

June 24-28, 2024 Edition

Following The Year_(s) Of ^Jesus Part 130

A Man (or Woman) After God's Own Heart

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well you knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday:

But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.' Acts 13:22 (NLT)

Reflection: This week we're looking at the wisdom of wisdom. That's right. The wisdom of wisdom. I hope you remember that WAYYYY back when we first started this whole year long journey into wisdom we defined a life of wisdom by this verse:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

Wisdom is a life long journey where we grow in wisdom by walking in wisdom. We can only walk in wisdom if we are trusting in the Lord with all of our hearts rather than trusting our own best thinking which seems so right. We've looked at what a life of wisdom looks like from so many possible angles but this week I was thinking we'd look at it from the prospective of a life of wisdom lived well- the life of King David. Now, I know David was not perfect- in fact he made some pretty horrific choices in his life. But I didn't say we were going to look at a perfect life of wisdom. The Bible doesn't give us any of those (other than Jesus). And thank God for that. Because if all we had were examples of wisdom lived out perfectly what hope would there be for any of us. I know me. I know I could never do this perfectly. But in David we find a very human, very flawed life but one in which the path of wisdom was walked as well as it was maybe by anyone else who ever lived.

So let's start out looking at the life of David by talking about something God said about him. God said that David was "a man after my own heart." What does that even mean? It couldn't mean perfect because if you've read the story of David's life then you know he was FAR from perfect. In fact he did some pretty terrible things that brought an awful lot of pain into this world. In light of this series on James that we're in right now I think you could confidently say that later in his life David did his part to practice the wisdom that comes from below and unleashed an awful lot of hell onto this earth in the process. We'll get to that part of the story next week, but for this week I want to focus in on David's early life when his actions showed the wisdom that comes from above and because of his actions (planting seeds of peace) he would harvest a crop of righteousness or shalom in his life that few people have seen in the history of this world.

When we first meet David he's not even in the story yet. God tells Samuel (the prophet) that He is taking the Kingdom away from Saul (the first king of Israel) and giving it to another. To one who has a heart like God's. Samuel goes to Bethlehem to meet Jessie- the father of this new king with a heart that beats with God's own heart. At this point Samuel doesn't know which son of Jessie's is the new king but when he sees the oldest boy he immediately thinks that this must be the next king. He even looks like a king! But God corrects His prophet:

"Don't look at how handsome Eliab is or how tall he is, because I have not chosen him. God does not see the same way people see. People look at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:6-7 (NCV)

God doesn't see the same way people see. People look on the surface to make their judgments but God looks beneath the surface into the heart... and David had a heart like few others have ever had. Why? What made David stand out? Well that's what we're going to focus on this week but think about this for a minute... Everything David did he wanted to be the best at it that he could be. If you go to Israel today and ask somebody walking by on the street who the greatest shepherd in the history of the Jewish people was they won't hesitate- David of course! Who was the best poet? David. Best song writer? David. Best soldier? David. Best general? David. Best king? David. Everything he did he did with everything he had. I don't know about you but that's one of my biggest failings. If what I'm doing at the moment doesn't seem all that important then maybe I'm not really giving all of myself. But David didn't do that.

If David was being a shepherd then he was going to give all he had to being a shepherd. He was going to take care of those sheep the way God would have him care for the sheep. If he was going to write poetry he did it with abandon for God. If he was going to dance he danced like no one was watching (just ask his wife Mychal ;o) The point is this- David gave all of himself and did everything he did for God. If you read the story of his life you will find a guy who believed that God was with him whatever he was doing and where he was doing it. And it changed everything for him.

How about you? Are you a man or woman "after God's own heart"? What would that even look like in your life? I've spent the last 31 years thinking about that question and trying to become a man whose heart beats with God's. I'm not anywhere as close as I should/could be but to the extent that I am able to make that a reality in my life- to that extent my life is powerful and miraculous and beautiful. So what do you say? Does that sound good to you? Then let's spend the next few days looking at what the response of David's heart was in different situations.

