

Real relationships

Christ Church: 23rd September 2018 9.00 am. and 10.40 am.

1 Samuel 20:1-9, 18-42 as a cut down from chs 18-20.

Bible stories can be read at two different levels. **Human story** about people relationships, but also **God's story** about our relationships with him. eg. Jesus' parable: The Prodigal Son.

OT stories fit into these two levels: human story & God's story. The whole history of King David a case in point.

To understand today's story (at both levels) we need to get the background. Biblical record in chapters 16-20. Powerful tale of human relationships, healthy/sick, but also relationships with God.

Level 1: The human story (1 Samuel chapters 16-20)

David anointed by Samuel while still a teenager to become God's choice of eventual king to replace Saul who's turned out to be totally unworthy (ch 16). He comes to Saul's attention through the Goliath incident (ch 17) and his musical gifts so moves into court. Builds a strong friendship with Jonathan, Saul's son.

Becomes a hugely successful military leader, immensely popular with all the women. Saul becomes jealous, then furious. David marries one of Saul's daughters with a bride price of 100 Philistine foreskins (you couldn't make it up!). But his relationship with Saul is rapidly deteriorating and Saul tries to have him killed in battle (ch 18).

David's relationship with Jonathan grows stronger but Saul plots to kill David. David's wife helps him escape, and all Saul's schemes come to nothing, while Saul descends into madness (ch 19).

So to ch 20. David seeking to flee from Saul, while Jonathan cannot believe his father will kill David, so they devise a test. A big feast is coming up. David will be missing. Jonathan will tell a made-up story and see what Saul's reaction is. Jonathan will communicate with David through the three arrows test.

The feast takes place. First night, no reaction. Second night Saul is furious – tries to kill Jonathan and obviously David. So the arrows test next day. Jonathan and David meet and part for (almost) ever.

Level 2: God's story

But there's another story here. See Ruth 4:21-22; Matthew 1:5,6. God is building a rescue plan of salvation. David a key piece in the Jesus jigsaw. David: God's anointed King; Jesus: a greater anointed King. Jesus described as 'Son of David' 17 times in NT. A Messianic title, as in Mark 12:35-37. Even though David is no saint!

But note people's relationships with God. The Spirit of the Lord (OT ref to the Holy Spirit) had departed from Saul – rejected by God but the evil spirit he had is described as coming from the Lord (probably means permitted rather than direct action): 16:14+,23; 18:10 (lit 'raving'); 19:9, 23. He is jealous, afraid and angry with David – the Lord's anointed (18:9,12,21,29; 20:31).

Meanwhile the Lord was with David who gives God the credit for all his success. 16:13; 17:37,45-46; 18:12,14,28; 19:5; 20:22. Even his friendship with Jonathan is seen as centred on God (20:42). He sees himself as God's servant. God comes first in his life.

What about us?

At level 1, what's the human story line for your life? What are your relationships like within that? Parents, siblings, friends, partners.

What about your relationships with sisters/brothers in this church? Do we have the love, loyalty and commitment that Jonathan and David demonstrated? What costs are we prepared to pay for others in this family? Are we a deeply attractive body of people to join?

At level 2, what's God's story in your life? What would the story of your relationship with Jesus Christ look like? You may be conscious of nothing other than mess. Do we have the second coming of Christ in focus? Is your life lived as a servant of his? Is your first thought how to be a disciple, or how to get on in life?

Are you seeking to use your life to serve him, to make a difference? In your family (children, grandchildren), in your workplace, in your community? You may be terribly ordinary, but that is no bar to your being a key person for God.

For it is ordinary people that God does extraordinary things through. Relationships matter: with each other, but with Jesus especially. How real are your relationships?