brings you through something — whatever the other side looks like — resist the instinct of the wicked and worthless men. Resist the urge to say we recovered this, therefore it belongs to us. They were not unusual people. They were doing what human beings instinctively do when they have worked hard and paid a high price — they claimed what they felt they had earned. And David stood in the middle of their argument and redirected everything with five words: “Lord has given us this.”

When the outcome belongs to God, you hold it with open hands. And open hands are the kind of hands that can hold a community together.

Because here is what this means for us. The church is not a collection of contributors ranked by spiritual output. We are a body. And in a body — as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12 — every part is necessary and no part is more fundamentally a member than any other. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. The head cannot say to the feet, you are not really part of this. The parts that seem weaker are indispensable. The parts that are less visible are given special honor. The body does not have levels. It has members.

Think about what that means in a church.

- The person who has served on the front lines for 40 years and the person who came to faith last month are equally members of the body.
- The one who gives generously from abundance and the one who gives a widow's mite are equally participants in the same mission.
- The elder who carries enormous visible responsibility and the quiet saint in the back row who has prayed for this church every single day for over three decades — both are essential. Both are indispensable. Both share alike in whatever God gives to this community.

The men who stayed at the Besor were not passengers. They were guards. Their exhaustion was real and their presence there was not wasted. David's reframing of their role — they stayed with the supplies — is a pastoral act of restoration. He gives them their dignity back by giving their limitation a purpose. They were not failed fighters. They were faithful guards. And the God who gave the victory gave it through all of them together — the 400 who fought and the 200 who waited.

There are no levels in the body of Christ. There is no spiritual first class and spiritual economy. There are no tiers of belonging based on visible

contribution, spiritual maturity, tenure, or the intensity of your Ziklag moment. We are one body. Every member is fully a member. And when God gives a victory to His church – when He brings us through something, when He provides what we could not provide for ourselves – it belongs to all of us, because all of us belong to Him.

That is the only ground stable enough to stand on when everything else has shifted. Not the ground of what we have earned or what we have contributed or what we believe we deserve. The ground of what God has given us – freely, to all of us, together.

Because the third step of moving forward in faith is to hold the outcome as God's gift rather than your achievement.

(CONCLUSION)

There is a reason this sermon is called When the Ground Shifts rather than When the Ground Collapses.

Shifts. Not collapses. Because the ground does not have to disappear entirely to undo you. It only has to move. The thing you were standing on only has to prove itself less permanent than you thought. That is enough to produce the disorientation, the grief, the fear, and the reaching – the frantic reaching for something solid to hold onto.

David's ground shifted. Everything that gave his life its structure moved beneath him, layer by layer, until there was nothing left. And what the text shows us, with extraordinary clarity, is what he did with his hands when the ground gave way.

He reached for God.

Not as a last resort. Not after trying everything else. As the first move.

That is the first step. Seek God's Word first. Not second. Not after the strategy has failed. First.

The second step is harder, because it costs something before you can see what it will produce. David obeyed God's Word before the outcome was clear. He moved before the fog lifted. He pressed past the Besor, fed the stranger, pressed on with 400 – all on the strength of three verbs and nothing else visible to confirm them. And God's provision met him on the road. Not before he set out. During the march.

The third step is the one that determines what kind of community we become on the other side of the crisis. David held the outcome as God's gift rather than his achievement. When the victory came, he did not say we recovered this. He said the Lord has given us this. And because it was a gift, it could be shared. Because it was grace, no one had a greater claim to it than anyone else. There are no levels in the body of Christ. All shared alike.

Seek first.

Obey before you can see.

Hold what comes as a gift.

Those are the three steps. And they form the answer to the question we have been sitting with all morning: *what does it look like to move forward in faith when you don't know how things will turn out?*

It looks like David.

Standing in the ashes.

Calling for the priest.

Moving on the word he has already received.

Stopping for the stranger.

Fighting through the night.

And on the other side – holding the blessing with open hands.

Let's close with some personal reflection:

Five Questions

One. When the ground last shifted in your life – when the unexpected arrived and you needed something to hold onto – what was the first thing you reached for? Not what you wish you had reached for. What you actually reached for first.

Two. Is there something right now that you know God's Word is calling you to do, but you are waiting to move until you can see more of the outcome? What is the word you have already received that you have not yet obeyed?

Three. Where in your life are you holding an outcome with a closed fist – treating something God brought you through as something you earned, something you are owed, something that belongs to you? What would it look like to open your hand?

Four. Is there someone in our church community – someone who stayed at the Besor while others pressed forward – whom you have been measuring against your own contribution? Someone you have decided deserves less because they gave less? David's word to his men is still in the room: they shall share alike.

Five. If your Ziklag moment arrived tomorrow – if everything you are currently counting on shifted overnight – what would be the last thing standing? What is the floor beneath your floor?

Six. Is there a step of obedience you have been postponing, not because you don't believe, but simply because you are too tired to take it? What would it look like to take that step on the strength of what God has already said, rather than waiting until you feel ready?