



What Can I Do?

1 Samuel 18:1-4, 1 Samuel 19 & 20

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I'm losing my voice a little bit. I preached yesterday and I was yelling a lot, so we'll see what happens. I won't yell at you guys, maybe. We'll find out, we'll see. Let's go jump into scripture.

1 Samuel 18, one through three, it says, as soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, this is Jonathan, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David. We see this relationship. And Jonathan loved him as his own soul, his compassion. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul based on this relationship. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

God, may my words be your words. May you open our eyes and our ears to hear what you have to say in your beautiful name, amen.

So as we mentioned, it is Black History Month. And every time I think about Black History Month, I think of these big names, these big heroes of those times. Because although I'm not black, what happened in the civil rights movement, I'm a beneficiary of those things, people who fought for our rights. And well-known heroes who sacrificed their position, their power, in order to benefit other people, the community during the civil rights movement. People that we all, that we may, many of us know, like Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Billie Holiday, Coretta Scott King, and the white allies who stood next to them, next to our black sisters and brothers during that troubling time. I think of those people and how they sacrificed their reputation and their power to stand in solidarity with us.

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And all this led me to think about, you know, the sacrificing kind of your power and stuff. And it led me to, I just recently learned about this cat named Charles Mully. He's from Kenya. Now Charles Mully, he was abandoned as a child and he grew up an orphan. And like many of the street kids at that point, he fell into, you know, having to rob and steal and beg and sniffing glue and all that kind of stuff that the street kids did at that time. But somewhere along his journey, he was introduced to Christ. And he wanted to change his life. And so he worked really hard to do so. And eventually he worked hard and he had a knack for business. And he built up his wealth slowly but surely until one day he was a millionaire and a very powerful, influential man in his community.

But when he was at the top of his game, as he was going to meetings and he was flying all around the world, he was back in Kenya again and he was going to a meeting in the city and he was confronted by these street boys. And they confronted him and kind of asked him for money, but he wouldn't give it to them. And eventually they ended up stealing his car. And it weighed heavily on him because he pleaded with God, why did you bring this back into my life? I've worked so hard to get away from this. Why are you bringing this poverty, this pain and this violence back into my life? And it weighed on him, he couldn't shake it. This reminds me of the lyric from the song Hosanna, break my heart for what breaks yours. Because he had compassion for them. He lived that life. He understood what they were going through. He knew they were just criminals. He knew that they had been abandoned, they were traumatized. And he couldn't shake it.

And so one day he pulled over and he prayed for hours in his car, pleading with God. And he finally heard God's voice, and what he did next shocked everybody. Shortly after that, he dedicated his life to helping orphans in the area. He gave up his power, his position to help the orphans. And since 1989, Charles and Esther Mully have taken in more than 26,000 abandoned children, clothing them, feeding them, giving them school, giving them a purpose, giving them a life, and giving them Christ. You can watch the documentary on Prime or it's actually on YouTube as well. I highly recommend it.

And in this documentary, one of his sons who was there, right, I mean, he's living the good life. Their family were living the good life. And when his father talked about this, the way his one of his sons put it, he says, in plain language, it's called total madness. What Mully did was just ridiculous that he would give up everything to do this.

So currently in the sermon series, we're in a sermon series called Losses Gain about living sacrificially for Christ, which is often harder, but it brings a richer and deeper relationship with God to our lives when we live sacrificially. And to quote Dr. Dudley, the senior pastor here, he says, sacrificial living is not deprivation. Sacrificial living is letting go of something, often good things, so that we can experience God's better things. And although that may be true, today I want to talk about how those better things may not always benefit you yourself, but benefit the community of which you're a part of. You may not get personal benefits, aside from knowing that you are following God.

Especially when it comes to sacrificing our position, reputation, and influence. And today we're going to talk about how sometimes God's call, or God calls us to sacrifice our

position, power, and influence to benefit others. Not something that seems very awesome in a me-first culture. Very counterculture. But it requires relationships. It requires compassion and empathy for others. Just like Charles Mully, God break my heart for what breaks yours.

This is why we're looking at the story of Jonathan, the son of King Saul in scripture that we read. And for those of you who may not know who King Saul is, he was the first appointed human king of Israel, appointed by the prophet Samuel. But when Samuel appointed him, he did give him some stipulations. We read it in 1 Samuel 12-14. This is Samuel talking to King Saul and the people. If you will fear the Lord, so English doesn't do great for translation of that word fear. That word fear the Lord is like respect, honor, and fear the Lord. He is the God of the universe, so it's all of that put together. Fear the Lord, honor the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandments of the Lord. And if both you, the people, and the king who reign over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well.

