

5/7/23 - 1 Sam. 21 - "A Call to Vulnerability"

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[0 : 0 0] We'll be reading from 1 Samuel 21. Then David came to Nob, to Himalek the priest.

And Himalek came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, Why are you alone, and no one with you? And David said to Himalek the priest, The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.

I have made an appointment with the young men from such and such a place. Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.

The priest answered David, I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread. If the young men have kept themselves from women. And David answered the priest, Truly women have been kept from us, as always, when I go on an expedition.

The vessels of the young men are holy, even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy? So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there, but the bread of the presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

[1 : 1 4] Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day detained before the Lord. His name was Doeg, the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen.

Then David said to Himalek, Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

And the priest said, The sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom you struck down in the valley of Elah. Behold, it is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.

And David said, There is none like that. Give it to me. And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, Is not this David the king of the land?

Did they not sing to one another of him in the dances? Saul has struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands. And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

[2 : 2 2] So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, Behold, you see the man is mad.

Why have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?

Well, good morning, everyone.

Once again, it's great to see everyone here gathered. And yeah, we got lots of walks coming up. Your Fitbits are going to be really happy over the next couple weeks.

But just to reiterate, the Walk for Life is this coming Saturday. The week after is the March for Jesus. And so, just want to make sure we get that straight.

[3 : 25] Because we do have a lot of walkers signed up on that back sheet. That might actually be a record-breaking number of walkers since I've been in this church.

So, that's a praise to be had because of all the people participating in that. So, so grateful for you all. And so, we're going into chapter 21.

We're on the road to the final chapter of our series in 1 Samuel. And I want to think about a couple things before we really dive into the text and what the Lord has for us in store.

But I believe that if we were to take a poll today that lists a dozen of situations, vulnerable situations in our lives that we might offer to volunteer for, I don't think that many of us would be inclined to a majority of those situations.

situations that would make us completely vulnerable. I mean, it could be little situations like tripping and completely failing in the middle of public, in the mall, having food and everything, and just to lay flat on your face.

[4 : 51] Maybe a little bit more humiliation. Maybe that happened to you. Maybe even break a bone and then have the EMTs come as you're laying there in front of everyone. Everyone, that'll make, you'll sign up for that, wouldn't you?

Or maybe, like my kids often get caught, is caught dancing or singing when you thought that nobody was looking. Right? Husbands and wives.

Or maybe laughing at a joke. You know, when people, you hear people say something and you're laughing because they're laughing, but you didn't hear anything that they're saying. And then they call you out for it and they're like, why are you laughing?

And then you're like, well, this is a vulnerable situation. Or even forgetting names of people that you just hear. Let me introduce you to that awkward moment you forgot their name.

That is the story of my life. And if I had forgotten your name here, I am so sorry. But I am a man of taking notes for those types of things. But vulnerability is often avoided due to fear.

[5 : 58] It's avoided due to fear. It comes in many shapes and sizes. And that could be from fear of rejection, fear of being hurt, fear of being judged, fear of being betrayed.

However, vulnerability, when avoided, like we can sometimes do, to avoid any vulnerable situation like the plague, it also has negative consequences as well that ought to be feared, just like the fear of being vulnerable.

Because in that, you fear and then act in isolation in all matters. You just isolate yourself from ever being vulnerable.

Or sometimes, you just have superficial relationships. Or those relationships just lack this emotional depth that really define a relationship.

I mean, we can't blame wanting to avoid vulnerability though, right? Who wants to be exposed to physical, emotional, and reputational harm? I don't think any of us.

[7 : 15] Who wants to run a risk of being embarrassed or having shame or weakness or the dreaded being wrong? Nobody wants to risk that.

It's quite anxiety-provoking, isn't it? The balance between those two extremes of being vulnerable and then actually avoiding being vulnerable.

And what the passage today will challenge is our reluctance of vulnerability. And that those who are not striving toward vulnerable living are individuals who are missing a critical aspect of sanctification.

Did you hear me? Those who are not striving towards vulnerability and vulnerable living are missing something critical in their sanctification as God provides and protects His people.

If only we might allow ourselves to be boldly vulnerable, might our insecurity actually drive us closer to God?

[8 : 35] Let's dive in until the soil of chapter 21 and see David's journey as he just departed Jonathan and Ramah and is arriving at Nob and then arriving in Gath.

