

If the King Fits, Crown Him

1 Sam. 11

(preached 5/13/15; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

Introduction

Every purchase that we make is not really complete until we use what we have bought.

What do I mean by that?

Well, as a little kid, my dad would often laugh at my desire to “wear the shoes out of the store.”

When I needed new shoes, my dad would take me to Belk’s and we would buy some new shoes...

And often times, I would put my old shoes in the box and wear the new ones out of the store.

I never saw anything wrong with that plan.

They were mine.

I saw no need to wait until the next day to wear them.

Might as well wear them home.

I only felt like they were really mine when I put them on.

I guess that was funny to my dad because putting on the shoes right away was a great indication of how excited I was to get them.

And I was!

But it also supports the point that I am trying to make...

Though you make a purchase and carry it out of the store in the bag...

It isn't really yours until you put it to use.

That is true for a pair of shoes or new clothes or a new TV or a new whatever...

Well, the same can be said for the new king of Israel that we have been looking at the past few weeks in 1 Samuel.

Though God was the perfect king of Israel, the nation had been asking for a king like the other nations had...

And over the last few weeks, we have watched God give them a new king in the person of Saul.

Even though having a king will lead to bigger problems for Israel, they have begged for one.

And so, God chose Saul from among all the men of Israel to be their very first king.

Saul has been anointed by Samuel, who was the leader of Israel.

And then last week, Saul was presented publically before the nation of Israel.

Saul is God's choice for the nation.

But last week, we saw something very interesting happen after Saul was presented before the people...

He went back to his home.

We know that Saul was a humble man at this point in his life...

And maybe he really didn't know what to do as the new king of Israel, so he just went home.

I would guess that it was a huge letdown for the people...

Here's your king Israel....

Now, go back home.

I would assume that they wanted him to do something kingly...

But what?

Well, that what is going to come tonight in chapter 11....

Saul is going to get his first chance to act like a king...

And in some ways, this helps the people “feel” like they now have a king like the other nations...

Saul was their king, but now the people are going to feel like he is their king.

I have entitled this message..

“If the King Fits, Crown Him...”

Which is simply a twist on the saying “IF the Shoe fits, Wear it.”

Tonight, Israel is going to try on Saul as their new king, and they are going to like what they see...

For us, the challenge is going to be finding a few life lessons as we go through chapter 11...

But I think we will find some good instruction for our own hearts tonight..

So let’s dig into 1 Samuel 11 tonight....

I have divided the chapter into four parts...

Verses 1-3 are titled....

I. Making a Deal with the Enemies of God (1-3)

So, let's read the first the first few words of chapter 11 and see the stage for what we are going to see happen tonight....

***¹Now Nahash the Ammonite came up
and ^{la}besieged Jabesh-gilead;***

Let's stop right there for a minute....

Who is Nahash? Who are the Ammonites and where is Jabesh Gilead?

I think you are learning that all of this information is important as you read the Bible...

Part of the challenge of arriving at an accurate interpretation and understanding of what the Bible means is to putting yourself in the scene...

Yall have learned by now that I consider geography and history very important when studying the Scriptures...

Without it, you lose meaning...

Now, most folks would rather be spoon fed than have to work at studying the Bible..

But Bible study is hard work, and so let's go to work here and see what this all this means...

Well, we know the Ammonites were people who lived east of the Jordan River...

As you know and can see from this map, the Jordan River runs along the eastern side of Israel..

The Ammonites lived on the east side of the Jordan River...

They were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew...

At this point in their history, they had a king named Nahash, which means "snake."

King Nahash had it out for Israel.

From what we know, he was a thorn in the sides of Israelites who lived east of the Jordan River...

And so shortly after Saul is named king, Nahash takes control of Jabesh Gilead, which was a Israeli city located below the sea of Galilee on the eastern side of the Jordan...

And I want you to take note of what the people of Jabesh-Gilead do once that Nahash has taken control of their town..

Look back at the end of verse 1...

Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and ^[a]besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of

Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a covenant with us and we will serve you.”

The first response of the Israelites living in that town is to simply surrender to Nahash...

