

# The King who does the Right Thing

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 17 March 2019

Preacher: Luca Sueri

[0:00] Good evening, everyone. For those who don't know me, my name is Luca, and I'm one of the members here at Branchfield Evangelical Church. Tonight we're looking at 1 Samuel 24, but before we do that, let's pray again.

Father, thank you for this time together tonight. Thank you that we can spend this time on this passage of the Old Testament. We ask you that your word will speak to our hearts. We ask you that you will protect our minds from distractions.

And we ask you that you will prepare our hearts, that they're open to receive the message you have for us tonight. Work in us, Father, we ask you as we look at your word. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. So, to begin, I would like to invite you all to try and put yourselves in the shoes of an imaginary child.

Let's say you're 10 or 11 years old, and you're playing a board game with your friends, and it's your favorite one. It's the one that you're really, really good at.

[1:10] Unfortunately, though, things are not going too well today, because there's just no way you're going to win. The cards are against you. But then, your friends leave the room for a minute, because the ice cream van just got here.

So you have the opportunity to reshuffle the cards. You can put the right one on top. The one that will let you conquer the board, just in a few moves. I mean, it's clearly what should have happened from the very start anyway, because you played well.

They were ahead of you just because they got lucky. Are you thinking about that feeling? You only have a few seconds to make the decision between letting things play out the way they would have, naturally, or changing the course of the game to your advantage.

What do you think would go through your head? So many conflicting feelings, right? I think that if we multiply those feelings by a billion times, we may be even just remotely close to what David must have felt as he was in this cave in the passage that we're looking at tonight.

David, too, had the opportunity to reshuffle the cards to his advantage, and he had to make a decision very quickly. The passage tonight is made up of three sections.

[2:34] And as we study the text, we'll see how David is the king who does the right thing. And how David, in doing so, points us to Jesus as the perfect king.

So we will try and consider which attributes of David we see in each section. So please cover your ears if you don't like spoilers, but I think that listing the attributes at the start will help us see them more clearly in the passage as we study it.

You might have to cover your eyes, too, to be honest, because it'll be on screen. So the first section narrates the main event of the chapter, and it goes from verse 1 to verse 7, and it shows us David as the servant king.

Moving on to the second section, we have David's speech in verses 8 to 15, and we'll see David as the trusting king. We will see who he puts his trust in and why he does that.

And then in the final section, from 16 to 22, we will see David waiting. We will see why David is a patient king. So David, the king who does the right thing by serving, by trusting, and by waiting.

[3:47] Now, before we look at what happens in the cave, let's recap. Let's sort of rewind and see what's been happening in the life of David for the last little while. Because if we want to understand the significance of today's passage, we have to understand what the main events are, which have led to this peculiar situation of Saul and David finding themselves in this, you might want to call it, a toilet cave room.

So David and Saul were both anointed kings by Samuel. Saul was the king that the people of Israel wanted. He was the king that they asked for, a king like the other nations.

They asked for such a king in chapter 8. However, Saul defied the Lord because he didn't respect his commandments in chapters 13 and 15. Therefore, God rejected Saul as king.

However, Saul is still on the throne. On the other hand, we have David. David is the king that God has chosen. Samuel anointed him to in chapter 16 as he was instructed by God after God rejected Saul.

But it's not time yet for David to sit on the throne. Not only was David anointed by Samuel, you might also remember he's defeated Goliath, the giant Philistine, in the chapter after.

[ 5 : 06 ] And his dear friend Jonathan, who's Saul's son, he just promised him two weeks ago in chapter 23 that he will not stand. Jonathan will not stand in the way of David becoming king.

And Jonathan even told David that even Saul, his father, knows that David will be king one day. And yet, despite all of this, as we have seen for the past few Sundays, David is on the run.

Saul became jealous of David. And even though he relented a couple of times, to this point he's already tried to kill him five times. And in today's passage, he's more determined than ever to catch him and to finish him.

And Saul is not going after David just with his own spear like the first time that he attacked him. At this point in time, Saul has 3,000 chosen men with him.

3,000 men who know how to do war are chasing after David and his 600 men, one-fifth of Saul's army. And David's men, they're outcasts and rejects.

