

**“Responding When the Mighty Have Fallen”**  
**1 Samuel 31 – 2 Samuel 2:2a**  
**February 16, 2020**  
**Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service**  
*Pastor Nicoletti*

We will consider two chapters from Samuel this evening. We will start in First Samuel 31:1 and end after the first phrase in Second Samuel 2:2.

David is in one region battling the Amalekites. Saul is in another region fighting the Philistines. If you recall, the last time we were with Saul, he was eating a meal in a house of demons with the medium of Endor.

Now Saul is leading Israel into battle. But Samuel’s post-mortem prophecy of Saul’s death from chapter twenty-eight hangs over the battlefield here in chapter thirty-one.

This is a long passage, but it covers one connected movement in the Book of Samuel, which, we should remember, is really one book and not two. And so, it is right for us to go right through the First- and Second- Samuel division as we consider our passage tonight.

With that in mind, First Samuel thirty-one through Second Samuel two, verse 2a.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this evening:

<sup>31:1</sup> Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. <sup>2</sup> And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. <sup>3</sup> The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. <sup>4</sup> Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.” But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. <sup>5</sup> And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. <sup>6</sup> Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together. <sup>7</sup> And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them.

<sup>8</sup> The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. <sup>9</sup> So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. <sup>10</sup> They put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. <sup>11</sup> But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup> all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. <sup>13</sup> And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

<sup>1:1</sup> After the death of Saul, when David had returned from striking down the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag. <sup>2</sup> And on the third day, behold, a man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. And when he came to David, he fell to the ground and paid homage. <sup>3</sup> David said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I have escaped from the camp of Israel.” <sup>4</sup> And David said to him, “How did it go? Tell me.” And he answered, “The people fled from the battle, and also many of the people have fallen and

are dead, and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead.”<sup>5</sup> Then David said to the young man who told him, “How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?”<sup>6</sup> And the young man who told him said, “By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul leaning on his spear, and behold, the chariots and the horsemen were close upon him.<sup>7</sup> And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’<sup>8</sup> And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’<sup>9</sup> And he said to me, ‘Stand beside me and kill me, for anguish has seized me, and yet my life still lingers.’<sup>10</sup> So I stood beside him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the armlet that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord.”

<sup>11</sup> Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him.<sup>12</sup> And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of Yahweh and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.<sup>13</sup> And David said to the young man who told him, “Where do you come from?” And he answered, “I am the son of a sojourner, an Amalekite.”<sup>14</sup> David said to him, “How is it you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy Yahweh's anointed?”<sup>15</sup> Then David called one of the young men and said, “Go, execute him.” And he struck him down so that he died.<sup>16</sup> And David said to him, “Your blood be on your head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed Yahweh's anointed.’”

<sup>17</sup> And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son,<sup>18</sup> and he said it should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar. He said:

<sup>19</sup> “Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places!

How the mighty have fallen!

<sup>20</sup> Tell it not in Gath,

publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon,  
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,  
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.

<sup>21</sup> “You mountains of Gilboa,

let there be no dew or rain upon you,  
nor fields of offerings!

For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,  
the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

<sup>22</sup> “From the blood of the slain,

from the fat of the mighty,  
the bow of Jonathan turned not back,  
and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

<sup>23</sup> “Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!

In life and in death they were not divided;  
they were swifter than eagles;  
they were stronger than lions.

<sup>24</sup> “You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,  
who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet,  
who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

<sup>25</sup> “How the mighty have fallen  
in the midst of the battle!

“Jonathan lies slain on your high places.

<sup>26</sup> I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;  
very pleasant have you been to me;  
your love to me was extraordinary,  
surpassing the love of women.

<sup>27</sup>“How the mighty have fallen,  
and the weapons of war perished!”

<sup>2:1</sup>After this David inquired of Yahweh, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” And Yahweh said to him, “Go up.” David said, “To which shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.” <sup>2</sup> So David went up there

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

Let's pray ...

Lord, you are our portion,  
and so we commit ourselves to keep your word.  
We ask you with all our hearts to show us your favor,  
and be gracious with us according to your promise.  
When we consider our ways,  
turn our feet to your testimonies.  
And as we hear your word now,  
give us a sense of urgency to conform ourselves to it,  
so that we act on it without delay.  
Grant this we ask, for Jesus's sake. Amen.

[Based on Psalm 119:57-60]

In our text this evening, after such a long decline, we finally come to the death of Saul. Saul, we must remember, seemed to begin well. He seemed humble when first selected as king. Once in place he rescued the people of Jabesh-Gilead when they were threatened by the Ammonites. That would seem to be the reason why, in chapter thirty-one, it is the people of Jabesh-Gilead who come and rescue Saul's body. Saul had delivered the people. And when he did, he also refused to take vengeance on his opponents within Israel. Saul seemed to be faithful and mighty.