So there's accountability there. Not just the king needs to follow God, but you as a people as well need to follow God. And if those two things happen, then it will go well for you. Well, it didn't take King Saul to jack that up, or mess that up. Didn't take him long to just mess that whole scenario up. He disobeyed God, and so God had to choose another king afterwards. And this is Samuel a little bit later, 1 Samuel 13-14. And Samuel said to King Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commands of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. This is eluding that one day there was going to be this prophecy about this cat named Jesus, who was going to come and establish a kingdom forever, salvation for all. That could have been King Saul, but because of his shenanigans, not anymore. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. Such an important verse, this compassion from this person. And the Lord has commanded him to be the prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.

So Samuel now has to find a new king. He anoints this young cat named David, the future king of Israel. Now, many people may not know David, but many people know the story of David and Goliath, the underdog who slays a giant. Many people know that story, and it's used in continuous times in so many stories.

Once David in the story defeats Goliath, this is where Jonathan, King Saul's son, comes back into the picture. Jonathan, who is the prince, the son of King Saul, who is royalty and will inherit the throne in the future if Saul stays king. But he makes this astonishing gesture, this astonishing sacrifice in 1 Samuel 18:3-4.

That's what we started off with. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword, and his bow, and his belt.

In this act, Jonathan is symbolically giving up his position to support David, who was a man after God's own heart, knowing that his father, King Saul, is not following the Lord properly. If Jonathan aligns with King Saul, he will inherit the throne one day, but if he aligns with David, he is throwing that away. He is giving that up. He is sacrificing his position to support King David.

And as we see, it's due to the relationship between Jonathan and David, to friendship and compassion. And this is where things get hard. Because following God sometimes means going against cultural norms, societal norms, and even against empires and kings. It's hard because how do we know where to draw the line, who to follow?

Well, we learn from Jonathan as he is clear through his relationship and his beliefs of whom God has favored. He is willing to sacrifice not just his position, but eventually later on in the story, his life. Because King Saul is very jealous of David. Because David is very successful, he tries to kill David multiple times. But Jonathan protects him. Jonathan lies to King Saul for him. He harbors David and helps him escape. And he tries to do it with respect. And tries to almost talk sense into Saul for his rash behavior.

And you have to understand the difficult position that Jonathan is in. Not only is he going against his king, he's also going against his own father. So this is very difficult for him to do. And he pleads with Saul, tries to talk some sense into him. We read in 1 Samuel 19:4-5, and Jonathan spoke well of David. He told David, look, go hide somewhere. Don't come to King Saul because he's bent out of shape. Let me go talk to him.

So Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul, his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David because he has not sinned against you and because his deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hands and he struck down the Philistine. And the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced, King Saul. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" Trying to talk some sense into King Saul, but King Saul is just so bent out of shape.

There's another time where straight up Jonathan is like, "Look, go hide in this area because my dad is going to kill you. Go hide in this joint. I will tell you if it's safe to come out or not." And he lied to his father. He said, "Oh, David's at some harvest thing that he had to go to, so he can't be here at the special dinner."

But King Saul finally starts to take note of what's going on. So King Saul, in 1 Samuel 20:30, says this: "Then King Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. And he said to him, 'You son of a perverse and rebellious woman.' And somehow he blames the woman, not himself. That's a whole other sermon that I'll let somebody else do. 'Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse, David, to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he surely shall die.'"

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Then Jonathan answered Saul, his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So not only has King Saul tried to kill David, now he's even trying to kill his own son out of his mind.

So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. Jonathan used his influence, his power, and stood in solidarity with David. Now I want to talk to you guys about some real things. I'm not here to try to upset anybody or pull any, you know, trigger anyone, but I just want to talk about the reality of life.

I've shared here before that I came to this country as an illegal immigrant. And I grew up in fear due to that. And just a little note of what that might look like. There was a time when UPS was coming to our house.

Now, if you've never seen a border security back there in the '80s, a border patrol, they have this green, dark forest-green outfit that they wear. Well, it looks very similar to the dark brown outfit that UPS wears. So when UPS showed up at our door knocking, "Hello, Mr. Chaves, please come out." Because back then, in the '80s, you had to sign for your stuff. It's not like today, Prime 2 Day Delivery, where they just throw your stuff at your porch. You had to go sign stuff.

And my parents were like, "Do not answer the door." They looked out there like, "Whoa, INS, forget that." And so we stayed quiet in our house. That's the kind of fear that I grew up with. We wouldn't even answer the door for UPS.

But then the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, signed by President Reagan, gave us residency. We were already in the process, and so we were one of the first families to gain residency. But that type of fear doesn't just go away just because you were handed some paperwork. We continued with that fear.

I used to carry my green card with me as a youth all the time. I even lost it one time. Holy mother of molasses. That was such a headache when I lost my green card. Oh my goodness. When I was a child, I inherited these issues.

But as I became an adult, it was now my choice, what I would do and how I would respond. Let me just be honest with you. The immigration system is broken. Not just in this country, but in other countries too. And the way we treat immigrants here in the U.S. is not great.

