

Opening Scripture 1 Samuel 29:9–11

Introduction: When Kerri and I first moved to Spokane, WA, in 1999, I bounced around for a while, working various Temp jobs for a Temp

agency. I landed in a particular job that paid pretty well, and they let us know from the outset that they would be hiring a few of us as permanent employees. Everything about it seemed like a good opportunity. But I really I hated the work. At the end of the six months that I worked there, they informed me that they would not be keeping me on.

And I remember when my supervisor met me at my desk and told me that I got this big grin on my face. My heart just wasn't in it. But I have to say, I was still somewhat disappointed and had a brief and fleeting moment of melancholy, knowing that I had been rejected. And in God's providence, I landed a good long-term job working for the American Cancer Society as the Patient Services Director, which worked out perfectly. Getting rejected is no fun.

Whether it's romantic rejection.

Job rejection.

Or a friendship

A college

A rejection letter from a publisher

In Chapter 29, David and his men are rejected. It didn't feel great at the time, but his heart wasn't in it anyway. Surely, he didn't want to fight against Saul (he's avoided that at every turn). Surely, he didn't want to be known as the King of Israel who once fought against Israel. This would have been a disaster later on. God providentially keeps him from fighting against his own people by stirring up controversy among the Philistine commanders.

God's providence can be seen in keeping David from fighting against his own people.

God's providence is shown in an early return to Ziklag, the town where his 600 soldiers had taken up residency for quite some time. But they return to Ziklag to an absolute horror show—it's a crime scene.

1 Samuel 30:1–10 David and his men arrived in Ziklag on the third day. The

Amalekites had raided the Negev and attacked and burned Ziklag. ² They also had kidnapped the women and everyone in it from youngest to oldest. They had killed no one but had carried them off as they went on their way. ³ When David and his men arrived at the town, they found it burned. Their wives, sons, and daughters had been kidnapped. ⁴ ***David and the troops with him wept loudly until they had no strength left to weep.*** ⁵ David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had also been kidnapped. ⁶ David was in an extremely difficult position because the troops talked about stoning him, for they were all very bitter over the loss of their sons and daughters. ***But David found strength in the Lord his God.*** ⁷ David said to the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought it to him, ⁸ and David asked the Lord, "Should I pursue these raiders? Will I overtake them?" The Lord replied to him, "Pursue them, for you will certainly overtake them and rescue the people."

⁹ So David and the six hundred men with him went. They came to the Wadi Besor, where some stayed behind. ¹⁰ David and four hundred of the men continued the pursuit, while two hundred stopped because they were too exhausted to cross the Wadi Besor.

1. David models finding strength in the LORD.

We see God providentially providing for and overseeing David's life and choices. God rescues him from the disaster of fighting his own people. God provides a message for him in the midst of ruins. And God keeps the women and children safe among their captors.

Now, the Amalekites were relentless adversaries, not only of Israel, but every other tribe in the land as well. They are the descendants of Amalek, one of the six sons of Eliphaz, grandson of Esau. **The history of their conflict with Israel, in particular, cannot be overstated. Years before, the Amalekites had obstructed Israel's entrance into the promised land.**

This is why you will see certain groups in modern history referred to as Amalek—the Nazis and now Hamas and Hezbollah.

But these crazy, nomadic Marauders have met their match in David. We remember God delivering Israel from the Amalekites in Judges (Ch 6, 7). David is no mere local judge carrying out a regional deliverance campaign.

The Soldiers: The soldiers, like David, are equally devastated, and they begin to turn on him, threatening to stone him. Morale is low. The outlook is bleak. It's a difficult thing to find yourself in a situation that ***you couldn't have predicted***, you didn't cause, but now you have to solve. And when those around you begin to question your leadership or your legitimacy, where do you turn?

Intense sorrow and loss can cause us to turn to anger, as we look for someone to blame. Often discharging that need for retribution in the wrong direction.

David: The whole scene is disheartening, and that's an understatement. But David knows where his strength lies. It is in the Lord his God. The text says that they wept together so loudly until their strength ran out. Have you ever been in a situation where there are just no more tears left? It's a helpless place where our despair can take on a life of its own.

