

2 Samuel 1:1-16

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Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Steve Palframan

[0 : 0 0] we were going to have our reading, which Anna is going to do for us. And it is from the book of 2 Samuel, chapter 1, verses 1 to 16. It's on page 304. Anna will give a pause long enough for you all to find that in the Bible.

2 Samuel, chapter 1. Is that long enough? Good morning. After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days.

On the third day, a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. Where have you come from? David asked him.

He answered, I have escaped from the Israelite camp. What happened? David asked. Tell me. The men fled from the battle, he replied. Many of them fell and died.

And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead. Then David said to the young man, who brought him... Oh, sorry. And David said to the young man who brought him the report, How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?

[1 : 1 1] I happen to be on Mount Gilboa, the young man said. And there was Saul leaning on his spear. And the chariots and their drivers in hot pursuit. When he turned round and saw me, he called out to me.

And I said, what can I do? He asked me, who are you? An Amalekite, I answered. Then he said to me, stand here by me and kill me. I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.

So I stood beside him and killed him, Because I knew that after he'd fallen, he could not survive. I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm, And I brought them here to my Lord.

Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted, Till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, And for the army of the Lord, And for the nation of Israel, Because they had fallen by the sword.

David said to the young man who brought him the report, Where are you from? I am a foreigner, an Amalekite, he answered. David asked him, Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?

[2 : 1 8] Then David called one of his men and said, Go, strike him down. So he struck him down and he died. But David had said to him, Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, I killed the Lord's anointed.

Amen. It really is an exercise in faith, isn't it? Coming to look at these ancient stories, With the trust and confidence that it is through hearing these And understanding these stories rightly, That we are really not only helped, But we are pointed to the Lord Jesus and saved Through the good news of the scriptures.

So it's an exercise in faith for us all, For me as a preacher, For all of us as we listen. And so if writing notes is helpful to you, And it helps you concentrate, Then do it. If it's not, Don't.

Just sit and listen. Great. Let me pray again for the Lord's help as we come to his word. Let me pray. Father, we want to pray just quietly in our hearts now, That you might help us in these moments, To listen carefully, To understand properly.

But even more than just understanding with our minds, We pray that in our hearts, We might be moved to love and trust you. Oh Lord, We know that we are prone to wander from you. Bring us back to faith in Christ, To trust and confidence in him this morning, We pray.

[3 : 40] In Jesus name. Amen. Well, I want you to imagine the scene with me as we start. It's at 1010 BC. You're an Amalekite, And you are on the run.

You've been involved in a raid on a foreign city, And it was successful. So you managed to burn the city, You captured the women and the children, You took the spoils of war, And you had an amazing party.

You ate lots of food, You drank lots of wine, You were in a kind of state of oblivion. But then your party was interrupted.

Your party was interrupted by the owner of the wives and the children, Who had turned up. He was a warrior called David. He'd come with 400 of his best troops, And he arrives with you having this amazing party, Celebrating the fact that you've captured all his wives and children.

What do you think happens next? Well, it's carnage, isn't it? Drunk men do not fight well, And men robbed of their wives and children show no mercy.

[4 : 58] So the battle went on, It went on all the way through the night, Started at dusk, And carried right on until the next day. And only a few of you escaped David's men By jumping on camels and running north.

And that's you. A little while later, Having escaped that battle, You find yourself on the scene of another one. Well, of what's left of it anyway. Our bodies lying on the ground, The victors are working their way round, Finishing people off and taking the spoil.

Collecting anything of any value And leaving the bodies to the wild animals. And as you're tiptoeing around the battle scene, Trying to avoid being noticed, You hear a distant groan, The sound of a soldier who is still alive, And who is calling out for help.

When you get over to this soldier, You realize that this soldier is none other than King Saul. Himself, the king of Israel. Everyone knows him. He's taller than the average bloke.

He's handsome. He has a crown on his head. He has an armlet on his arm. And he has a spear with him. He always had a spear by his side. But here he is, Badly injured, Calling for your help.

[6 : 04] Stand here, He says to you, And kill me. I'm in agony. I don't want those Philistines to have the satisfaction Of finishing me off. So you kill me, please.

Now here's the question for you this morning. What do you do? What do you do? You know, He's asking you to kill him, But it's a big deal, isn't he?

He's the king. The king of a powerful nation. This isn't someone you mess with. But then as you're thinking, They're going thinking, What am I going to do?

Am I going to kill this guy? Or am I going to show him mercy and just leave him? What am I going to do? Well then you have this brilliant brainwave. Because you remember that King Saul and you have a mutual enemy.

David. You've just robbed his wives and children and he's after you. King Saul has been after David for a long time. So you come across a brainwave and you think, Huh, what an opportunity.