Now understand, this is complete disobedience to the very 1st commandment of serving no one but God.

But the first thought of the people is to simply find a quick solution to the problem...

Even though it means disobedience to their God.

That is characteristic of a nation that is far from God, which Israel was in this day.

And so, their first response is to simply surrender and serve the Ammonite king.

Are you that kind of Christian, who will even disobey God in order to make peace?

Is the law of God secondary to your own level of comfort?

Now I am not saying we shouldn't be peace makers, we should...

But when it comes to an issue of clear sin, we don't sin just to keep everyone happy...

And guess what?

Giving in will only lead to more problems....

Look at verse 2....

² But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, “I will make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel.”

Nahash will make peace with them, but he not only wants their service to him...

He also wants to poke out their right eye...

And that is exactly what that means.

In these days of constant warfare, a man with one only one eye was at a huge disadvantage...

He had no depth perception and his peripheral vision would be very limited....

And so what Nahash wanted was to make the people of this town unfit for military service...

But he also them to be a visible reminder to everyone that that had surrendered to him...

Every time you would see a one eyed man, it would be a reminder that Nahash had won victory over Israel at Jabesh-gilead.

I need to say this out loud because we all should know it, but sin is a cruel master...

It not only wants you as its slave, it wants to make you a spectacle before the whole world...

Let any man or woman fall into sin and the world takes little notice...

But let a Christian fall into sin and it is front page news...

We need to realize that our sin is magnified as believers...

We are ambassadors of Christ.

How dare we bring insult upon his name with our sin...

But the Israelites of Jabesh-gilead weren't worried about that...

They wanted peace at all costs....

And so they are going to consider Nahash's offer in verse 3...

³ The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you."

They ask for 7 days to figure out what to do...

And isn't it interesting that they are going to look all around Israel for someone to deliver them....

But they are going to look up for help...

One way to measure the health of your relationship to God is to consider where is the first place that you look for help when trouble comes....

Do you call a friend?

Do you turn to your spouse?

Do you think about how to fight back from a human perspective?

Do you think about how to escape?

Or do you first take the problem to your Lord before you turn anywhere else...

Now, those other solutions are fine and the Lord may use a friend or spouse to give you help...

But our first thought in times of trouble should be to look to the Lord for help...

However, the people of Jabesh-gilead are going to look for deliverance in the land of Israel...

And if they can't find any help, they are willing to be Nahash's one-eyed servants...

So, we move from making a deal with the enemy of God to.....

II. Stirring Up the People of God (4-8)

Verse 4...

⁴ Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and spoke these words in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voices and wept.

So, the messengers take off from Jabesh-gilead and they head all over Israel looking for help....

Now, it just so happens that they come through Gibeah and ask for help there...

Well, the people of Gibeah are no different than the people of Jabesh-gilead because what do they do when they hear that Nahash has captured the town?

Well, they begin crying...

I talked Sunday about how moms are always able to calm our fears....

As a kid, my mother was as scared of thunderstorms as I was...

I remember running to tell her that a tornado warning had been issued for our town...

Now, the thought behind that is...

She is going to calm me down and make a plan to get us to safety...

But what did she do?

Well, she panicked just like I was panicking...

And in some ways, that is the picture here...

The messengers are going through Israel looking for help for their desperate situation...

And they are looking for the people to run to help them....

But instead the people are simply giving up like the people of the town....

Instead of the people standing up to fight with them, they are cowering in fear and grief as well...

It is a sad day when the people of God no longer believe in the power of God to save them.

And so it looks real bad, but then everything changes in verse 5...

⁵ Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen, and ^[b]he said, "What is the matter with the people that they weep?" So they related to him the words of the men of Jabesh. ⁶ Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and ^[c]he became very angry.

I love this scene...

Here is the first king of Israel and what is he doing?

He is in the field plowing with a group of oxen...

It is almost like nothing has changed since he became the king...

The people are still lacking trust in God...

And Saul is still a farmer's son...

But when Saul hears why the people are weeping, God's spirit stirs in his heart to do something about it..

I don't want to make less of this scene....

This is an incredible truth of this chapter...