[ 6 : 13 ] There are no soldiers. So this is what's happened so far. Now let's see what happens in verses 1 to 7. Let's see why David is the right king who's the king who does the right thing by serving.

In verse 1, we read that Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines. And if you were here two Sundays ago, you'll remember that Saul was chasing David around this mountain.

And just when it seemed that he was about to catch him, a messenger told Saul that the Philistines were raiding some villages. So Saul and his men left. So clearly God's providence was at work.

But now Saul is back. And like it's already happened on other occasions, his spies, his spies are another advantage that he has over David. They tell him where David is.

So he gathers his 3,000s and off he goes to the crags of the wild goats, an area full of caves. Now I think this is one of those passages in the Bible where we're reminded that even though it was written thousands of years ago, it's still very relatable, if not sometimes even comical.

[ 7 : 21 ] Because it tells us of women and men just like us. And in some cases it will do so by describing the sinful nature of these people in a way that reminds us of our own sins.

Some other times it reminds us that king or not, we all need to move our bowels. Because God has designed us like that and there's nothing we can do to avoid it. So Saul leaves his men behind, we're not sure how far, and picks a cave to go relieve himself.

And of all the caves, and as I said there were men in this area, he manages to pick the one where his men, his enemies are hiding. What are the chances?

It's like, again, the author is trying to tell us something. God is clearly at work here too, just like he was during the chase around the mountain. So what happens as Saul goes in?

Does he go in? Does he see David and then shouts to his men and tell them to get there immediately and massacre everyone? No. In fact, nothing happens. Because Saul goes in, the cave is probably very dark, maybe it bends at the back, and he doesn't see who is in it.

[ 8 : 30 ] In fact, he doesn't see that anyone at all is in it. So he simply goes to the toilet like he would have in any other cave. Can we think of a more vulnerable situation?

He's without his men. He's all alone in a darkness that his eyes haven't yet adjusted to. He's got his pants down. So I wonder if any of us can blame David's men for what they say in verse 4.

Let's read it again. This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said to you, I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.

Now, as far as we know, when God said this, he was actually talking about the Philistines in chapter 23. And based on what is recorded in the book of Samuel, we're not aware that God ever explicitly referred to Saul as David's enemy or that he ever said Saul would be someone who God would put into David's hands.

But in their defense, this man has been chasing David and his men for months. And if that's not an enemy, I don't know what it is. And enemies are enemies. Plus, even if David's men had been the most selfless people on earth, even if they didn't care about their own lives, maybe they cared about God.

[ 9 : 56 ] And they were still shocked and outraged by how Saul had massacred a whole town of people, including God's very own priests. We saw that in chapter 22. Wouldn't we have felt entitled to take Saul's life?

I mean, he's clearly not a man after God's heart. And the world would be better off without him. As far as David goes, we do know his thinking at this stage.

According to the order that the events are narrated here, his men encourage him to take Saul's life. And then he leaves them. And stealthy like a ninja, he approaches Saul and cuts off a piece of his robe, without Saul even noticing.

We just don't know if he approached Saul with the intention of killing him, or if he wanted to take just a piece of rope from the very start, as he does as a proof that he spared his life.

However, what we do know is that after cutting it, he is conscience stricken. David feels guilty.

Maybe because he was very close to giving in to the temptation to kill the king.

[ 11 : 05 ] Another reason might be that even though he didn't kill him, he still disrespected him. And way more than we can appreciate these days, because in David's culture, robes had a symbolic meaning to do with the authority of a person.

Either way, David goes back to his men and he sharply rebukes them. A literal translation of the original would have read that he tore them apart with his words.

Now, I want you to think about how this was really not an easy conversation to have. Apart from the fact that they had to whisper to not be heard by Saul just a few yards back, I don't think we can even begin to comprehend the amount of pressure that David must have had on himself.

These are hundreds of men, 600 men, who are risking their own lives to protect David's. These are no friends debating if Marmite tastes good or not, and I know how divisive the topic can be.

This is a matter of life and death. In a matter of seconds, David went from being the king on the run, at the mercy of the king on the throne, to having the possibility, like us with our board game, to completely subvert the situation.