But not just here. In my country, Mexico, we treat immigrants on the southern border terribly. Their immigration process is just as broken. And when I speak to people from around the world, it's the same everywhere. Somehow, immigration policies expose how we, as humans, "other" people when we don't align with God's will.

So, in my 30s, I thought, maybe it's time to become a naturalized citizen. My whole family did, starting with my brother who served in the Army for seven years. He was the first, and everyone followed. Although being a citizen didn't affect me that much—mostly

just giving me the power to vote—there was something about it. But the system is so broken.

I wasn't allowed to apply for citizenship because Homeland Security had switched to a centralized system. The system didn't accept my green card's expiration date and said it was about to expire soon, which wasn't true. I still had two years.

So, I couldn't apply. I had to make an appointment to reapply for my green card. When I explained my situation to Homeland Security, they couldn't help me. Because the system was centralized, they said there was nothing they could do.

They told me I could pay to renew my green card and then apply for citizenship. I had to make the decision then and there—I couldn't leave and think it over. So I said, "Wait, you want me to pay over \$600 to renew my green card for a mistake you made, and then pay more money for citizenship? And I can't even go home to discuss this with my wife?" The guy was nice, but he was just doing his job. But that didn't sit well with me.

So, after reflecting and praying, I decided not to apply for citizenship anymore. I decided to stay a Mexican citizen. Over time, I believe God showed me why.

See, I've benefitted from this broken immigration process. And I felt the need to stand in solidarity with my fellow sisters and brothers in Christ who face similar situations. When I pastor, I talk with people in these situations. I have compassion and empathy for them because I know what they're going through. I'm not that far removed from that fear.

I've had friends who, once they gain citizenship, want to forget everything they went through. They're traumatized and never want to revisit it. But I'm not like that. As immigration becomes a more political issue—and especially in the church—I felt the only power I had was to stand in solidarity with people who feel powerless.

When things get crazy about immigration and deportation, my US friends freak out: "Wait, your stuff is okay, right? You've got your papers, right?" And I tell them, "Yes, I'm a resident." But then they ask, "Are they going to take you away?" I reassure them: "No, I'm fine. They'd have to do something illegal to deport me. I've been here since 1986, and I have no criminal record."

But my wife, my mom, and my family freaked out. They didn't like my decision. They tried to talk me out of it. People even here at BelPres came to me and asked, "Are you okay? If anything happens, we'll protect you." I appreciated that, but in those moments, this is what I could say: "For as much fear as you have for my situation, imagine the paralyzing fear so many others are feeling because of our policies and our behaviors."

Policies are one thing. Politics is one thing. But our behaviors as Christians should align with God's word. How we treat foreigners is clear in the Bible. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This is the only power I have—my influence. Sometimes the sacrifices we make don't benefit us personally, but they benefit the community.

The community, in biblical terms, means we're in relationship with each other.

You weren't called to this church just to sit, listen, and leave. You're not here by chance. God has called you to be in relationship with everyone in this church—whether you're an introvert or extrovert, slow or quick to connect.

In relationship, we gain empathy and compassion. We understand what's going on in people's lives.

If you want to know what's happening in Eastern Congo right now, it's a disaster. We have families in the New Hope community who are refugees, many of whom are scared for their families and themselves. But being in community, as the church family, means being with people who may not look like us, vote like us, or even come from the same country. But we are all children of God. In solidarity, even if it seems like a small act, we're showing we're together in this.

Let me show you a picture. This is from the 60s during a sit-in at a white-only counter. The man in the front is Hunter Gray. He sat in solidarity with black women and other African Americans, enduring the same abuse they faced. He knew it was wrong. He knew it was unjust. And he sat with them.

This picture shows that we don't have to walk this path alone.

God is always at work, caring for His people. But sometimes, God calls us to give up our power, our position, and our reputation so others can experience His grace and mercy.

God, break our hearts for what breaks Yours.

As a church family, we are called to be in relationship with each other. When we do, we learn about the struggles people face—loneliness, bullying, issues with the elderly, families, refugees, and immigrants.

We must align ourselves with God, as best as we can, to make sense of this crazy world. If you need more, one of our elders will have a prayer after services, to pray over these issues. Dr. Dudley and others will release a video this week to talk about current issues.

God has given you power through the Holy Spirit—to build relationships, empathy, and compassion.

When God calls, it may be your position or influence that He asks you to sacrifice to glorify His name, not yours.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven, thank you for Your word. Thank you for all You've done at BelPres over the years as a light to marginalized communities. In these times, give us the words to speak, eyes to see, and ears to hear. Break our hearts for what breaks Yours. Help us stand together to glorify Your name, Your beautiful and glorious name. And together, we all said, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- We learn from Jonathan's sacrifice of position that sometimes we are called to sacrifice not for our benefit but for the benefit of community. Have you ever been the recipient of this? What was that like?
- How might God be calling you to give up your power, status or influence in this season for the benefit of others?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.