The sermon title today is A Call to Vulnerability. I'd like to pray. So join me in prayer. Lord, thank You for Your Word.

And as we search for truth this morning, as we search for life, we find Your Word open to us and so speak. And it's in this we pray in Jesus Christ's powerful and mighty name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. The first section of two this morning is vulnerability in religious formalism.

And we'll till the soil a little bit here to explain what that means. Verse 1 in the passage, as it was read this morning, picks up in the narrative after David is departing Jonathan.

[9 : 45] And David encounters this trembling high priest, Ahimelech. Trembling. Did you hear that?

This word was last used when Israel was facing the Philistines. It was a word that was used when Eli realized the Ark of the Covenant has been taken.

As Eli, blind Eli, standing at the gate, hearing the roar of opposition to Israel occurring. Ahimelech is trembling at the sight of David.

Why? Why? Why is this high priest trembling at the sight? Well, I believe that it would appear and suspicion would take root that I've heard the stories that things aren't too good between David and Saul.

and if you're here, that means Saul's coming here and I don't want that guy here. I believe that he sees that David kind of looks like a fugitive on the run.

[11 : 03] He's alone. He's flying solo. In other words, Ahimelech, I believe, had quite trembling fear of having any association with David because that would actually risk his own life.

The reason I believe that is because of the context with what we'll see next week in chapter 22. This high priest had a choice. He could get in with Saul, turn David in, and have it made, have Saul's side, or he could submit to David and so we get a little bit of tension in the passage.

In verse 2, David immediately eases the priest's fear and trembling and creates a deceptive story that lays out a bogus charge from Saul that, well, Saul told me to go to this place and this place, and the reason for his visit to the high priest was simply hunger.

He was hungry. In verse 3, regardless of what we may conclude about David's deception, I do believe that David was looking out for the best interest of Ahimelech.

He did not want to disclose, I'm on the run! I need some food! Because that would blatantly give him a choice. You know how sometimes you can, it's better to just not know and be ignorant in some cases and just not know all the details?

[12 : 34] Because then you won't get questioned and know anything and just, I don't know. I think that's Ahimelech's play in this. And so David deceives him. I don't believe it's a moral, a message about moral judgment or anything like that, but I do believe that he had his best interest.

David's best interest was protecting Ahimelech, and we'll see that playing out next week. But the first of two requests is holy bread in verse 4. According to Leviticus 24, there were detailed regulations for special use and consumption to only be done by the priests.

Twelve pieces of bread put aside for special use representing the twelve tribes of Israel. And next week, Ahimelech will reveal that he took at this time, between David requesting and him actually fulfilling a request, he took a lot of time in prayer and petition.

Yeah, I'm sure that the high priest had some suspicion. However, religious requirements would never allow someone to starve.

And you could see the tension between his decision-making here. would Ahimelech allow his religious formalism, according to Leviticus 24, leave David to starve.

[14 : 08] This high priest was in a vulnerable place. Ritual obligation versus spiritual obligation. And it's in good faith in verse 5 and 6 that the high priest did ensure that David received the bread as long as he was prepared to receive the bread.

This ain't just ordinary bread you don't get at Schwebel's. This was bread set apart according to Leviticus and according to God's law. And so, at least tell, the priest is saying, at least tell me you're clean.

You haven't been with women and all your men too. Right? And the high priest's vulnerability led him to provision of sustenance for David.

And on the flip side, think of how the story might have went if he didn't fulfill the request. If the high priest would have rejected the request, as I would imagine, Ahimelech has a line of wonderful men, Eli, Hophni, Phineas, right?

I believe if it was any of them, he'd be like, uh-uh, that's my bread. You ain't having my bread. Right? And I do believe that this would have made the high priest guilty of religious legalism.

[15 : 39] Vulnerability. Wasn't it Jesus Christ's own reference to this very scenario that he used in his day to refute the Pharisees?

This takes us to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 12, from verse 1 to verse 8. Jesus Christ says to the Pharisees, open up to 1 Samuel 21.

Jesus and the disciples were plucking grain and ate on the Sabbath. How dare they? Right? Plucking grain. And the prowling Pharisees behind the bushes accused them of violating the law.

And Jesus responds, Have you not read what David did when he was hungry and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

And Jesus Christ says, Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

[17 : 02] And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would have not condemned the guiltless. And Jesus just drops the mic, For the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Boosh. Right. So what's happening here in 1 Samuel? the priest of God might be duped by a phony story by God's king, but he'd rather be duped than be guilty of allowing God's law to be set over and against God's king and allow him to starve.