2. Hope is restored through a providential encounter (1 Samuel 30:11–20). David's men found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. They gave him some bread to eat and water to drink.¹² Then they gave him some pressed figs and two clusters of raisins. After he ate he revived, for he hadn't eaten food or drunk water for three days and three nights.

¹³ Then David said to him, "Who do you belong to? Where are you from?"

"I'm an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite man," he said. "My master abandoned me when I got sick three days ago."¹⁴ We raided the south country of the Cherethites, the territory of Judah, and the south country of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag."

¹⁵ David then asked him, "Will you lead me to these raiders?"

He said, "Swear to me by God that you won't kill me or turn me over to my master, and I will lead you to them."

¹⁶ So he led him, and there were the Amalekites, spread out over the entire area, eating, drinking, and celebrating because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and the land of Judah.¹⁷ David slaughtered them from twilight until the evening of the next day. None of them escaped, except four hundred young men who got on camels and fled.

¹⁸ David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken; he also rescued his two wives. ¹⁹ Nothing of theirs was missing from the youngest to the oldest, including the sons and daughters, and all the plunder the Amalekites had taken. David got everything back. ²⁰ He took all the flocks and herds, which were driven ahead of the other livestock, and the people shouted, “This is David’s plunder!”

David shows the Egyptian man compassion before he knows that he is a slave and a potential asset in this contest with the Amalekites. David and his men are exhausted from a long day’s travel from the front lines back to their encampment. They are emotionally spent, and yet they take the time to share their provisions and nurse this stranger back to health.

Sometimes the most difficult acts of service are when you feel you have nothing left to give. And you give anyway. Sometimes, we have to meet others’ needs, not out of our abundance of energy, patience, or financial resources—but out of our own needs. David teaches his band of brothers this lesson. This is what it means to follow after God’s own heart. It means to give when it costs you, not when it’s convenient for you, even when what you really feel is rage and profound sorrow.

God is obviously seen in this providential encounter. David sought guidance from the LORD, and God assured him of victory. But it’s interesting to note that God didn’t lay out every step for him like a detailed blueprint. Unlike having a pillar of fire at night or a cloud during the day, or an angel guiding him, David didn’t rely on spectacular miracles every day to keep him on track. Instead, he trusted in God’s providential presence, working both in him and through him. Paul said to the Philippian Christians, **Philippians 2:12–13**, “Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.” It is as we work things out that we see how God has been working in and through our efforts.

3. The principle of generosity (1 Samuel 30:21–31) ²¹ When David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to go with him and had been left at the Wadi Besor, they came out to meet him and to meet the

troops with him. When David approached the men, he greeted them,²² but all the corrupt and worthless men among those who had gone with David argued, “Because they didn’t go with us, we will not give any of the plunder we recovered to them except for each man’s wife and children. They may take them and go.”

²³ But David said, “**My brothers**, you must not do this with what *the Lord has given us. He protected us and handed over to us the raiders* who came against us. ²⁴ Who can agree to your proposal? The share of the one who goes into battle is to be the same as the share of the one who remains with the supplies. They will share equally.” ²⁵ And it has been so from that day forward. David established this policy as a law and an ordinance for Israel and it still continues today.

Once more, David finds himself in the position of teaching his troops the ways of God. Among their ranks are unethical and untrustworthy individuals, yet they, too, contributed to the victory. Since joining David in the desert, these men have played a crucial role in his story. At the very beginning, when he had nothing, God brought him the disgruntled, indebted, and disenfranchised, undoubtedly men with questionable character. David has had to make do in imperfect conditions all the way through. Among these men are *a few troublemakers who don’t want to share the plunder*. They don’t want to give away what they so valiantly fought for.

But David knows the truth.

David teaches them the way of God’s Heart through friendship and generosity. Verse 23 says it all.

He is gracious, calling these corrupt and worthless men “**My brothers.**” We are reminded of Jesus, who sat at a table in his final hours and predicted Judas’ betrayal. Judas leaves the table and makes a deal with the devil. To betray Jesus into the hands of the Sanhedrin officials for 30 lousy pieces of silver. And when Judas leads the temple guards out to the garden to arrest Jesus, the betrayer kisses him on the cheek. Christ responds, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Jesus knew all along which one of his disciples would become a backstabbing traitor. Yet Christ still provided bread and fish for that

disciple too. He saved him from the furious storm on the lake, just like the others. He washed Judas' feet just as he had washed Peter, James, and John. And in the moment of Judas' disloyalty, Jesus calls the man "friend." And 1,000 years earlier, here is Jesus' ancestor, David, showing the worthless among his ragtag army friendship.