[7 : 06] An opportunity too good to miss. If I kill Saul and take his crown and his armlet and his spear to David, Then David is sure going to forgive me, isn't he?

For stealing his wife and his children. So without a second thought, you pick up a sword, You push it through the chest of King Saul. You take off his crown and his armlet and you run to claim your forgiveness from David.

Now that in a nutshell is our story in 2 Samuel chapter 1. Or at least it's the story that the Amalekite tells in our passage. And for the next few minutes, I just want us to look at the main characters in the story and then come at the end to think about how it might apply to us.

So let's take a closer look firstly at the Amalekites. The Amalekites. Now, they've had their party crashed, haven't we? Or there they are having their party just before David crashed it.

And if you look at the opening verse of our passage, you'll find that David is in a place called Ziklag, having returned from striking down the Amalekites. Ziklag was the Philistine city that David had been given by the king of Gath.

[8 : 08] And he'd been living there to try and escape King Saul, who had been trying to kill him. Over the page back in 1 Samuel chapter 30, you read the story of the Amalekite attack on the Ziklag.

David was away. He was trying to join the battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. And the Amalekites seized on the defenseless city with David away and had come and attacked it, burned it with fire, taken the women and the children captive.

It's a terrible, terrible crime. It's the worst kind of robbery, isn't it? It's like arriving from home to find that someone's not only broken into your house and taken your stuff, but they've taken your family as well.

And that makes David mad, as you might expect. And he goes after the Amalekites. Eventually, he catches up with them, catches up with them at their party as they're celebrating their victory. And 1 Samuel tells us that David has only 400 men against his vast army because the rest of them are far too tired.

But even so, they defeat the Amalekites and rescue the wives and children, with the Bible telling us that only 400 of the Amalekites get away on camels. That's what's just happened. And David is now back home.

[9 : 11] He's been home for two days. When in verse 2, in walks the young man who has torn clothes and dust on his head or soil on his head. And he bows down on the ground to David.

Now, in those days, having dust or soil on your head is not because you've fallen over in a puddle. It's a sign that someone has died and you're showing sort of empathy with them. You have been buried with them, if you like.

You have soil on your head like they have soil on their head under the ground. And you tear your clothes open to mourn them to show your sadness. Anyway, this young man tells David that King Saul and his son Jonathan have died in the battle along with a whole load of Israelites and the Philistines have won.

David, if you remember from Anna's reading, wants to check out the story. So he asks the young man how he knows. To which, if you look down at verse 6, the Amalekite tells the story that we started with.

A story which isn't included in one Samuel. And you have no real idea whether it's a true story or not. Or whether the details have been twisted by this Amalekite just to get his own way. But whatever the details, he does have Saul's crown and armlet in verse 10.

[10 : 15] So he must have been there or thereabouts. David never questions the truth of the story. But he does ask the man to identify himself. To which he says, verse 13, I am the son of a foreigner and Amalekite.

Now just stop and think about that for a moment. This is a crunch moment in the story, isn't it? The young man thinks that coming to David with Saul's crown and with his armlet is enough to let him off the fact that he's just raided David's hometown and carried off his wife and children.

Saul's death saves my life. That's the Amalekite's reckoning. But what happens in the end? Well, look down at verse 15. David says, go strike him down.

Go execute him. So the Amalekite dies there in Ziklag with verse 16 saying it's his own fault for killing King Saul. Now we'll think about that some more in a moment. But the next character, let's think about the next character.

That's King Saul. King Saul. Now I grant you that King Saul isn't a major character in this story because he's dead, right? So he doesn't do a fat lot in our story. He dies in the battle along with his sons and a whole load of other Israelites just as God had said would happen.

[11 : 26] One Samuel telling us that Saul died by falling on his own sword. Whether or not it was the Amalekite, we don't know. But the thing that we need to see in order to understand the significance of Saul for our story this morning is how he is referred to.

So in verse 4, if you look, the Amalekite calls him just Saul. He doesn't call him King Saul or anything else. He just calls him Saul. But in verse 14 and verse 16, David calls him by a special name.

Let me read those verses to you again. David asked him, Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? Then David called one of his men and said, Go strike him down.

So he struck him down and he died. For David said to him, Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, I killed not Saul but the Lord's anointed.

David calls him the Lord's anointed. Literally the word there is Messiah. This is amazing. David sees that Saul, despite all his failings and all his weaknesses, has been God's chosen king.

[12 : 31] His sent one. The one that God had chosen to lead his people. And that meant that his life was precious and it should be spared and not taken. And David says in verse 14 that the Amalekite should have known that.

Clearly, if he knew enough to know who he was by the crown and the armlet, he knew enough to know you shouldn't kill him. I think it's probably an important aside here as well.