You see, the same is certainly true for us today in a different sense. We must not allow ourselves to get too comfortable in religious formalism.

And at times, be challenged, church, to become vulnerable when God breaks from customary tradition on account of reaching the world.

And this is the aim and direction of religion, true religion, religion. Or have we forgotten Saul's lesson from Samuel back to chapter 15, to obey is better than sacrifice.

[18 : 34] It is with prayerful consideration all of us as the bride of Christ ought to continuously examine the condition of our hearts in all of our religious pursuits.

I could just put myself on the chopping block as well. Being a pastor with, I don't know if you've known, but I have a deep conviction for the local church.

I love the local church. And if ever that conviction of assembling is an end in and of itself and rather than a means to an end, I'm the most to be pitied.

Because our assembling as a local church is a means to an end. It's not an end in and of itself. Why?

Why would I be most pitied? Because at this moment, Steel Valley Church is utterly useless to the world. It's just our little club that we assemble in.

[19 : 53] We must not forget that our assembling or religious formalism is always a means to an end. And that end is described in James 1, 27, religion that is pure and undefiled before God is this, to visit the orphans to care for the poor.

The widows, those who are outcasted in society, to care for them in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world. That's pure religion.

James 1, 27. And what may be perceived as a vulnerable act of man may actually be a vital act of God.

Ahimelech was put in a vulnerable situation between choosing between religious formalism and spiritual provision. And this became a vital act of God in David's life.

And we should see that. We should see that through the provision of bread from verse 1 to 6. We should see that in the provision of protection with a sword.

[21 : 11] There's none like it in verse 9. In all the world than Goliath's sword. Obedience is greater than sacrifice.

And for that the high priest extensively sought the counsel of the Lord in the matter. in his vulnerable situation and in petition. And so too in such a situation we must seek fervently God in those vulnerable states.

Especially as we get the mention of the enemy in chains in verse 7. Doeg will learn much more about him next week in a horrific scene.

But we are without excuse. no matter proximity of the enemy. No matter how we might feel in it. Obedience to God's command will lead his people into vulnerable situations and circumstances that call for radical trust.

Radical yielding to God. And this is certain. So while we can argue that David was also in a vulnerable place, he's without men, he's without food, he's without sword, I don't think the text is set up to really reveal his vulnerability until the next episode.

[22 : 34] And so it wouldn't be until the next stop that David would be brought to the ultimate test of vulnerability to trusting God. And we get our second section starting in verse 10, vulnerability surrounded by evil.

And so David, in verse 10, having a sack full of bread, a large sword like no other on his belt. You want to get noticed, just flash that bling around a little bit, having that thing on your hip.

His next stop is Gath. Really, David? You think that's a good idea? Many might think that's foolish. But I think the author is making a point.

That David was trying to escape Saul, and I think the only place that David would never be found by Saul would be in Gath.

Meaning that his fear of Saul was actually greater than even the fear of this Philistine city, of whom he just beheaded their contender, not to mention. It didn't take long for David's fear to become a reality.

[23 : 50] In verse 11, the author and the narrator doesn't take long at all. He's spotted by the servants of the king of Achish. Is this not David?

The one whom the songs were all written about? You heard them on moody radio, right? Saul had his thousands and David has his ten thousands.

And on and on the song is sung. It even reached Gath, a place 25 miles away from his previous location.

Word is spread. His victory actually attributed kingship because he did what the king should have done in the situation between Goliath.

David's success and blessing from God was unable to be hidden. God did a mighty work in David's life and he couldn't hide from that reality. And I'm sure that nice handy blinging sword on his belt couldn't hide the victory that God gave over Goliath, right?

[25 : 01] You see God's success and blessing over his life had set him up for quite a vulnerable situation. The enemy took notice.

But David took it to heart. and had much fear. This is the only instance of David having fear in this entire book of 1 Samuel.

In fact, if you turn to Psalm 56, if you want to, you can. If not, just take my word for it now, check me later. Psalm 56 has a title, a subtitle to it, and it reads, a song of David when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

He writes this song. It says, I'd like to take a couple lines from it. Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me.

All day long, an attacker oppresses me. The enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly.

[26 : 34] Verse 3, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust.