But I can't help but think of Popeye here.

I grew up watching Popeye cartoons...

And the story of every one of them is this....

Popeye is weak and even ignorant of the trouble around him at times....

But when he finds out that someone is being treated unfairly...

He pops in a can of spinach and out pop the muscles and he goes to make the situation right....

Well, here is Saul in the field totally unaware of what is happening in the JAbesh-gilead...

But when word reached him that they are in trouble, the Spirit of God kicks in and moves him to act...

And in verse 7, he begins to stir up the people around Israel...

⁷ He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out as one man. ⁸ He ^[d]numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000.

You can see this scene...

Saul is plowing with some oxen, hear the news of the siege of Jabesh-gilead and that no one is helping them....

He takes the oxen and kills them and then sends the dead oxen around Israel and tells the people that if they didn't show up to fight...

He was going to kill their oxen as well...

And it worked because 330,000 people showed up to deliver Jabesh-gilead...

And I want you to notice why the people came..

I'm sure the threat of dead oxen was one thing, but verse 7 said that the dread of the LORD fell on the people...

So much for the idea that fear of God is not a good motivator....

Though we can't scare people into obeying God, the fear of God is a powerful weapon and a healthy part of every Christian's life.

And so the people of Israel are stirred to come fight for Jabesh-gilead....

The next thing is to simply watch the....

III. Carrying out of the Plan of God (9-11)

Verse 9..

⁹ They said to the messengers who had come, “Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh-gilead, ‘Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you will have deliverance.’” So the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. ¹⁰ Then the men of Jabesh said, “Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good ^{lel}to you.” ¹¹ The next morning Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp at the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

After the people have gathered...

Now remember, this is an incredible act to gather all these men together in less than 7 days...

But when they were all gathered, Saul sends a message back to the town telling that help is on the way...

Then in verse 11, Saul’s army of men attacks during the morning watch, which would have been around 2 am – 6 am in the morning...

And they defeated the Ammonite army by noon of the next day..

And they were so soundly defeated that they every Ammonite simply ran for his life all alone...

God has come to rescue of people who didn't even look to Him for deliverance...

The town has been freed from its siege.

Saul has acted like the king that he was chosen to be.

The people have witnessed his leadership and skill on the battlefield...

And then leads us to the final part of chapter 12...

IV. Renewing Commitment to the Kingdom of God (12-15)

If you remember last week in 1 Samuel 10, we learned that as soon as Saul was chosen king of Israel, he gained some friends and enemies...

Some people were opposed to him from the start, but Saul controlled his reaction to those who opposed him...

The final words of chapter 10 tell us that Saul remained silent to their criticism...

But now that he has led Israel to victory....

Let us see how he responds to his enemies...

Verse 12...

¹² Then the people said to Samuel, “Who is he that said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ ¹³Bring the men, that we may put them to death.”

The supporters of Saul are given more confidence in him after this victory, so they ask for the deaths of Saul's critics...

And you would expect Saul to join with his supporters in calling for their deaths...

But look at verse 13....

¹³ But Saul said, “Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has accomplished deliverance in Israel.”

What an display of self-control on Saul’s part.

A chance to silence his critics comes to Saul again, and this time he has the support of the people to do it.

He has just won an impressive victory.

He could kill these men and notice would even notice or question it, but he doesn’t.

And how do we explain that?

Well for one, he is a king under the influence of the Spirit of God.

Saul lets them live because maybe they will come to repentance and stop opposing the king that God has chosen to lead Israel.

And on top of that, why worry about a small group of critics...

If Saul truly believes that God can deliver Israel from all her enemies, why not believe that God can protect him from a few men with critical attitudes?

And the same applies to me and you....

If we are people who believe that God is fully in control...

And we are people living lives above reproach so that no one is able to bring a credible charge against us...

And we are living lives that are transparent before the whole world...

Then why worry about what people say about us?

Why respond to their untrue charges?

Why defend ourselves from lies?

Leave the vengeance to the Lord.

Pray for your enemies.

Love those who persecute you.

And trust God to either save their souls or execute His justice upon them.

That is the road that Saul took here.