The hardest thing is to practice forgiveness and patience, to see our betrayer's humanity, and to defer to God as judge.

He attributes the victory to the LORD entirely, "You must not do this with what *the LORD has give us. He protected us and handed over to us the raiders.*" David reminds them where their victory comes from. They did the scouting, and they did the fighting—but it is God who led them there and gave them the victory.

The cure to our stinginess is to be reminded that everything we have comes from the LORD.

He establishes a pattern and now a policy of generosity. When we know that all that we have belongs to the LORD—every dollar in my bank account, every breath in my lungs, every ability, talent, and skill that I've honed, everything I know—it all comes from the LORD, and the way we offer all of it to the LORD is by establishing a pattern and a policy of generosity. **David is not just their soon-to-be-king, he is their teacher. He is showing them the way of God's heart.**

Notice the scope of it though: ²⁶ When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, "Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord." ²⁷ It was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, ²⁸ in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, ²⁹ in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, ³⁰ in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, ³¹ in Hebron, for all the places where David and his men had roamed.

If you take the time to track all these territories and cities on a map, you will see this covers a large swath of territory. Basically, David had recovered so much plunder from the Amalekite raid, that he could distribute the resources far and wide.

David isn't just generous to the men who stayed behind and watched the supplies. David's charity is widespread, toward those who weren't part of

their fight at all. And in so doing he models God's common grace to all, regardless of their belief, or faithfulness to God.

Application:

Take refuge in the Lord our strength when all else has failed. Jesus said Matthew 7:24–27 “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash.” **In what way does Jesus define his lordship over our lives?** I make Jesus my Lord when I choose to follow his teachings. The foundation of our lives is everything. It determines whether or not we will collapse under the weight and the pressure of the trying times of life, or whether we will stand. Are you finding your strength in the LORD today? Are you building your life on the foundation of Jesus' teaching?

The heart that pursues God pursues compassion and generosity. Sometimes, an act of compassion, mercy, or generosity is not convenient. But the reward for such a life is so much greater than any material incentives. Here's what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 112:5, 6 “Good will come to the one who lends generously and conducts his business fairly. ⁶He will never be shaken.” ***We never look more like God than when we are giving.*** Because God loved the world so much that he *gave* his most priceless and treasured Son and with him richly supplies us with all things, and now calls us to emulate him. David doesn't give out of nothing (here, though earlier he gave when it cost him), he gives out of something. He has a treasure to share. He has plunder to distribute. Like him, we give what God has supplied. We share the storehouses of all that we have received from the LORD.

Have you received peace from Christ today? Then give it.

Have you received grace or compassion today? Then give it.

Have you received material resources today? Then give them.

To the day he dies, David must teach his people the principle of lavish

generosity, which is the only thing that can immunize us against a miserly and miserable life. **And it also inoculates us from idolatry.** So that our things and blessings don't become our gods.

Communion: I'm going to call the ushers forward to prepare to take communion this morning.

Every month, we take communion so that we may never forget who we are and why we're here.

In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul addresses "partaking of communion in an unworthy manner." ***That command is not directed at unbelievers but believers.*** In context, we see a church that is being torn apart by division and discord—the rich against the poor, the eccentric gifts vs. intelligible gifts, domestic rivalries, and disputes such that Christians are suing one another in open court for all to see. They have fractured the body, brought disgrace to it, and are now threatening to ruin the witness of the church by dividing the LORD's supper into haves and have-nots. It is an absolute fiasco.

It is in that context that Paul writes them to say—the tradition I received I passed on to you—That Christ was crucified to save you from this nonsense. Jesus' blood was shed so that you could have life. And his body was broken so that you may be healed.

1 Cor 11:28–30: So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the **Lord** in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the **Lord**. Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

So this admonition is for the divisive person who tears down the unity of the church.

This warning is for all those who are nursing grievances and refuse to forgive.

This word of caution is for the unrepentant gossip who destroys

relationships with their words.

It's for anyone who calls themselves a Christian—who names Jesus as Savior and LORD, but refuses to follow Christ's commands to go and be reconciled.