



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
December 4, 2016

1 SAMUEL 11

1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] Lord, we know that when you speak that we stand on holy ground like you did with Moses in the Old Testament. When he was confronted with your word, you told him to take off his shoes because where he stands is holy ground. When you came in contact with Isaiah and he saw that vision of the angels, the angel came down and touched his lips and he said, “Whoa is me.” Lord we respect your word in the same way that Isaiah experienced it. When Saul in the New Testament experienced you personally, he fell off of his horse to the ground because he came into contact with the God of the universe. So Lord, in this moment we’re about to open your word. We know that as we do, something very supernatural and very spiritual takes place because your word is opened up and has the ability and the capacity to touch our hearts if we’re open to it. So Lord, I ask at this moment that you would make our hearts soft (not hard), open and receptive to your word, willing to listen to what you might have to say for us. We ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.

Each week we try to take Jesus home. What I mean by take Jesus home is we try to put Him into practice in our lives. In order to do that, we have to approach the scriptures and understand what they say. I want to show you the process that I go through when I create a message and I want to show you the process you should be going through when you study the Bible on your own.

We start with God’s word over here on the left, the Bible passage. The first thing we want to do is understand what the Bible means in that context. That word is interpretation. We want to know what the Bible means. We’re not just saying what does the Bible mean to me. We’re saying what does the Bible mean in its original context when it was originally written. What does it mean, what does that story look like in that particular situation. That’s what we’re looking for first. We must start there in order to properly move to application or we find ourselves in error. What we’re looking for in the midst of that interpretation is this timeless principle that’s valid, not only for those people back there in that story, but it’s valid for us today. It’s valid for every culture, every age, every historical period. Those are timeless principles.

Then from those timeless principles we’ll bring it down to our hearts. It might be our heart as a church, but more often what we’re doing is trying to apply it to our own lives personally. I’m looking today from God’s word and I’m asking, “How does this apply to me? What can I do when I walk out of here that will help me to be different?” That’s the application where I say, “Yes, I’ve got something. I’ve learned something from this text.”

Now in 1 Samuel 11 I'm going to show you where I think we're going and then I'll show you how we get there because I want you to see the process that's taking place. I'm going to show you today a couple different principles that come out of the story.

One of the parts of the story is they made a treaty with these guys. The principle is whenever a treaty is made, compromise is part of the result. We have to be careful about treaties, especially when we make treaties with the world. That's a timeless principle. Usually timeless principles don't contain the word 'we.' I try to avoid that, but I just said that. So what I mean is treaties with the world are dangerous, often involving compromise. It's a timeless principle. Now we come down to application; we use the word 'we' and 'I' and so on. So I need to be careful about compromising with the world.

Another principle I'm going to see here is these guys found their solution. These people who were trapped and in a difficult situation are going to find their solution in a community. I would suggest that the principle is that God has created a community where solutions are made available. Then add the application. I'm going to make the application today to the church community that God has allowed us to be a part of. So that's the process we're going to take today.

I want you to see that starting in 1 Samuel 11. We have to go back into the story and see what it means. *Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you."*

So Nahash the Ammonite is the enemy. The Ammonites were enemies of the people of Israel. Jabesh Gilead are people of Israel. So these are Israelites in this particular city or pair of cities that are there. They are under pressure. The pressure of the army is coming around and creating a siege.

Now a siege was a military operation where the people who lived out in the countryside would often go into the fortified walls when they were being attacked to be protected against the enemy as they would fight. However, sometimes the enemy would surround the city and prevent people from going in and out, thus preventing water and food from entering the city, eventually depleting the resources so they would either die or they would have to give up. That's the military event that's taking place here.

So it says the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, who's the leader here, *"Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you."* What they're saying is, "We're under pressure here in our situation so we will give up our freedom. I'll serve you. Let's make a treaty. Let's compromise here so that we don't die. So their choice is death or a treaty." That's how they're viewing it.

I don't think it's often that simple. In life even sometimes we think it's that simple. Either I'm going to get taken advantage of or I'm going to get angry with this person. So we choose to get angry with this person instead of finding another alternative that may be more appropriate. I would suggest that as we look at this passage this is what we're going to see the interpretation that the enemy is there. So the people are under pressure, and under pressure the people offered a treaty to the enemy.

The principle is the world pressures believers, and treaties are dangerous because they often lead to compromise. That's true in any culture, any historical period of time. It's a timeless principle. The application is I need to be careful about compromising God's truth when I'm under pressure. Sometimes we can do that. We want to be careful about compromising God's truth when we feel like we're under pressure.