[ 12 : 25 ] He can finally take the throne that God had so clearly assigned to him when Samuel anointed him. And then, a few more seconds, and he was back to square one, because Saul is leaving the cave, and David is just the king on the run again.

Why does David let this happen? He does because what we see here is our righteous king in action. David is the king, as we're seeing, who does the right thing, because he will not sin.

He will not take his fate into his own hands. What he does instead is put his future and put the future of his men in God's hands. He recognizes that God is in control and that he is God's servant. This is why he goes back to his men and he rebukes them for suggesting to kill the ruling king. So where does David find the strength to do this? We've just considered all the implications of such a choice, such an irrational choice from a human perspective.

Well, David could do the right thing because he didn't have his own interests at heart. He wanted to do God's will. He wanted to serve God. There are two beautiful Psalms that David wrote while he was hiding in caves, just like in today's passage, and while Saul was chasing him.

[ 13 : 52 ] These are Psalm 57 and Psalm 142. I recommend that you read them at home when you have time because they're very helpful to understand what David's frame of mind is as he deals with the challenges of being the king on the run.

And you can see in those Psalms how David does not commiserate himself while he's running away from Saul. He doesn't blame God for what he's having to endure.

And what he does instead is find respite in God's love and wait for God to intervene and save him. He is tired, clearly.

He is going through possibly the hardest days of his life. But what he does is look to God, fully relying on God and not on his own strengths or on his men's.

David trusts that God will be faithful to his promises and understands that what he is called to do in the meantime is serve him. So it's because of this close relationship with God, this attitude of submission to God's authority that David can find the strength to tell his men as he does in verse 6, the Lord forbid that I should do such a thing because he, Saul, he is the anointed of the Lord.

[ 15 : 14 ] David, the righteous king, who's anointed to, he knows that the right thing just now, the right thing to do in this case, is to serve the king on the throne. It's to serve Saul.

This is why we're calling this section the servant king. David respects God's will and serves his human king no matter how difficult it is to resist the temptation to finally make justice for himself. And in doing so, in serving Saul, he's ultimately, of course, serving God. If we think about our own lives, it can be very tempting, I think, to see God's providence in the events around us, just like David's men do.

But our whole lives, like David's, they should revolve around God's revealed will, which is his word. Our attitude should be to serve him, even if situations present themselves, which can lead us to do the opposite and serve ourselves instead.

We're called to interpret what happens around us not according to our human standards, but according to God's word. Because God speaks to us all the time and directly through his word, much more than he will ever do through coincidences left to our interpretation.

[ 16 : 34 ] So I think we should learn from David to be dependent on God, to dwell in his word like he does and his sons and be in communion with the Father. So for instance, when we're convinced that the events around us, that they're clearly telling us to stop serving in that church ministry because not enough people attend it, to stop caring so much about the spiritual health of our friend because it clearly is just a waste of energy, we can certainly be discouraged when these things happen.

We're weak, we'll be tired, just like David's men, and our temptation is probably to just give up. But we need to ask ourselves, is this really what God wants?

It could be, but like David's men, we must ensure that we're not focusing on our own desires and our intentions, but our focus needs to be on God's will and how we, as his subjects, can serve him best.

That way, we can recognize temptation when it comes our way, dressed as providence, like in the case of David here. That way, we will know if our interpretation of the events, if it contradicts God's plan for us, which ultimately is to glorify him through our life, his plan is for us to serve him.

As we move on to the second section in verses 8 to 15, we're going to be looking at David who does the right thing by trusting.

[ 18 : 04 ] So at this point, Saul is leaving the cave. He's unaware of David's presence and David runs after him. I think by now, his men must think that David has just gone mad.

He trusts in God so much and in his plan to eventually make him king that after sparing Saul's life, instead of hiding in the cave until Saul is gone, he comes out and calls him because David trusts that Saul will not order his men to slaughter him.

How does David address Saul? In verse 8, address Saul, sorry. In verse 8, my lord, the king. And his body language is consistent with his words too.

He bows down face to the ground because David is showing respect to Saul's authority. It's important that we don't miss the reason why. David said it to his men in verse 6.

