

NOVEMBER 20-25, 2023

Quiet WATERS

A daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka

"He leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul."

PSALM 23:2-3



Monday, November 20, 2023

Devastation

1 Samuel 5-6

“Then they carried the ark into Dagon’s temple and set it beside Dagon... The LORD’S hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors.”
1 Samuel 5:2, 6

The ark of God was captured by the Philistines. The elders of Israel had called for it to be brought from Shiloh and the sons of Eli came along. The ark of God was captured, and the sons of Eli were killed. When Eli was told, he died as well, and the declaration was made that the glory had departed from Israel. But God is not handled by human hands like other gods are. God is sovereign even over the movement of the ark. The ark is not brought to Ashod by chance. The ark is not placed in the temple of Dagon by chance. God reveals that he will not be mocked. God is not like other gods to be used as a magic genie. God is the majestic ruler over all there is. He is to be adored above all others. Mocking God brings consequences—in this case tumors and devastation. God is not to be mocked, yet so many do. They discount who he is and they discount his ultimate authority. They cling to worthless things and then blame God when those worthless things tumble and fall and break before him in the same way the statue of Dagon did. I must be very careful to worship the Lord alone and not mock him by setting him amidst all the other mundane pursuits of my life. He must be given preeminence.

Dear Lord, forgive me for the times that I have mocked you and thought that I could control you. Help me always to worship you alone. Amen.

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

Rejecting

1 Samuel 7-8

And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.”
1 Samuel 8:7-9

Every time I read this passage I wonder about the heart of God. I do not handle rejection well and I have never experienced rejection at this level—absolute, continual, vile rejection. Notice that God does not say they have rejected, but that they are rejecting and, of course, the implication is that it will continue. From the time that God delivered them from Egypt, they have been looking for something else to give the glory to for their deliverance, continually rejecting God as the deliverer and King. Just a few years before this request, God had once again come to their defense when they turned their hearts back on him. He kept the Philistines from coming into their land. And yet, they wanted a king like the other nations had. They wanted a weak man who would take whatever he wanted from them instead of the all-powerful God constantly bestowing grace. Does that really seem like a good trade? I must be very careful not to reject my King. I must look intentionally for ways to submit to His authority in my life.

My King, I bow before you and I worship you. I thank you for all the times you defended me for your glory, even as I was rejecting you. I praise You because you are an amazing and loving King. Amen.

Wednesday, November 22, 2023

Heart

1 Samuel 9-10

“The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person... As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.”

1 Samuel 10:6, 9

God knows what is in a person’s heart. God can change a person’s heart. God changed Saul’s heart. Saul’s life will show that he did not always live according to the changed heart and the power that had come upon him. He did not always live out his life as a person who had been changed into a different person. Many times, in the account of his life, it will be revealed that he lived out of the old person—the person he was before God came upon him in power and changed him. I can’t help but consider the fact that God has come upon me with power. I am a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). I have been made completely new by God and I have been given the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has not just come upon me, he has indwelt me. Like Saul, I am now left with a choice. Will the account of my life reveal that I have lived according to my new life and my new heart that has been changed by God or will I choose to live in the strength of my sinful nature and desires? Each moment of each day, I get to make that choice.

Dear God, I thank you for changing my heart. Left to myself, I am an evil, wicked, and self-serving person. And yet, you have made me new. Please let the story of my life be one that radiates and glorifies you. Amen.

Thursday, November 23, 2023

Turn away

1 Samuel 11-12

“Do not be afraid,” Samuel replied. “You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.” 1 Samuel 12:20-22

The Israelites now are beginning to realize the implications of asking for a king. They are seeing it as a sin. They are beginning to see that asking for a king was short-sighted at best. So now, the temptation is to turn away from God in shame and condemnation. That is not what would be best for them. What would be best is for them to keep their gaze fixed on God! They did not need to turn away and choose other ways of getting out of the situation. God is faithful even when they are not. God will preserve a remnant because of his love and promise. He will do this for the sake of his name. He chose them way before they chose him. They are his people. So that the world can see that he is God, he cares for his people. That continues even to this day. I must not turn away from the Lord. I must keep my eyes fixed on him and I must consider the prize. As Paul said, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Even when I sin and when I am tempted to allow shame to take my eyes off God, I must fix my eyes on him—the source of forgiveness.

Dear Lord, please keep my eyes fixed on you. Please keep me from turning away from you even when it feels as though I have betrayed your trust. Remind me that my relationship with you has your faithfulness as its foundation. Amen.

Friday, November 24, 2023

Foolishly

1 Samuel 13-14

You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’S command.” 1 Samuel 13:13-14

Saul had indeed acted very foolishly. He determined that he could approach the Lord on his own terms. He was anointed as the king, not the priest. Samuel was the one who was to offer the sacrifice—not Saul. One can draw near to God, but it must be under His terms. Any other way it is attempted is foolish and will bear a consequence. Saul’s foolishness (disobedience) cost him the kingdom. God chose him as king to be an example of what it means to follow the Lord. He did not choose him as king to do whatever he wanted. Saul thought too highly of himself and did not wait for the Lord. He began to believe his own press reports. The kingdom would be given to another. The kings of Israel were stewards of God’s flock. They were not ultimate rulers; they were rulers appointed by God to serve him by caring for his people. I must learn to keep the commands of the Lord—not out of duty, but out of love, remembering that any disobedience must carry a consequence, even if I have rationalized it all out in my mind and convinced myself that it is okay.

Dear Lord, please keep me from foolishly disobeying you. Help me draw near to you on your terms and remind me that I have been saved to serve you! Amen.

Saturday, November 25, 2023

Worship

1 Samuel 15-16

But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”

1 Samuel 15:22-23

What is true worship? Saul was to learn that what he was calling worship was actually self-adoration. He disobeyed God so that he could claim that he obeyed God. Instead of following God’s mandates for the battle, he decided—on his own—that he would do God the favor of offering sacrifices to him. The problem is that he was offering these in a place where he had set up a monument for himself! His response to Samuel is telling: “... spared the best of the sheep and cattle to offer to the LORD your God (15:15). He seems to realize, at some level, that he and Samuel are not worshiping the same God. Who do I worship? It is my obedience to the Lord my God in humility and repentance and my offering of a sacrifice of praise as I offer myself as a living sacrifice that declare I serve the one true God.

Lord, I worship you in the splendor of your holiness. I am continually amazed by you and your loving-kindness toward all that you have made. Please see my obedience as a sacrifice of praise. Amen.