Now that I've done the homework, my own study, and I've come to those conclusions and see that, then my job is to present this information to you in a way that you might receive it and it might touch your heart. That's what preaching is – taking God's word in that process into a place that may be acceptable to you. That's why we tell stories, sometimes jokes, sometimes illustrations. We bring application into the situation so that you can grasp the idea.

I want to take you to a Bible verse that illustrates the same truth for us. If we look at Romans 12:2 it illustrates this very same principle that's taught and applies it to us in the New Testament. It says in these words: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world. When the pressure is on, do not conform to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing, and perfect will.*

Now I like the Phillips version. It's another version of the Bible. I like the way this author has described this verse. He says – *Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.*

We live in a world where the pressure's on. It's harder and harder to take a stand for what's right without stepping on people's toes. The temptation is to create a treaty with people so they can avoid conflict and we can win them over somehow.

Now it's important for us to love people, but there's a point when that love is tested with the truth and we are put in a very difficult position. Are we going to give up the truth because we love someone, or are we going to hold fast to the truth because the temptation is to make a treaty or to compromise the truth? When someone doesn't like what the Bible says, you're trying to share with someone and they hear about the Bible truth, it's very tempting for us to say something like this: "Well, not all Bible scholars believe the same thing about that passage." "Yes, but God wants you to be a peace or He wants you to be happy." "There are different interpretations about that." "Oh different churches believe different things." Thus we water down the truth of the gospel or the truth about sin in order to compromise.

Now compromise always leads to common ground. I'll take one step toward this and you take one step the other way and we'll come to some common ground. That's a great idea if we're trying to determine between a husband and wife how clean we want the house to be. Sometimes one person needs to be a little less anxious about how clean it is and the other person needs to be a little more anxious and get it clean, and so we start moving toward each other. That kind of compromise is good and valuable.

But it's not good when we're trying to determine morality. We need to call sin sin. When you compromise in areas of truth, you're sacrificing integrity. This is the key. It's not just integrity for you; it's integrity of the gospel. Because the truth doesn't change. The truth contains timeless principles that are true in every culture and in every age at all times. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone, for example. It doesn't come through any other means.

We can't water down the truth. Sometimes in an attempt to make Christianity more appealing, people try to water down the truth a little bit in one way or another, how bad sin is. It's bad, but we can make it sound like it isn't bad. But when we start watering down the truth more and more then Christianity becomes like a club that you can join. It doesn't have that distinctiveness that makes Christianity what it is today. When it comes to God's truth there are no other options. You can't water it down.

I like to use the illustration of drowning. If you're drowning and you've got a metal jacket on and you're going down, you need a savior who's going to save you. But there are a lot of people out there who are saying, "I know I'm drowning, but I'm just going to try to learn how to swim." They're going to drown. They don't have a choice. Well, they have a choice. The choice is whether to live or to die. But the only choice is to reach out to a savior who wants to help them. There are no other choices.

If you want to live you reach out to the Savior. There's not a lot of ways to get to heaven. There's one way and Jesus is that way. We can't offer people a half-baked gospel. We can't water it down to make it palatable so they can continue to live in sin and have Jesus in their back pocket. God offers new life. He says old things are passed away and new things come. There's no middle ground. You leave your past condition; you get saved out of it. Because God is something different than the world. There's a major difference between the world and us. That distinction needs to be clear. We can't ever water down the truth because the truth is truth. That's what it is. We need to take a stand for the truth and what it offers.

See, God offers us love and joy and peace and hope. But those things come when we have total commitment to Him. We're offering ourselves to Him as total commitment. We don't get those things just because we show up at a church worship service or use Christian vocabulary. I think this is really important today.

Young people today want to be part of something that is important and significant and is life changing. They don't want to be part of something that is mediocre. They don't want to compromise. So if we give them a half-baked gospel, that's not a gospel at all. Young people today want to stand for something and God changes people with the gospel. He changes people with His word. Whenever you compromise with the world, whenever you make a treaty with the world, you get yourself into trouble. You take a step toward the world and that's hard.

Now we are under pressure today in our world system. That world system that's moderated by Satan, who is manufacturing a lot of ideas to try to compromise, is trying to squeeze us into a mold. We must not compromise the truth. Whenever you compromise and enter into a treaty, you enter into slavery. That's what the Israelites are offering. We'll become your slaves.