He reiterates it here to Saul. He doesn't respect Saul for the good man he is, of course, or out of fear of the king, nor because Saul is his friend Jonathan's father.

[ 19 : 13 ] Look at verse 10. Because he is the Lord's anointed. That's the only reason. And just to avoid any confusion in Saul and prevent his pride from finding an opportunity to pump his own ego even more, David goes on to point how different they are.

David is the righteous king because he didn't listen to his men who see an enemy in Saul. But Saul, on the other hand, he keeps listening to other men. David says it in verse 9. David is the righteous king because he had the opportunity to kill Saul, but he didn't.

And this piece of robe that he is holding, it proves it. He shows it to Saul in verse 11 and he says, I have not wronged you, but Saul, on the other hand, he keeps hunting David down.

So in verse 13, David says, from evildoers come evil deeds so my hand will not touch you. David, at this point, he just goes for it.

He respects God's anointed by not killing him. He bows to him, but then he also calls a spade a spade. Saul's evil deeds make him an evildoer, an unrighteous man.

[ 20 : 26 ] And by contrast, because David does not touch him, David is righteous. We have such an impressive, such an amazing example of trust in David here.

Steadfast trust, as he says in Psalm 57. My heart, O God, is steadfast. My heart is steadfast. Because David knows that he might have been the anointed king on the run.

Saul might have been the anointed king currently on the throne, but ultimately, it's God and God only who is the ultimate king. And God is going to judge between the two of them.

He says it twice in verses 12 and 15. David is suffering unjustly, but he still respects God's authority.

He respects God's plan and his timing and he puts everything in God's hands. David is innocent. Saul is guilty. It's clear to everyone, even to Saul himself, as we'll see in a moment, but God is the judge.

[ 21 : 27 ] So David's trust is not in himself. It is in God only. What a lesson for us. How much more of an example of dependence on God we would be if we stopped trying to make justice for ourselves whenever we think we're being wronged.

And if we trusted in the fact that God, God only, is king and judge. Hopefully no one is trying to kill us, but when that person at work, university, or even at church says some unkind words, when that person talks behind our back, or when someone disrespects us one way or another, is my reaction, I've been challenged to think, is my reaction what you would expect of a child of God?

Do I behave like someone who believes that we're not on this earth to honor ourselves, but that we're here to glorify God, to serve God?

We know we live in a broken world, and that is difficult, but we also know that God is sovereign, and he will judge this world when the time comes. In the meantime, just like David, we are here to serve him.

So, in these first two sections, so far we've seen David as the seventh king. He does the right thing by submitting himself to God's authority, and by serving Saul as the God's anointed.

[ 22 : 51 ] And then in this second section, we just talked about David as the trusting king, because he trusts that God will keep his promises, and that he will be the ultimate judge between him and Saul.

Now in this third and last section, the author of 1 Samuel gives us an account of Saul's response to David. And David again is the king who does the right thing, and I wanted to point out how he is patient in this case.

He's waiting, and why. So we know because we've read the passage that Saul is not going to laugh at David, call his men, and finally put an end to this extenuating really chase.

the opposite. David, my son. That's what Saul says in verse 16. So for a moment here, David is not just Jesse's son anymore, which is how Saul addressed him in the last few chapters.

He is my son. What does Saul do? He weeps. He is clearly overwhelmed. He must have realized the huge significance of what just happened.

[ 23 : 59 ] Who, he says in verse 19, just who lets his enemy go unharmed when he finds him? And then Saul will say two things, and it's the fact itself that he says them out loud to David that means a lot because it's the first time that he acknowledges them.

The first one being, you are more righteous than I am because I have treated you badly in verse 17.

You are more righteous. What David just said that Saul is an evil doer, Saul is finally admitting.

And then the second thing is, you will surely be king in verse 20. Jonathan told David that Saul knew this already. But this is the first time that we see Saul say publicly that David will be king.

He knows that God has rejected him and chosen David to replace him. Now, if you know what the next few chapters have in store for us, then you also know that despite this reaction of Saul here, despite the weeping, things will pretty go much things will pretty much go to the way they were with David still running away from Saul and Saul being very determined to try and kill him.

So however much he means what he's saying just now, this clearly wasn't true repentance.