Tuesday Reflection: I think the first thing to notice about God's heart and by extension what that means we need to be cultivating in our own lives to be/become men or women after God's own heart is that God is at His core a Servant. It seems like a crazy thing to say but Jesus says that's exactly Who He is at His core:

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others.

Matthew 20:28 (NLT)

That's Who Jesus is in a nutshell. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that you and I will never be more like God then when we are serving someone else out of love. You see it in the story of David and Goliath. After David was anointed the next king of Israel he didn't immediately ascend to the throne. He was still a little boy (scholars believe somewhere between the age of 11 and 15) but beyond that he wouldn't lift a hand to take the throne from Saul. He would wait patiently until that day when the throne would be his. Until then David stayed at home and continued taking care of the sheep and probably writing poetry and songs of praise to God.

One day David's father asked him to take some food to David's older brothers who were away fighting a war against the Philistines at the valley of Elah. The two armies faced one

another from opposing sides of the valley but didn't actually fight yet. Neither army wanted to give up the advantage of the high ground they were commanding. So every day the champion of the Philistines (Goliath) would walk down to the bottom of the valley and issue a challenge. Basically he offered to fight any Israelite sort of "mono y mono" in a steel cage death match kind of fight and whoever won the fight, their side won the war. Every day for 40 days Goliath issued this challenge and cursed and mocked the army of Israel and their God. So one day David comes walking into camp. He gets there in time to hear Goliath's challenge and he looks around to see who will fight for God. Nobody is willing to fight Goliath (what was a giant of a man- the Bible says he was over 9 feet tall!) so David volunteers. He goes to king Saul and says:

David said to Saul, "Don't let anyone be discouraged. I, your servant, will go and fight this Philistine!" 1 Samuel 17:32 (NCV)

Why? Why is David willing to fight the giant when he's just a little boy himself? Where did he find that kind of confidence? We'll get into that tomorrow but for today let's just leave it at this- David was at his core a servant. If he saw a need he asked God if it was something God wanted to accomplish with David's help. He saw his life as a partnership with God and he never passed by a need without asking God if that was something he should take care of.

If you are attempting to cultivate the heart of God within you then I'm not saying you have to meet every need you see. Nobody could possibly last long doing that. There is SO much need in the world. What I think God is looking for is people who are willing to see the need and ask Him if that's something He wants me to partner with Him in doing. If so you jump in and meet the need. If not you keep going and look for your next opportunity to serve. It won't take long- need is everywhere. But can you imagine how different the world would be if all of us lived our lives this way? I know- I wish everyone did this- but we don't, do we? And I can't control everyone else (heck... I can barely control myself so what hope do I have of controlling anyone else?) but I can choose to start looking for need and when I find something that God wants to do with me I can respond with a servant's heart.

Wednesday Reflection: So David in response to need David had a servant heart. He saw Goliath's challenge and when nobody else stepped up David volunteered even though he was just a little boy. Why? Because in response to a challenge David had a confident heart. When King Saul seemed skeptical that David could fight Goliath look at what David says:

"When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!" 1 Samuel 17:34-37 (NLT)

What's he saying? He's saying that he's not worried about Goliath- not because he's big enough to take Goliath down by himself but because he believes this battle is something God is calling him to. And as far as David was concerned, if God calls you to it, God will get you through it. It's a very similar sentiment as one of the more famous passages from the New

Testament. Maybe you've heard the phrase, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." We Christians love to quote that verse but what does it really mean?