Joni Erikson-Tarda points out in her book called When Is It Right to Die? That David's assumption in the passage here is that it is always morally wrong to take the life of someone, even if they're asking you to do so and even if they're coming towards the end of their life.

Do you notice that? Let me say that again. David's assumption here is that it is morally wrong to take the life of someone, even if they're asking you and even if they are coming towards the end of their life anyway.

Now, you need to know that because you need to remember that because that's going to be significant in our country in years to come. I am sure of it. Point is, euthanasia or assisted suicide is morally wrong in the scriptures, even when death is near and assistance is requested.

[13 : 38] It's just an aside. The fact here that this is the Messiah of Israel just heightens the guilt of the Amalekite, which makes Saul in our passage the murdered Messiah, doesn't it?

He is the murdered Messiah. Now, the final character to look at is King David or David as the king in waiting. Samuel had anointed him as king way back in 1 Samuel chapter 16.

He'd risen to fame in Israel through things like defeating Goliath and winning lots of battles. But King Saul, you might remember, hated him and kept chasing away, even trying to kill him to stop him from becoming king.

But despite David having had lots of opportunities to kill Saul and take revenge, he never does. Why? Well, because he's sure that Saul is God's anointed king and it's God's job to make the king and not his.

And in the way our story is told this morning, the way the passage is laid out, it places David's reaction to Saul right at the center of the passage, right at the center of the story. So verses 1 to 10 is really a conversation between David and the Amalekites.

[14 : 43] The Amalekite comes and speaks to David. And then at the end of the passage in verses 13 to 16, you've got another conversation between David and the Amalekite. And in between, the bit that the author really wants you to look at and zoom in on and focus is David's reaction to Saul's death.

Verses 11 and 12. Let me read those to you again. Look down in your Bibles. Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the army of the Lord and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

Now that I think brings us to the big point, the big lesson for us this morning. And it's there in that contrast between David and the Amalekite. The Amalekite kills God's anointed to get his own way.

Thinking that by killing Saul, he will secure for himself the life that he really wants, or at least secure the pardon from David for being part of the Amalekite tribe who stole his family.

But in contrast, David, the righteous one, the man after God's heart, mourns for the sword that kills the Lord's anointed, tearing his clothes and weeping and going out without food and leading others to do the same because the sword has killed God's king and destroyed his army.

[16 : 01] And that's the point of the story, right? You understand the characters of the story by understanding their opposed reactions to the death of the Lord's anointed.

In other words, if you want to know who's good and bad in the story in 2 Samuel chapter 1, you look at their reactions to the death of the Lord's anointed king.

Wickedness dismisses God's king, takes his life just cheaply to achieve its own ends. While righteousness longs for the life and the success of God's king.

Let me say that's still true today. That's the point of the story for us. That you and I, we see ourselves and we understand ourselves.

We see our destinies and our futures in our reactions to the death of the Lord's anointed king. That's where you find out who you are. Jump forward in history and you'll know that the real king of God's people is not Saul, it's not even David.

[17 : 03] The fulfillment of all those people is King Jesus. King not of a nation of Israel, but the perfect king of God's eternal heavenly kingdom. A kingdom that you glimpse now in the life of a local church like this, but you see gloriously in the return of the Lord Jesus.

And to use the words of the passage, Jesus is the Messiah, the murdered Messiah. The Bible tells us King Jesus dies, not in a battle, but on a cross.

And so just like in 2 Samuel 1, you find the good and the bad from their reactions to the death of the king. So now today you see who we are in our reactions to the death of God's king.

You might remember that just before his death, Jesus told the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem a parable. It's called the parable of the tenants.

In this story, Jesus pictures himself as the son of a vineyard owner who is going back to the vineyard to collect the rent of the people who are running the vineyard.

[18 : 05] But the people running the vineyard are a bunch of wicked tenants and they see the son coming and they plan to kill him. But the sting of the story as Jesus tells it is that he tells it to expose the Jewish leaders.

He says to them, look, why do you hate me so much? Well, it's because you know who I am. You know, the tenants say, let's kill the son and the inheritance will be ours.

If we kill the son, we get the vineyard, right? That's what they think. In other words, let's do away with God's Messiah so that we can get what we want for ourselves. That's the Amalekites heart, isn't it?

Let's do away with Jesus and we can be Lord and King. We can get what we want. You know, we might not have the chance to shout out in the crowd for Pilate to kill Jesus. We might not be able to physically drive the nails in.

But we must see that at its heart, sin is not naughtiness, but a desire to push God out of the way so that we can live life for ourselves, get what we want.

[19 : 06] It's a murderous intent towards God's kingly rule. It's like the Amalekite. I mean, think about it. It's much easier, isn't it, to get along at work without the rule of Jesus.