I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? All day long, they injure my cause. All their thoughts are against me for evil.

They stir up strife. They lurk. They watch my steps as they have waited for my life, for their crime.

Will they escape? Do you ever fear the result of God's victory being the very thing that sharpens the enemy's weapons against you?

Do you ever fear the result of God's victory in your life being the very sharpening of the enemy's weapons to be used against you?

[27 : 45] A few weeks ago, you may recall that maybe you don't fear the enemy, that you are the strong Christian who stands out among the many.

Maybe that's not you. But if the enemy is after you, you have to remember that the enemy will go to great lengths to devastate everything that is around you, that's connected to you, take away your kids, take away your family, and for that, that deserves fear.

We should fear that. Being that this is the only mention of David being afraid in the entire book should be significant.

And for that, we ought to really think about if we're guilty of minimizing the severity of the enemy's plots against us. Do we really understand the gravity of what Satan does in our lives?

Why am I trying to cause you to reflect and realize your fear in the matter? It's because this was the driving force of David's trust in the Lord in Psalm 56.

[29 : 12] With the overriding fear of God triumphing over the fear of man, but it began and originated by fear of man, the reality, vulnerability.

David says in Psalm 56, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. Man, what an illuminating expression into the emotional state of 1 Samuel 21.

What was David's source of trust? It wasn't a sling. It wasn't a fancy sword on his hip. It wasn't the scoreboard of victories against the Philistines from days past.

It wasn't the counsel of a friend, Jonathan. It wasn't the affection and affirmations of a spouse. Verse 4, Psalm 56, it was his word that made all the difference.

what does it mean to trust in God if all you do is just live comfortably?

[30 : 42] In our most vulnerable states, the word of God contains a promise that is irrevocable. It is certain. It is transcendent.

Friends, it is also God's word that David clung as he thought very fast in verse 13 to probably create the biggest deception of his life.

You see David, completely humiliating himself, knowing the only way to get out of here is to act as crazy as the enemies. He starts clawing and scratching at the doors and the walls, the spittle running down the beard.

Talk about vulnerability. humility. But he trusted in the Lord. King Achish basically released David. I would be safe to say that he basically was kicked out of Gath because he was a lunatic.

But who would have thought David escapes the grip of the enemy once again. Isn't that awesome?

[31 : 57] For you and I today, though, the text really argues that God's people are most useful when we allow ourselves to be most vulnerable.

See, vulnerability forces us to trust in ways that we would have previously maybe never trusted before. Was it not a state of vulnerability that our own Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, submitted Himself to the rulers of the world, gave His life over to the slaughter?

Church, you don't get much more vulnerable than having your arms spread open wide, nailed to a cross, with people spitting on you, stripped of your clothes, completely naked, for all the world to see.

But His vulnerability was the means of God's greatest act of salvation for you. As it were for David, it stands for you.

Maybe you're not in Christ, though. There's nothing more vulnerable than a place of a place of repentance, grieving over your sins, the offenses that you have made against a holy, perfect God, deserving of His wrath, deserving death.

[33 : 28] death. There's nothing more vulnerable than coming to grips with your own sin and realizing you are guilty of sin.

And for that, Christ calls you in His open arms, come, by your faith. There's nothing more vulnerable for the church than the call of Jesus Christ that He commanded to His disciples to leave everything and follow Him.

There's nothing more vulnerable for Ahimelech than to abandon religious formalism. There wasn't anything more vulnerable than David being trapped, surrounded by the enemy.

However, each step of these instances was a time that the devoted followers of God were driven to trust in ways that they would have previously never trusted before.

How many of us struggle to just fear? Maybe you grew up and your dad said, you know, never cry in front of people.

[34 : 44] You never show people that you're weak. Bunch of nonsense. Outer nonsense. How many of us struggle to feel, to fear?

Maybe for us it's just because we haven't really submitted ourselves to a vulnerable state that God desires for our lives. either acting like we're always so strong and tough or just avoiding any sort of vulnerability in our lives and just hiding away.

Guess what? Being a Christian is not safe. safe. It is not safe. Who are we to ever play it safe?

Our trust in God will proportionally be balanced by our fear in vulnerable states. How might God be calling you to be vulnerable?

How to help you draw to a deep and profound trust in Him? Well, may the vulnerability of the cross be an expression of the vulnerability demanded of our lives, dying to ourselves and living for Him.

[36 : 15] Let's pray.