

Light Unto Our Path



*Messages by various speakers mostly on the first book
of Samuel at the Streetlight Mission Church
in the 6:30 p.m. services of May 2007*

Table of Contents

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Pastor Paul Aasman

Text	Title	Speaker	Page #
1 Samuel 10:23-24	<i>Long Live the King!</i>	P. Aasman	4
Luke 24:51	<i>The King Hands are Lifted to Bless</i>	J. Witteveen	9
1 Samuel 11:6	<i>The Spirit comes upon Saul in Power</i>	P. Aasman	15

1 Samuel 10:23-24 “They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.’ Then the people shouted, ‘Long live the king!’”

Long Live the King!

Reading: 1 Samuel 10:17-27
Text: 1 Samuel 10:23-24

Men of character, people of integrity - these are in low supply. One of the objectives the Church has is to form the character of men and women to be godly, Christ-like and teach people to walk in step with the Spirit.

It is one of the express purposes of Cadets: godly character, solid youths of integrity - who speak words that are weighty because they will live up to their promises and speak only of what they know, who speak not just the truth, but speak the truth in love.

But people of integrity are in short supply. We live in a culture that is entranced by the cult of appearances - one that shamelessly lifts up the teen idols, and demonizes the fallen angels of yesterday; who bring precious sweet sacrifices to the gods of sport, and hang on the words of actors and actresses.

You can see the character of the people by looking at their gods.

Two weeks ago, br. Witteveen spoke about Israel's desire for a king. They wanted to be like the other nations. They wanted a king to lead their army. They were taken by the appearance of things. They had every reason to reject appearances and hold fast to what they could not see. God had delivered his people out of Egypt - the unseen God whom no man ever has seen or can see. He had led his people through the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh's whole army in it. He led them through the desert and gave them lands belonging to people more powerful and numerous than they.

With the unseen God at their head, they were safe. With him at their lead, nobody could touch them. Yet, they wanted to be like other nations. They wanted a king whom they could see. They wanted royalty, muscular soldiers, snorting warhorses, and machines for battle.

Samuel the prophet was their leader, a spiritual leader who spoke for God. They brought their demands for a king to Samuel, and God told Samuel to grant them their request. Let them have a king. They will learn to regret it. Let them find out what it means when they refuse to live by faith.

Samuel called all the people together to a place called Mizpah. Samuel chose the location for selecting a king carefully. We can read about Mizpah in 1 Samuel 7:10-11 - *"While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to*

engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car." Mizpah, then, was the site of the most recent and very great victory for God's people. With God as their king, they could not go wrong! They could not possibly forget what the unseen God had done for them at Mizpah.

And Samuel drives the point home when the people from all over Israel gathered here again, by telling them God's word as he does in 1 Samuel 10:18 - *"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.'" But, God said, "You have rejected me."* You have rejected the life of faith because you want a life of appearances.

Fools. We hear the same folly today: We don't want life in heaven. We want life now. We don't want what we can't see now. We want what we can feel and see and smell and breathe now. We don't want a Saviour who saves us from unseen guilt. We want a Saviour who can save us from boredom, a god whom we can cheer by his acting and game playing on TV, a goddess who can excite us with her body.

Fools. Israel rejected the living unseen God for an insignificant, helpless king just because they wanted to be able to see him. Sometimes God treats adults like children when they act like children. He granted their request. Beware of what you ask for from God - an unbeliever's request may receive an unbeliever's answer.

God instruct the people of Israel to present themselves before the Lord by tribes and clans. By using the lot God chose the tribe of Benjamin (there were 12 tribes in all, each named after one of Jacob's 12 sons). From the tribe of Benjamin, the clan of Matri was chosen. We don't know too much about the clans. From this clan, Saul was chosen.

But when they look for Saul, they could not find him. So they asked God, and he informed Samuel that Saul was hidden among the baggage. Recall that people had travelled from far away to come to this national assembly, and they needed tents, sleeping bags, food and such. That is where Saul was. He as not much interested in affairs of national importance.