That is the high road, and that is the road that we must take if we truly believe that God is in control.

Then we read this in verses 14-15...

¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, “Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.” ¹⁵ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

This is a time of celebration in the land of Israel.

This goes back to my introduction.

Sure, Saul was already the king due to the anointing and public ceremony of chapter 10...

But now the people had witnessed his leadership.

They had watched him act when no one else wanted to fight for Jabesh-gilead.

They had seen his organizational skills in battle.

They had observed how he completely destroyed the enemy.

And so Samuel takes advantage of this festive mood in Israel and invites the nation to Gilgal to renew their commitment to the Lord....

This is similar to the food vendors at a ball game...

The people at the game are in a good mood.

They are out relaxing and celebrating, so the vendors have no problem charging \$5 or more for a cup of Coke....

Any other place, the people would complain about a \$2 coke...

But when they are in a good mood, they will pay \$5.

And so Samuel sees the energy and excitement over Saul....

And he uses this opportunity to remind the people of their commitment to the LORD and his kingdom.

Yes, Saul is their king, but more importantly, the LORD is their God.

And so they offer sacrifices to God at Gilgal, and they all rejoice together...

And this is another incredible high point in Israel's history...

They have a king who leads them to victory.

They have a God who gives them deliverance...

It is a time to rejoice and celebrate in the Lord's goodness to them...

This brings us a lesson for all of us...

What does it mean to re-dedicate your life to the Lord?

You know you have seen people who walk an aisle and tell a preacher that they want to rededicate their life to the Lord?

And there is nothing wrong with that I suppose, but people may mean all kinds of things when they do that....

Can people fall into sin and feel the need to renew their commitment to God publically?

Sure, but I want us all that re-dedication does not need a public display....

It isn't necessarily walking an aisle and shaking a preacher's hand...

The Bible never tells people to do that...

Instead, the idea of rededication and renewal is something that happens in your heart....

And guess what?

It can happen every day as you commit to following the Lord more fully when you wake up in the morning...

Israel had strayed from the Lord, but Saul's victory had helped them renew their commitment to God and His kingdom...

And for us, Jesus constantly calls us to renew our commitment to Him....

Matthew 6:33...

³³ ***But ^[s]seek first ^[t]His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be ^[u]added to you.***

And the idea behind the word “seek” is the constant reminder that we constantly renewing our commitment....

Seek the kingdom today.....

Seek it tomorrow...

Seek it in how you do your job...

Seek it for your family..

Seek it in your life...

And what does all that seeking do?

IT causes us to constantly renew our commitment to the Lord....

It is true that we are in the kingdom, but it is also equally true that we are seeking the kingdom as well...

We are always looking for ways to obey the King better...

We are always looking to do kingdom work...

WE are always rededicating our lives to grow the kingdom...

That is the mentality that Samuel was trying to teach Israel.

Saul was their king.

But God was their God...

Now, renew your obedience to God and show your allegiance to His kingdom...

And that brings us to the end of chapter 11....

Conclusion

Well, we need to rejoice with Israel too because dark days are ahead...

As admirable as Saul has been up to this point, he will be just as foolish in days ahead...

I think the great lessons from this chapter are.

#1....Don't allow yourself to sin and do wrong just in order to keep the peace.

The people of Jabesh-gilead were willing to break the 1st commandment just to save their lives...

There is a time to make peace, but there is never a time to disobey a clear command of God.

#2...One voice can change countless lives.

It seems as if Saul was the only one who had any interest in fighting to protect God's people in Jabesh-gilead.

But that one voice moved the hearts of over 300,000 men to join him.

The Spirit of God moved Saul to action , and it turned the attitude of the people...

But a note of caution...

Make sure your anger is righteous anger not sinful anger before you ask others to join you...

And then the finale lesson here is...

#3....The time to renew your commitment to God's kingdom purposes is everyday.

The Christian life is a race to repent and renew our walk with the Lord.

Every morning is a chance to clear the air with the Lord...

Confess your sin and seek His kingdom.

Rededication starts in the heart as we seek to serve the Lord more fully.

Let us pray...