What it seems to have come to mean in 21st century America is that if I want a bigger house than I can get a bigger house because I can do anything... if I want a nicer car then I can get a nicer car because I can do anything... if I set my sights on a particular guy or girl and decide I want to marry them then it will happen because I can do anything... But is that what that verse is saying? That anything I want I can have just by incanting those words and thereby draw anything I desire towards me by the power of Jesus? I don't think so. Paul is talking in Philippians 4 about his ability to handle whatever hardships come his way as he goes about his duties bestowed upon him by God. I love the way the Living Bible paraphrase puts this verse:

For I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power. Philippians 4:13 (TLB)

That's in essence what David is saying to Saul. He's not saying he can do anything he sets his mind to... he's saying that anything God calls him to is a done deal as far as he's concerned. And David feels strongly that God is calling him to this battle. Because of that faith and that understanding of his place in God's world David has a TON of confidence. And he's spent a life time (as short as that may have been up to this point for the young man) cultivating that trust and confidence not in himself but in his God. God had proved Himself faithful over and over and it gave David a brand of confidence that nobody saw coming. Nobody could understand it. But do you know what? Nobody could stand against it either. He was such an unlikely candidate for becoming the king of Israel that even his own father didn't think to call him in from the fields when the prophet told him to gather his sons because one of them would be the next king. On the day that a new king was chosen it wasn't the oldest or the strongest that was picked and yet in the life of this boy giants fell and entire nations would tremble at the sound of his name. Why? Because David lived his life beyond-the-sun. He saw everything happening under-the-sun but he rarely fell for the illusion that what he saw going on under-the-sun was true reality or that it would have the last word. Because of that God changed the world with David's life.

God can do something similar in your life if you let Him. Maybe not on the scale that He worked in David's life but God calls on all of us to live quiet lives of greatness in which we change the world from within the sphere of influence God has placed us in. If we are willing to look at life under-the-sun as the illusion and build our lives on what only exist beyond-the-sun that shift will change the course of your life forever and unleash a flow of God's power from Heaven into your life that you never dreamed was possible. David did have a confident heart but it flowed from the servant heart that he had developed. How about you? Do you have the confidence that if God has called you to it then God will get you through it?

Thursday Reflection: So in response to need David had a servant's heart. In response to a challenge he had a confident heart and that brings us to today- in response to success he had a humble heart. Now that word, "humble" is a tough one to translate into English. When we think of the word "humble" our minds conjure up ideas of shy, self deprecating and modest. But that's not the picture the Bible has in mind. The picture the Bible has in mind is

illustrated in these next few scriptures of the story of David and Goliath. David is confident he can kill Goliath so king Saul tries to give David his armor but it doesn't fit the little boy. He can't move while he's wearing it so he decides to go into battle in what feels natural- his shepherding uniform. So down the hill David walks wearing a peasant boy's tunic and carrying a shepherds crook and a sling. He kneels down by the creek bed and picks up 5 stones and then he stands to face his giant. Look at what happens next:

"Am I a dog," (Goliath) roared at David, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods. "Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!" Goliath yelled. David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies-the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." 1 Samuel 17:43-45 (NCV)

It had to be a seriously surreal moment for Goliath, for the Philistine army... for the Israelites who were watching. What is going on? Goliath tries to intimidate David but David isn't frightened... he's confident and he's humble. And that word- humble- doesn't mean what we usually think it to mean. We think of it as conciliatory, right? Deflecting, self deprecating... but that's not what that word means at all. In fact, I think this story is a perfect picture of humility. Humility as the Bible defines it is extreme confidence because of the One Who fights with us and for us.

All of us have some kind of giant in our lives that we either have to run from or stand and do battle with. It may be a spiritual giant, or a physical health giant, or a emotional or psychological giant. God intends for us to fight these giants with His power and His strength. And when we do that confidence and humility together are the spirit with which we should approach these giants. In fact, do you know what the last thing you're supposed to do, according to the Bible, before you engage your giant? You're supposed to talk some serious trash! At least that's what David does:

"Today the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll kill you and cut off your head. Today I'll feed the bodies of the Philistine soldiers to the birds of the air and the wild animals. Then all the world will know there is a God in Israel! Everyone gathered here will know the LORD does not need swords or spears to save people. The battle belongs to him, and he will hand you over to us." As Goliath came near to attack him, David ran quickly to meet him.