But when he was found and brought forward, the people were very impressed. Impressed by what? By his *appearance* - and indeed, he was good looking. He was very tall. The adult men among whom he stood only reached up to his shoulders. Samuel says in verse 24 "*Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.*" Even Samuel is

impressed. Perhaps Saul's appearance even stirred Samuel's hopes. He could not have simply been tall and lanky. He must have been handsome and muscular. There are men who have the ability to command respect and instill confidence by their very appearance. There is an air to their bearing, a confidence in their stride, a look in their eye. You just want to trust them. You are instinctively ready to obey.

But beware appearances. Saul may look like a good king, but don't judge men by their demeanor, their appearance. The book of Samuel is making a very deliberate comparison between Saul (verse 24) and David (1 Samuel 16:1-7). The Lord says of Jesse's oldest son Eliab in 1 Samuel 16:7 "*Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*" And this is very important. God is teaching us in this book that we must be on guard against being taken in by appearances. When men judge by appearances, then when the greatest person comes, we miss it. In fact, we look on the outside and reject him. Isaiah said that his appearance was so marred that we turned our eyes away rather than to look at him. We rejected Jesus. We judged him by outward things, not by the force of godliness, holiness and love.

Let us seek in one another the qualities of Christ: faith, love and hope. Let us seek in one another the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

We may be the outcasts of society, the marginalized, the rejected and despised, but in the eyes of God, we are the very ones he is pleased to use to build his kingdom, advance his glory, and these are the very ones on whom he is pleased to heap his love, that we may become the lords of the earth, and kings over creation.

May 13, 2007
Brother Jim Witteveen

Luke 24:51 “While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”

The King Hands are Lifted to Bless

Reading: Luke 24:44-53
Text: Luke 24:51

On the Christian calendar, and in the holidays that we celebrate in this country, Ascension Day seems to be the poor cousin of Christmas and Easter. In some European countries, Ascension Day is a public holiday... but then, they generally like to take more holidays in Europe than we do anyway. Strangely enough, I was doing some research on this and I found out that Ascension Day is a public holiday in Indonesia, of all places. In Indonesia, all government offices, schools, and many businesses are closed on Ascension Day.

But we remember the day that Christ ascended into heaven as a very important day in the history of the world, because Christ's ascension was one of the most important things that has ever happened, and tonight we'll talk about why that is, and two reasons in particular – Jesus ascended into heaven, and he continues to work there... and, Jesus did not leave his people alone. He is the king seated on his throne at the right hand of God, but he is with us always!

But first of all, the word “ascension” - what does it mean? According to the dictionary I looked at, ascension means “to change location in an upward direction.” Which goes to show you that dictionaries don't always make things clearer! On Ascension Day, Christ went up into heaven, as his disciples looked on. There is something so amazing about this story that we can't even begin to really understand what happened. And it's described here in the gospel in one single, simple, sentence. He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. He ascended into heaven, as we confess in the Apostle's Creed, and now he sits at the right hand of God.

And this is important because it's not like when Christ ascended into heaven that he said, “My work is done. Now I'm going home. My job is finished, now we're just going to wait until the end of time when I take my people to join me.” No, it's not like that at all. Christ's ascension was not the end of his work, but it

marked a great change in his work. This is the first reason why Ascension Day is so important.

The Son of God came into this world for a reason. Christ died on the cross to save his people from their sins. He rose from the dead, conquering death, winning the victory over the great enemy, death. And 40 days later, he ascended into heaven. But this ascension is not like someone driving home from work after he's finished work for the day. No, this is the beginning of another chapter in the work of Christ. It is a homecoming of sorts, but a homecoming of a great king after the most important victory of all time. Because to this day he is sitting at the right hand of his father, reigning over all things, for the sake of his people, the church. He is the great king, the Lord, the master, the one who is in control of all things. When he was on earth, he was mocked and beaten and the people placed a crown of thorns on his head to make him look like a fool. He was completely and utterly humiliated. He was the king – we talked about that a couple of weeks ago, and he was treated worse than anyone deserves to be treated – spit on, abused, degraded in every possible way. But when he ascended, he received his crown. He received his throne. Everything was made right, and he was put into the position that he deserves as God's Son. He received authority over all things, in heaven and on earth. Christ is busy. He is not idle. And the amazing thing is, he's is

doing all these things for his people, for those who love him and believe in him.

