



+ This week at church we reached our penultimate sermon from the series. In 1 Sam 18 we see, in microcosm, David's rocketing in popularity and prominence. We then tracked two key responses to that.

+ The Rise of the true king...

We've known for a few weeks that Saul has begun a long and slow decline, and that David is rising; in this chapter his growing success is charted.

There are repeated key words and ideas set at the heart of the chapter highlighting its main themes. The first is that of his success (V5, V14, V15, V30) - Everything that David does prospers! But there is someone behind that success and that someone is not David - it is because the Lord was with him (V12, V14, V28).

His success is practically seen in military terms which is surprising because Saul was a warrior king, taller than anybody else, a king like the other nations-but now it is David who lead the troops into battle and is loved because of that (V13, V16). It almost feels as if Saul is shirking responsibility again, not acting in a kingly way.

+ The Responses to the true king...

There is a majority response and a minority response to David.

- The majority response

Simply put the majority responses that David is loved! We see that right through the chapter.

It is famously first there with Jonathan at the start of the chapter. We noted here that people often misunderstand this friendship claiming that there must be a homosexual angle to it, however this reveals to us more about our society then about what was

actually there in the text. For example the word love is use later in the chapter as to how the nation response to David Clearly there is not a sexual element there!

Problem is in our culture close friendship has been sexualised, when there is intimacy we assume there must always be something more. We also noted that in our culture close friendship is simply uncommon - maybe that's partly why we feel uncomfortable with the closeness of David and Jonathan? We noted how we are a nation of connected but lonely people. Perhaps consider in your home group the importance of friendship and how we as a church can combat loneliness.

We also noted that Jonathan responds to David not by suspicion but rather by unity, not by fear but rather by friendship in V4 as he gives him his clothes et cetera he is symbolically giving up his position for the sake of Gods chosen king!

As well as being loved by Jonathan he is admired by the women (V6-7), Loved by Saul's daughter (V20) and to top it all off loved by everyone (V16).

As well as being loved though, like marmite David is also hated...

- The minority response

We sense a mix of negative toxic emotions in Saul -there's envy that the song about him shows David as more glorious, envy is quickly followed by anger and insecurity (V8), this then morphs into fear (V 12, 15, V 29) that fear is then acted out in a couple of different ways where essentially Saul tries to get rid of David:

1. In V10 and V11 we read not about a plan, but rather a moment of passion as Saul flings the spear at David - attempting to pin him to the wall. We considered that the mention of "the spear" was likely a deliberate method of tying Saul up with goliath (who also had "the spear"). Perhaps we are meant to see Saul is a "Goliath-like-enemy" threatening the people of God and the true king?
2. In V17 we read of Saul's plan to attempt to marry him to one of his daughters! This seems to be him seeking to charm David into a reckless battle against the Philistine! Or else putting him onto the battlefield as a marked man. The initial plan does not work because of David's humility, but his subsequent plan is more successful as David is happy to earn Saul's second daughter's hand in marriage. The dowry that he must pay though is 100 Philistine foreskins! Ouch. It sounds like a gruesome detail but in those days it was a common way of bringing back evidence to prove numbers of enemy who had been killed. David in fact goes above and beyond by bringing back 200.

David of course is not killed and rather Saul ends the chapter in a worse place than where he began. What Saul said at the beginning in V8 seems to have an air of inevitability about it, Saul speaks more than he knows.

We finished with a question and an encouragement:

+ The question was - **how do we deal with those in the Lord is blessing?**

Are we more like Saul envying and resenting? Or like Jonathan willing to encourage and even relinquish our role and rights for the sake of God King?

+ The encouragement was - **to remember that we cannot stop the final crowning of God's king.**

In this chapter and beyond David is certain of the endgame, he has been anointed by the Lord privately and will one-day be publicly crowned. As the story unfolds we see that he is humble and patient because he knows when is coming. Because he is a man after God's own heart so we can leave it to the Lord. No we are not David but the equivalent for us might be the fact that we know where history is going, we know that God's kingdom will finally be seen to be king by all. So when things feel difficult or confusing or frustrating whether internationally or personally we can have a confidence that God is in charge and is bringing all things together under the lordship of Christ (Eph 1v10 or Rev 7v9-10) etc

Here are some questions to help you begin to apply this chapter in your groups...

- pick up some of the key themes and ideas in this chapter... What is this a chapter about? Note some of the different responses to David, how do they project forward to Jesus? In what way are they different?

- do you agree that we are very connected but a lonely nation? Why do you think this is (multiple reasons)? Would you say you have many friends?

- do you find it easy to be encouraged when God pours out his grace on other people? Or are we those who envy what the Lord does in or through others? i.e. are we more like Saul or Jonathan?

- in this chapter and beyond David seems to have a firm confidence that he would be crowned as king and so was able to live accordingly as he related to Saul. How easy do we find it to remember that one day Jesus will be seen as king by all? Does this change our day today? How?

- Saul does seem to be painted as a kind of an "internal-Goliath-enemy". As if he was more of an issue than the Philistine giant. How do we react within the people of God when there are individuals who seem to be blocking God's purposes? What lessons can we learn from David in this?