School is a much happier place for me if I don't talk about following Jesus or trusting him. You know, the people around me seem to be perfectly happy enough without him. Why would I bring him up? Besides, it seems as if life would be so much better if it was dictated by my life choices, by doing what I want, by living for myself.

So I'm tempted to ignore Jesus or just get rid of him altogether so I can do my own thing. But in 2 Samuel chapter 1, that's the Amalekite, right? And it doesn't end well for him.

You know the story. That's the warning. Don't be the Amalekite. Don't be the Amalekite. But there's one more thing, I think, to say about the story because there's a twist in this.

Because not only is King Jesus like King Saul, he is also better than King Saul. Better than even King David. The story tells the gospel in a kind of ironic twist.

[20 : 16] Think about it. Here we've got a wicked Amalekite who thinks that he can purchase forgiveness by murdering God's anointed king. Thinking that killing the Messiah would mean David would overlook the fact that he'd robbed his wife and kids while he was out of town.

But he failed and he died for his wickedness. You know, in 2 Samuel chapter 1, the death of the Lord's anointed king is not sufficient for your forgiveness. Right? Right? Why is that?

Because King Saul is not King Jesus. The real Messiah, the real king, Jesus, dies on a cross giving up his life.

And he does purchase our forgiveness. Stunning, isn't it? As the sword of the soldier pierces the side of the Lord Jesus, from it flows forgiveness for all who would turn to him.

The death of the real Messiah does pay for your forgiveness. You see, here's the story of 2 Samuel chapter 1 for us this morning. It's not really 1010 BC anymore, is it?

[21 : 18] You're not really an Amalekite running from King David. No, it's 2024. And you're not on the run from David for robbing his wife and kids. Instead, all of us by nature are on the run from the Lord.

We've robbed the life that the Lord gave us. We've robbed the gifts that he's given us, the blessings that he's showered upon us. And we've used them for ourselves and for our own glory.

And the battleground is not Mount Gilboa. It's school or the workplace, the home or the streets. Where it's easier to ignore him completely or do away with him. Planning life without any reference or notice to Jesus.

Breaking his rules, ignoring his priorities. Failing to worship him in any meaningful sense of the word. Hoping perhaps that just a nodding glance and an occasional attendance at church might just be enough.

But we know it's not. And then here in 2 Samuel chapter 1, we stumble upon the dying King Jesus. Dying in our place for our sin.

[22 : 16] So that we don't need to run anymore. Because there he purchases for us forgiveness through his shed blood. So that with tears like David's, we can weep at the wickedness that held him to the cross.

Not a wickedness that overpowered him. But our wickedness that he took on himself to die in our place. The better King Jesus. The better Messiah. It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished.

His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished. If you look down at verse 13. You see the Amalekite standing before David to give an account of himself.

Look at what David says. Where are you from? Where are you from? You know, I'll give you 30 seconds to justify your existence to me. I'm the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite. He answers. Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?

David asks him. Who do you think you were? Killing King Saul? Go strike him down, comes the verdict. It's not hard, is it, to imagine us to be in the same position.

[23 : 23] Not before David, but before the Lord. To whom one day all of us will give an account. Where are you from? We're asked by the Lord. Well, I'm the son of a foreigner.

I'm a sinner, Lord. That's who I am. Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? We're asked.

There's no answer to that, is there? Justify yourself for living life for yourself. Justify yourself for ignoring Christ. Justify yourself for worshipping yourself and not him.

You can't do it. You can't do it. Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? I have no idea, Lord. I have no answer for you, Lord. I have nothing. I have absolutely nothing.

And so we await the verdict, don't we? Go strike him down. It doesn't come. It doesn't come. Instead, what comes? This verdict. I struck him down so that you might live.

[24 : 25] Isn't that wonderful? What a great, great story. A gospel story of an anointed king laying down his life to purchase your forgiveness and my forgiveness.

I struck him down so you might live. Come, join my eternal kingdom, says the Lord to us. Let me pray and then we'll sing together. Heavenly Father, we confess that there is an Amalekite in each of us.

We treat rather lightly who you are and your rule and your reign in order to get our own way. But we thank you that King Jesus gave his life to purchase our forgiveness.

Thank you that coming to him and trusting in him means that we don't get stricken down by you. But you forgive us and show us mercy and grace and welcome us into your eternal kingdom.

We thank you that Jesus is better than Saul. We thank you that his death is better than Saul's. We thank you that he's better than David, more gracious and kind and forgiving.

[25 : 39] And so we come to you with joy and thankfulness this morning that all the word, the whole Bible, sings of the glory of Jesus who gave his life that we might be forgiven.

And so we praise you in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.