Let's read on and see what happens in the next verse because I think we'll see some things about this process of offering a treaty that happens even in our own lives if we're not careful. If we start compromising – “oh well, I'll accept that, I'll do this, and I'll do that” – and we start entering ourselves into some kind of compromise, here's where we end up.

They offer to make a treaty (the enemy) and so we'll become your slaves. What is the answer of the enemy? Verse 2 – *But Nahash the Ammonite replied, “I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel.”*

That's a pretty big sacrifice. But I would suggest that sometimes when we find ourselves compromising with the enemy we find ourselves eventually in a place where we are crippled. It's a terrible price that they would have to pay. I think many people make that choice today. They become mediocre Christians or they give up truth in order to maintain peace. They compromise in order to hold on to some semblance of their life without conflict because they don't like conflict. God has a different plan.

I want you to see what happens in this story today because these people who made a mistake, I think, in first trying to make a treaty now appeal to the community and they find a solution that God's going to bring into the situation that's actually beautiful and God rescues them through this other plan, something they hadn't thought of, but they appealed to the Israelite community and that's what happens.

Verse 3 – *The elders of Jabesh said to him, “Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you.”*

When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud. This is bad. This is painful. We can only call on the Lord in these difficult places. So here they are. They're part of a community. They're Israelites. The people from Jabesh Gilead are part of a bigger group. Their identity is made up of the fact that they are Israelites.

It's different today than it was years ago when it comes to community. When we say the word community today, usually we are thinking in our mind about the community of our town. We live in the Robbinsville community. So we use the word community more like a political group of people or a residential group of people where we all gather together in community. That is a form of community.

A hundred years ago it was that your identity was determined by that community that you lived in or that your family grew up in. So if your father was a blacksmith, it was expected that you would carry on the family tradition. You would become a blacksmith as well. If you lived in a particular town, you'd probably marry someone in that town because that's just who you were. It's part of the identity that you have.

But in our culture today, it's different. In culture years ago the word community was embraced, it was welcome. It was understood that we're part of a community. Today we have in a part of our current culture a value we call individuality or individualism. It's a very important part of

who we are as Americans. We value our individualistic capabilities, our privacy, our desire to be our own persons. That's a valuable thing. But the emphasis on individualism puts community in question for many. In fact people are often skeptical about a community.

So when we talk about the church's community people are often hesitant to dive in and be a part of it in their lives. People think differently today. I think the difference of individuality that we all like and we all appreciate actually weakens our ability to be a church and in a community. We don't want to lose our individualism, but we also must understand that God designed the community to be a place where we are giving and receiving and finding comfort and growth, and God is doing something very important in the midst of that. It's hard for us to catch God's vision for community when we're so emphasized on this concept of individualism in our own lives.

You see I think today people ask different questions about church. When they go to church they ask questions like, "I don't think I'm getting fed here. I'm not getting the Spirit here. I'm not getting my needs met here." That's an individualized approach to God's community, the church. Just ask yourself how are you going to evaluate your experience here today? Are you going to ask the question, what did I get out of it? Did I get inspired? Was the worship meaningful to me? Did I get a blessing? Or do you ask the question the community addresses, which says, how did I participate today? Who did I encourage today? How did I think about other people? How did I contribute to that community as a whole?

Here's a picture that Marie Ondy this week put up on her Facebook post and I said, "I'm going to share that at church on Sunday." Church is not something you go to; it's a family you belong to. It's a community. I like this church. I get blessed by this church. When we all sing together, I get blessed. When you come up with ideas about ministry, I get encouraged. I like coming to this church. When I see people caring for each other I'm inspired by that. So I get a lot of personal benefit from coming to this church. But that's not the only benefit I receive because I want to be part of community.

During the week I'm trying to contribute to this church and its health, as many of you are, for which I'm very grateful. Part of my goal is to make this 1 hour and 15 minutes we spend together the most valuable 1 hour and 15 minutes that we have together. So when I'm planning worship, I plan the things I'm going to say before and during the songs. I plan the songs themselves so they tie together somehow that will bring us some inspiration. I try to take God's word and apply it in ways that we walk away with some practical application.

I tell you, when I leave here on Sunday morning I am pumped. Partly because I received a lot from you guys and all the things that are going on, but partly also because I donated a part of who I am to this congregation. It's hard for me to go home on Sunday afternoon I have so much energy. Typically on Sunday afternoons I go golfing and I just love running. I'm going to run on the golf course and burn off some of that energy before I go home. I'm so pumped up because I love this church. It's partly because I am part of a community and I really enjoy this community.