Many places in Scripture tell us what Christ is doing right now. Romans 8:34 tells us: “*Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*”

This is why when we pray, we pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ – Jesus Christ intercedes for us – he is the go-between between God the Father and his people. In 1 John 2:1 we read “*But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*”

So Jesus, having gone up into heaven, speaks to the Father in defence of those who believe in him. Instead of seeing the sinfulness of his people, he sees Christ - Christ defends those who believe in him! And he continues to do this until this very day! And finally, Ephesians 2:4-6 tells us: “*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...*”

So there is a way that we can say that God has already raised all of his people from the dead, in Christ. From being dead in their sins, they become alive! And God has also seated his people with Christ, so that they reign with him!

So that's one part of Christ's ascension into heaven – it isn't the end of his work, but the beginning of a new part of his work. But there's another side to his ascension, just as important, and we also see that in the text that we're looking at this evening. “*He lifted up his hands and blessed them.*” (Luke 24:50)

So he didn't leave earth without giving something to his disciples, to the men he had called to lay the foundations of his church. And what he gave them was this: he blessed them. This is the second thing about his ascension that's so important. He gave them his blessing, and in ten days, on Pentecost, he would give them his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to help them to do the work he wanted them to do. He did not leave his people alone, without help. He's still working in heaven, at the right hand of God, but through his Spirit, he's still working and active on earth too.

He told his disciples, You are my witnesses. You're the ones who are going to have to get the word out about what happened. This is news that changed the world. This is news that affected everything, the central event of history – this is the good news, the gospel – Jesus has died, he has risen, he has ascended. So these witnesses, the disciples, were important – Peter and James and John, all of them. They had to build, and they couldn't do it on their own – no one can. They needed the blessing of the risen Lord to do what they had to do. They needed the Holy Spirit.

You can see it in Peter. If in some way we could make a “before” and “after” picture of Peter, you would see two very different people. Before – he denies Jesus. He does things without thinking, he's impulsive, and he speaks before he thinks. And after, yes, after... he's a leader of the church. He's an inspired author of two books of the New Testament. And all because of what Jesus gave to him. It says in the passage that we read together that he opened up the minds of the disciples so that they could understand that all of Scripture points to him. Because without their minds being opened, they simply could not understand it. But now that their minds are opened, they can see it clearly. They can understand why Jesus came, why he had to die, why he rose, and why he was ascending.

And he tells them that he sends the promise of the Father with them. And the promise was very shortly going to be fulfilled – they would receive power like they had never experienced before when the Holy Spirit was poured out on them.

Jesus has become the great king, and in his love for his people he lifts up his hands to bless his disciples. The great king is not some kind of dictator sitting on high. He is a loving king, a king who cares for his people, a king who takes care of his subjects. He blessed the disciples. He gave them his Holy Spirit so they could be his witnesses, and today we have that witness on the pages of the Bible. And he blesses his people today. He has

ascended into heaven, but he is with his people always, until the end of time. There is no greater blessing than that blessing from the ascended Lord and king, Jesus Christ.

In the last two verses that we read together we can see the disciples' reaction to everything that had happened. *“Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”*

And that should be our reaction as well. Let us worship him. Let us live our lives with great joy. And let us continually praise God, for what he has done!

May 27, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

1 Samuel 11:6 “When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger.”

The Spirit comes upon Saul in Power

Reading: 1 Samuel 11
Text: 1 Samuel 11:6

We are always interested in ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos - usually of people who have had cosmetic work done, or who have lost a lot of weight. The ‘after’ shot is always much better.

The chapter of the Bible we read from presents us with two pictures, a before and an after - before Saul was anointed with power by the Holy Spirit, and afterward. The difference is huge.