Nevertheless, we have to realize that Saul can't help but acknowledge that God is at work in David's life.

[ 25 : 24 ] That's why he's saying what he's saying. Isn't this a striking picture of how it is impossible, even for someone like Saul, and therefore for those around us, how it is impossible for them to see, to ignore God at work in our own lives.

How encouraging is it when people can see that there is something different about the way that we behave? And then on the other hand, how disheartening can it be when we're not being an example?

And the difference that should be there simply isn't. Just as David's actions spoke volumes about where his heart was, so do ours.

The example I came up with, just think about someone turning down that promotion at work, because it would take time away from their work for God, whether that's at church or somewhere else. It would become apparent to everyone in their circle where this person's priorities are, and possibly prompt them to ask questions about why that is.

And then on the other hand, we can be such a stumbling block for the non-Christians around us when they see that we gossip or that we slack off at work just like everyone else.

[ 26 : 35 ] Our behavior, just like David's here, it will be noticed by those around us, and it does say a lot about where our trust and priorities are. After this, Saul asks David to swear that he will not wipe out his house once he becomes king in verse 21, which again confirms that Saul is convinced by now he knows that David will be king.

David swears he's just done it to Jonathan in the previous chapter, but he does it again to Saul here. And then they go their own separate ways. David and his men went up to the stronghold according to verse 22, and we could add they waited.

This is the third aspect of David that we see in this story. He is a patient king. He waits on God's timing. Saul just admitted that even he knows that David will be king, but David knows that this is not the right time.

God still has more to teach David before he gets to the throne. And even though it is difficult, David submits himself to God's authority and he keeps waiting while suffering unjustly.

So we've seen in chapter 24 how David is shown to us as a king who does the right thing by serving, by trusting, by waiting. And I think that the picture of David that's just been drawn before our eyes in this passage, it takes us straight to Jesus, doesn't it?

[ 28 : 02 ] Because the parallels are everywhere. I'll quickly read these verses from 1 Peter 2.

These are about Jesus. To this you were called, and this is bearing the pain of unjust suffering that he mentions in the previous verse.

Because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow, you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.

When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed. So David suffered unjustly and so did Jesus. David left an example of righteousness and so did Jesus.

David did not retaliate and neither did Jesus. David entrusted himself to God as his judge and so did Jesus. The difference being between the two of them you've probably noticed he committed no sin because at the end of the day David is just a man.

[ 29 : 21 ] He's a man who does the right thing in this passage. He's a man who sins in others and David didn't take our sins to the cross with him but only Jesus did. We're not saved through David of course but we are saved through Jesus.

This is why we're looking at David serving, trusting, and waiting tonight because he points us to Jesus, the perfect king. Jesus served God by submitting to God's plan to come on earth in human form.

He trusted in God and was obedient to the point of death on a cross and he waited patiently for God's will to be done while suffering horribly. So think back to what is going through your childhood as you sit in front of that board and you have the possibility to alter the course of the game and win. How much more tempting would it be when your life is on the line? By any human standards it would just make no sense to face death rather than walk away.

Particularly, one might add, if you've done nothing to deserve such death. Jesus knew the cost and he did the right thing because he wanted to. He served, he trusted, he waited because he's not just the king who did the right thing once, he is the perfect king.

[ 30 : 42 ] If we're left to ourselves we won't be able to serve, to trust, and to wait for God and his plan. This is why we need to be dependent on Jesus and point other people to Jesus with our life.

So let's fix our eyes on Jesus, the perfect king and let's imitate Christ in suffering with righteousness while we wait for him to come back. So that those around us, God willing, will discover Jesus for

themselves and glorify God.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you because, as we've seen, you're the one that we want to put our trust in. You have won the battle, you have defeated death, you have sacrificed our son for us.

Through Jesus we're made righteous. And it should be easy for us to trust in your plan and in your timing but we are weak and as we've seen we live in a broken world and we're broken too.

And so often we would rather serve ourselves and put our trust in ourselves. Father, we ask you tonight to forgive us. We ask you to strengthen us. We ask you to make us more similar to Jesus.

[ 31 : 59 ] May we leave tonight wanting to imitate him as we start a new week tomorrow, Father. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.