Now there's more people at this church I'd say that have that kind of ministry mindset than in most churches. In fact some people I think are attracted to a large church because they can kind of slide in and slide out and be anonymous. Nobody knows who they are. The very fact that you

showed up here today is a fact that you are more interested in community and you consider that valuable. You know that when somebody says to you today, “How are you,” we already know how you are from the last time we met last weekend, so that’s not just a trivial greeting. I want to know how you are compared to what you told me last week! We know each other’s names. There’s a sense of community.

Now I’m not saying that large churches are bad. I would trust that if the Lord blesses us someday and we become a large church that we would still find ways to keep that community alive and that ability to connect with each other in personal ways. We come to church for various reasons. We worship, we celebrate, we help one another. It’s one of the privileges of being part of a community.

Some of the sweetest memories I have in my Christian life are those when I was involved in a small group in the life of the church. A small group gets together and they get to know each other. There’s this sense of community that develops in that group. I experience that with the folks that come here on Sunday morning. We get together at eight o’clock. We set up here and once it’s all set up, we sit and talk, and there’s a sense of fellowship. We’re catching up on each other’s lives. It’s a community. It’s not just something we do, but it’s something we are because of who we are together. I just appreciate that.

The people of Jabesh Gilead were in a terrible place. They were facing a disaster. They needed help. They needed support. They were blessed that they had a community to go to. They weren’t isolated. Let’s see how God solves their problem in the midst of the community.

Look at verse 5. Remember now when we were in verse 4 the people were sad because of the pain they know these people are going to go through losing their eye. In having this treaty there’s a lot of people weeping and they are sad about it. But now we have verse 5.

Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, “What is wrong with everyone? Why are they weeping?” Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said. When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger.

Now God’s going to provide a different solution for these people than what they knew about or what they already thought about. I would suggest this is how life often happens in community. God gives passions to different people. Notice most of the people were just crying, but one guy says I’m going to do something about it. In fact if you look at our fellowship, you look at this church and you’re kind of critical about something, maybe that’s God speaking to you and saying maybe you ought to do something about it and improve that area. Because God has given you a passion or a burden or something that could improve the strength of the church.

It’s interesting in the passage how God uses passion to bring about action. There’s a lot of people who are sad. There’s one guy who’s going to do something about it. He’s going to take action. God’s working in the people of Jabesh Gilead. God’s working in the life of Saul. God’s working in the life of the other Israelites. He’s orchestrating all of these things and He’s given Saul this

God-given passion that's going to drive him forward to do something about it. A lot of sad people in the world, but there are some people who are willing to do something about it.

I would suggest that's us. That's you and me. We have something to offer to sad people. We have something to offer to people who are struggling in their lives. Every once in a while you come across someone who's willing to do something about it. That's Saul that God is raising up here.

Now notice that Saul is motivated by anger. This illustrates to me that there is an anger that isn't evil. This anger fuels the passion of injustice. He sees sin, he sees injustice, and he's going to do something about it, fueled by that passion.

Verse 7 – He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, “This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel.” Then the terror of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out together as one. When Saul mustered them at Bezek, the men of Israel (from the north) numbered three hundred thousand and those of Judah (from the south) thirty thousand.

Verse 9 – They told the messengers who had come, “Say to the men of Jabesh Gilead, ‘By the time the sun is hot tomorrow, you will be rescued.’” When the messengers went and reported this to the men of Jabesh, they were elated. They said to the Ammonites, “Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you like.”

It's interesting to watch a leader lead. There's a leadership vacuum I would suggest in most places in life. What you need to do is step in and say, “I have an idea,” and their eyes will turn to you. If you have a suggestion, if you have the ability to step into situations, people are waiting for people like you to step in and do that.

Verse 11 – The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

Wow. War is never pretty. This is a vicious story. This is rated R, I would suggest, in all of its pieces. But it's an opportunity in the midst of life to see God work because a lot of our lives we live with violence and difficulties and challenges and painful things that drive us into places we never want to go, but God has solutions for them.

That kind of ends the story, but there's this afterthought in verse 12 and following. I want to point out something else about anger as we go through here. Look at verse 12. This is after the victory is over. Everybody's kind of reflecting on all of this. *The people then said to Samuel, “Who was it that asked, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Turn these men over to us so that we may put them to death.”*

You see when Saul was anointed as king earlier, there were some people who criticized him and were not willing to serve him. So they were rejecting him asking at that point. So now that Saul's

had a victory, some of his supporters are coming out saying, “Let’s find those people that were critical. Let’s put them to death.”