1 Samuel 17:46-48 (NCV)

David ran quickly to meet him. Wow! That's crazy talk, isn't it? But David was not worried. He knew Who was on his side. And so when Goliath started towards David what does David do? He runs to his giant. And it happens just the way David thought it would. He knocks Goliath down with a stone and then cuts off the head of the giant. It's an amazing moment in story of the people of God but it's more than that. It's also a lesson for all of us with giants in our lives (and I think that's just about all of us...). If God is for us, who can be against us?

But how do I unleash this power in my life? How do I, like David, win my battles with giants in my own life? Well, you have to be prepared in advance. David didn't walk down the hill towards Goliath unprepared. It might have seemed that way but he had been preparing his entire life. How? By learning to trust God. By cultivating the presence of God in his life. David was already a man (boy?) after God's own heart before he ever stepped onto that

battle field which is what equipped him to defeat Goliath. It wasn't really the stone that knocked Goliath down- it was David's connection with God Himself. Without that connection I have a feeling this story ends very differently. David has spent his life cultivating a connection with God that prepared him for whatever life threw his way. This part of David's story was just another chapter in a lifetime of trusting the Lord with all of his heart, not depending on his own understanding, seeking His will in all he did and then taking the steps (with a servant's heart, a confident heart and a humble heart) that the Lord placed before him.

I know that seems strange- how can this be a story about servanthood and humility? Aren't those things signs of weakness and not signs of strength. You'd think so, right? Especially if you're looking at things from an under-the-sun perspective. But it turns out that beyond-the-sun (the place where true reality resides and the place where servanthood and humility are actually signs of power and strength and not weakness) has a very different economy than we have down here under-the-sun.

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. *Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT)*

Even His death on the cross seemed like it was a surrender to the forces of darkness but He knew better. It looked like weakness but it was actually the most potent attack the spiritual world has ever seen. On the cross He unleashed the greatest expression of spiritual power ever seen in this universe. And it was a perfect picture of humility. You want a heart "after God's own heart"? This is part of it. Be humble. Not weak... humble. There can be no greater expression of power in your life than when you confidently, humbly choose to serve others because you believe God has called you to. Sometimes it might look like slaying giants, sometimes it might look like washing feet. But from God's perspective it's all power and victory.

So how about it? Are you ready to become more powerful than you could have ever imagined? Are you ready to become a man/woman after God's own heart? Then go out today with confident humility and keep your eyes opened for any need that God might want to use you to meet. And when you see a need that you believe God is asking you to meet, run to meet it with confident humility and God will use you to change the world.

Friday Reflection: So to sort of review where we've been this week we've been looking at the life of King David. A man after-God's-own-heart. A man whose life defined what the path of wisdom looks like. A man who trusted the Lord with all his heart, did not depend on his own understanding. A man who sought God's will in all he did and because of that God showed him which path to take. And it led to a legendary life that we are still talking about 3,000 years later. But David's life wasn't perfect. David had some amazing victories as a result of trusting the Lord with all his heart but he also had some legendary downfalls when he started depending on his own understanding rather than continuing to trust God.

One day when David was at his palace and his army was off fighting the enemy he saw a beautiful woman bathing on her roof. Her name was Bathsheba and I always thought that was her name because David saw her taking a bath. Turns out there's no connection. The word for bath in Hebrew sounds nothing like Bathsheba so that was a childhood bit of wonder that was snuffed out by my seminary studies. Anyways, David fell in lust with her (not the same as falling in love- not even close) and had her brought to the palace. Her husband was one of David's soldiers and was off with the army fighting for his king and David took her and had an affair with her. She got pregnant and David knew they'd be found out if he didn't think of something so he called for her husband, Uriah, to come home and report to him on the battle. David figured after his report Uriah would go home and spend the night with his wife and then 8 months later when Bathsheba had a baby everyone would just think it was premature.