The ‘after’ picture is much better than the ‘before’ picture. And so it will be - because it is the difference of Pentecost.

In chapter 11, we find Saul back on the farm. In verse 5 we read that Saul is coming back into town (Gibeah) after a hard day’s work on the field, guiding his oxen along. You have to wonder, what is Saul doing? Is he a king, or is he farmer? Recall how he was chosen by casting the lot to become King, and remember how when he stood up, the people were really excited because he was tall and handsome. They shouted, “Long live the King!”

Saul was the king they wanted. And they needed Saul. They needed him now! They knew it, and Saul should have known it. 1 Samuel 12:12 says *“But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’ - even though the LORD your God was your king.”*

Now look at the situation. Jabesh Gilead is a city on the edge of Israel’s territory. It is vulnerable to invaders. And it happens that a certain Nahash the Ammonite attacks and captures Jabesh Gilead. Nahash is not a very nice man. He is a barbarian, like a pirate of the Caribbean. He will let the people of Jabesh only if he can gouge out the right eye of every man in the city. The people of Jabesh ask for and receive 7 days, from Nahash the Butcher.

So elders of the city send out messengers to every main town in Israel asking for help. They also send a messenger to the town of Gibeah where Saul lives. Why didn't they just send a message to their king? Why not ask for royal deliverance? That is what they got a king for, is it not? But now notice that when the messengers from Jabesh came to Gibeah, they did not right away send to their honoured son, Saul. No, they got the elders of the town together, and it is only because Saul noticed something strange was going on, and pried some info from a neighbour in town, that he got any idea at all about what was going on!

Something is not right here. Saul was king in the land. But he wasn't doing any of the things that a king should do. He was on the farm, working the land. Hard working, but not doing the right thing. That wasn't his job any more. And foreign warriors were terrorizing the people of Jabesh because Saul was not doing his job.

Think about that. If you don't do your work, you not only make other people suffer who depend on you, but you yourself become irrelevant. People will quickly ignore you and try to get along without you. If you don't reach out a loving hand of friendship and help to other believers, then the church will soon become irrelevant to people. If fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters do not work together in love, then families soon are left

behind and you don't even talk to your parents for years. That is true for many of you, isn't it?

There is a lot of neglect out there. So many people are called to do their duty toward one another, but when they don't do their work, we suffer terribly.

That is the before picture. That is life outside the Spirit of God. Saul without the Spirit of God is useless.

Now, look what happens in our text, verse 6 - "*When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger.*" Suddenly Saul is very enthusiastic. He must have known what was happening in Jabesh, but now he is angry. It is holy anger - righteous wrath. In anger, he did not sin. His anger made him do what he was supposed to do and should have done long before. The Holy Spirit came upon him and suddenly he had the courage to be the king he had been called to be, been anointed and ordained to be, acclaimed with joy and shouts to be. He was a king. But only the Spirit of God enabled him to be what he was.

He took a pair of oxen he was leading back home in town, and he chopped them in pieces, sending one piece to each major region by the hand of a messenger, summoning the army of Israel to him at Bezek, a town near to Jabesh. What a response. Fear from God fell on every soul in Israel. They feared to displease the king. So they came - 300,000 of them and more. They marched

against the Ammonite invaders, and routed them. It was a victory to tell of.

That is the after picture.

Which picture do you like better?

That is what you need to be. The Spirit of God that came upon Saul has now been promised to you. Jesus Christ promises that whoever belong to him by faith shall receive the Holy Spirit. It is not a Spirit that enables you to do strange things, like speak in tongues, or like Benny Hin, to do all kinds of miracles . The Spirit gives you the power to be what you are.

What are you? If you belong to Jesus Christ, you are a child of God. Can you act like one of God's children? Not on your own. But if the Spirit of Jesus is on you, you can. You can love as Christ loved. You can give of yourself as Christ gave. You can lead, you can serve, you can teach, you can learn, you can listen, you can comfort, you can admonish, you can say sorry, you can forgive. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.