I just want you to see that here we have anger again and this anger is in response to injustice, the same kind of anger we saw with Saul where injustice took place, yet Saul was doing something right in that situation and these people are going to be stopped in their tracks. I think we have to be careful about anger because anger does usually point us to something that’s wrong, that’s unjust. But that doesn’t mean that every time we see something unjust we go and attack it as Saul did in this story.

So notice Saul’s response in verse 13 because this kind of anger that they’re experiencing isn’t the kind of anger that they need to take action on. Verse 13 – *But Saul said, “No one will be put to death today, for this day the Lord has rescued Israel.”*

Anger is a tricky thing and we have to be careful not to misuse it because every time we experience anger it’s usually because of some form of injustice. If we start taking it and running on that passion we can get ourselves in trouble. Yet there are sometimes when that anger is fueled by this injustice that needs to be righted and we need to take action. So Saul calms the people in this particular part of the story.

Verse 14 – *Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.” So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the Lord. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the Lord, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.*

Now if you’re tracking the story with us, this is the third time that Saul has been anointed king or they’re celebrating his kingship. It’s taken some people some time to recognize that God is working in this situation. Saul is going to get a lot of credit for this battle, but notice back in verse 13 Saul is wise in giving credit to the Lord for the victory that took place. Notice it says there – *“No one will be put to death, for this day the Lord has rescued Israel.”* The community got the credit, but God got the credit as well for what happened in that situation. It wasn’t just Saul’s leadership. It was God’s leadership. It was the involvement of many people in the midst of that.

I like what’s happening in this passage. The passage has the potential to be a huge disaster in these people’s lives. I can’t imagine the pain they would experience in the midst of this. But God uses the community of the Israelites to bring about a miracle, to bring about victory. The people’s lives were changed.

In the Old Testament God chose to work primarily through a family that became a nation. He promised in the Old Testament to Abraham, *“Through you all the nations of the world will be blessed.”* So God used the Israelite people to be this whole place where people would experience the blessing of God. Primarily the Savior Jesus Christ would come from the Israelites and He would bless the whole world. God still has a very important place for Israel in His kingdom program. However, in the New Testament He shifts the vehicle through which He passes the message onto the world and that message is now the church.

We the church are holders of this tremendous message that the rest of the world needs. The world needs to be blessed and God says I'm going to bless the world through the church. So He gives us this great commission to go out and share the message with everyone, to pass that message on to others. We are like, the Bible says, clay jars containing this beautiful message that God has. We pass that on because we know that there is something bigger going on in this world than things that are just the things that we see.

You and I today could be a part of something bigger than just the individualism of ourselves. So it's not just about me and advancing my cause, my desires, my wishes, and so on, but I become a part of a community. I don't just put my toe in to tell whether it's hot or warm and then complain about it. I step in and I'm part of it because when I get in and start swimming around, I make that community what it is. God has brought you to a place in your life to be part of a community. I trust that's here. I know some of you are just visiting and that's great, and if this isn't the place for you, that's okay. I'm glad that you are here today and maybe God has a message for you in the midst of this. But if God has brought you here and this is the place for you, I'd encourage you to jump in.

If you've been here more than two weeks you are no longer a visitor. So when you turn around, you say, "Welcome to our church." I call this my church and it is my church because I'm a part of it and I love being a part of this. But that doesn't mean it's mine as opposed to yours. I hope that every one of you are saying to yourself, "This is my church." We are part of this. We are part of a community. I'll know that's true because sometimes some of you will come up to me and say, "I like your church," and I'm saying, "Oh they're not a part yet." When you say, "This is my church," then I know you're on board, you've jumped in the water, not just sticking your toe in. We are part of something big and God wants to do something big through us.

This isn't the only church in the community that's doing a good job. There are other great churches in our community that are serving the Lord and teaching the word and being the lighthouse that God wants us to be. But I welcome you to be part of this community and commit yourself to this church and allow God to work in your life. Take the risk of sharing personal issues with people. Take the risk of getting to know some people. Community is a beautiful privilege and I trust the Lord might use that in your life today.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you that you've designed the church to be this family. A family where we can get to know each other, care about each other. We can know each other personally and we can find that encouragement and support. Lord I think back on times in my life when I have been in very difficult situations, maybe not as bad as these people of Jabesh Gilead, but terrible situations where your blessing has come through your church. I thank you for that. Lord, I pray that you'd give that sweetness to each person here, that you'd use your church to bless them in a powerful way. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.