But Uriah was too noble for that. His fellow soldiers didn't get to come home and spend the night with their wives so neither would he. David was stuck. So he committed an even greater sin- he sent Uriah back to the battle with a note to the general. The general was to put Uriah in the most dangerous situations possible until he had been killed by the enemy. And that is exactly what happened. David graciously took the grieving widow into his palace and married her and soon Bathsheba was pregnant. David thought it was over.

But it wasn't.

The prophet of God came to see David one day. He told David a story:

"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." 2 Samuel 12:1-6 (NLT)

David didn't see the irony. Yet. But he would soon. Because in one of the most dramatic moments in all of human history the prophet Nathan pulls back the curtain that David thought was covering his sin:

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! 2 Samuel 12:7 (NLT)

How would David respond? We know how the previous king- Saul- had reacted when he was rebuked by the prophet of God, and we now know how David's son Solomon reacted when rebuked by someone speaking for God (he tried to kill the guy). How would David react? And this leads us to the final lesson in our study of the life of David as it relates to a life of wisdom. We know that in response to need David had a servant's heart. In response to a challenge he had a confident heart. And we know that in response to success he had a humble heart. Now we learn what happens to a man-after-God's-own-heart in response to failure- David had a repentant heart:

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." 2 Samuel 12:13 (NLT)

Here's what we know about how David handled the times when he sinned- he repented. He admitted his guilt. He asked for forgiveness. And he "repented". That word "repent" is an interesting one. We don't use it often in English anymore except in church. What exactly does it mean to repent. Turns out it's a lot more than just saying "I'm sorry." To repent is to turn around and go the other way. Most of my fellow Alaskans know that as you drive around the Anchorage, Eagle River, Palmer, Wasilla, Girdwood areas of our state you from time to time will catch a glimpse of water. I remember when I first moved to Alaska I came here from Southern California. Whenever I saw the ocean I knew that was west of me.

But not here. I'd be with someone in downtown Anchorage and I'd see the ocean and I'd say, "what's that?" The inlet was the answer. Then I'd be on the Glenn on the way to the Valley and I'd catch a glimpse of ocean and I'd say, "what's that then?" The inlet. Then I'd be headed south towards Seward and I'd see the ocean to my right. "What's that then?" The inlet. It was all the inlet. BUT, it was two different "arms" of the same inlet. And those of you who live in this area know that arm is called the Knik Arm and the other is the Turnagain Arm. Turns out that when Captain Cook sailed into what would later be called "Cook Inlet" he went up the Knik Arm first looking for the Northwest Passage but when he hit a deadend he "repented" and when he tried the other arm he had to "turnagain".

When he said he repented he didn't have to explain that he turned around and went the opposite direction. That's what the word meant- to turn around and go the other direction. It still does. So when David "repents" he doesn't just say "sorry". He makes a change in his life. This wasn't the only time David would need to repent during his lifetime but it's probably the most publicized. Here's something he wrote about this experience in one of his psalms:

O loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my sins. Wash me, cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again. For I admit my shameful deed. Psalm 51:1-3 (TLB)

David was FAR from perfect. So am I. So are you. David made some massive mistakes. Committed what he himself called "shameful deeds". And yet even with all that the Bible made this statement about his life:

David had served God's purpose in his own generation. Acts 13:36 (NLT)

David was a man after God's own heart in spite of his many failures. Why? Because whenever he failed he would confess his sin and repent. No matter who you are or what you've done or where you've been or what's happened to you the same thing can be true for you. You can be a man or woman after God's own heart. How? By walking the same path David walked. Live a life that is so connected to God that your heart beats with His. Learn to hear His voice and respond to it (one of the definitions of wisdom). Then as you go about your life if you see a need that God is asking you to meet then meet it with a servant's heart. If it seems scary or challenging meet that challenge with a confident heart. When you see success in your life respond with a humble heart. And when you fail make sure you respond with a repentant heart. Then...

Repeat as necessary.