But then he stopped listening to the word of God. And from that, everything turned. When confronted he did not fully repent. He continued to disregard the word of God. And as his turning from God persisted, he became an inversion of what he had been. Where before he fought the enemies of God's people, and was merciful to the people of God, soon he is sparing the enemies of God and attacking the allies and defenders of God – including not only David but even Yahweh's priests and prophets.

Saul turns from faithful to unfaithful. David declares in our passage that in Saul, the mighty have fallen. But if Saul's fall ends here, surely it started back when he first turned from the Lord. And his fall affects many around him. Some, like David or the priests, receive Saul's undeserved wrath. Some, like Jonathan, his son – a man faithful to David and faithful to the Lord – reap the consequences of Saul's unfaithfulness. And Israel as a whole finds itself inadequately defended against the Philistines while Saul focuses more on David than on the true enemies of the people of God.

David has been anointed by Yahweh, through the prophet Samuel, to succeed Saul. In the meantime David has continued to serve Saul faithfully, even as Saul has repeatedly sought to kill David.

In chapter twenty-eight, at a particularly spiritual low-point for Saul, Saul receives the prophecy that in this battle, both he and his sons will die. And that is what happens.

We should note that Saul's act of suicide was not an act of a depressed person struggling with suicidal thoughts, but it is rather an act of faithlessness on the battlefield. And in that way, it seems especially fitting that Saul would take his own life. Because in truth, Saul has been destroying himself for the last nineteen chapters. Saul has turned from the Lord ... and the logical end of such a turn – the logical end of rejecting our God and Maker – is always self-destruction. That's what spiritual decline looks like for those who harden their hearts against the Lord, and it is in many ways what the eternity of hell looks like. Turned away from God, turned in on themselves, those who reject the Lord consume themselves, and eventually destroy themselves. We have seen that dramatized over most of First Samuel, and now it reaches its logical conclusion as Saul physically destroys himself.

But the death of Saul leads to a question. How should we respond when the mighty fall? How should we react when those who were once great bring about their own demise?

It is worth thinking about how we respond to similar situations in our own lives and culture.

The situation with Saul, of course, is a leader among God's people who had been faithful, but then turned to evil, and finally came to an end by the judgment of God.

We can certainly think of similar situations in our own day – of pastors or other powerful leaders in the church at large who started out well but then became self-serving and eventually brought an end to their own ministries, their public life, or even their faith.

That would be the closest parallel, of course. But we can extrapolate out from there as well. For instance, we can think of those among God's people who are not leaders, but who have followed a similar path – starting out faithful, they became self-serving, and in the end, as Paul puts it, they made a shipwreck of their faith.

Or we can consider leaders outside the Church, who are not part of the people of God but who are still our neighbors and our fellow citizens, and who, as neighbors, we have a Biblical calling to love as ourselves. We can think of leaders in other institutions we are in, leaders at work, leaders in government and politics. Leaders who, like Saul, may also fall by their own doing.

Or we can consider those who we relate to in some other setting: family members, friends, co-workers, peers, or others.

In the various settings where you live and work and relate to others, where have you seen, and where might you see the person who begins faithfully, but ends in some level of self-destruction? Where might you see the person who begins as a kind ally to you, but in the end turns against you unjustly?

And then, if they were to fall – if they were to bring some level of destruction on themselves – if they were to receive judgment for their unfaithfulness or their sin ... then how should we respond?

How should we respond when the mighty fall?

We get four possible responses in our text this evening: three responses we can be tempted towards, and one which we are called to. And that is what we will consider tonight.

We will consider the response of the Philistines, the response of the Amalekite, the response of despair, and then the response of David.

First, we consider the response of the Philistines: The temptation to gloat and degrade.

This is what we see in verses eight through ten. The Philistines respond to the downfall of Saul with gloating. They find the body of Saul, they cut off his head, they boast in their victory throughout the land, and they strap his body onto the wall of Beth-shan – desecrating it to assert their victory.

The temptation to gloat is when we respond to the fall of others by mocking, desecrating, or minimizing their humanity.

And we may not do it by strapping anyone's corpse to the city wall. But responding to the downfall of the mighty – whether their disgrace or simply their death – with mockery to dehumanize them, is extremely common.

Most of us don't think we do this. Most of us would insist that we would never do this. But psychiatrist Scott Alexander argues that the reason we think that is because we are selective in how we do it.

In his wonderful article titled "I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup," Alexander writes:

"The worst reaction I've ever gotten to a blog post was when I wrote about the death of Osama bin Laden. I've written all sorts of stuff about race and gender and politics and whatever, but that was the worst.

"I didn't come out and say I was happy he was dead. But some people interpreted it that way, and there followed a bunch of comments and emails and Facebook messages about how could I possibly be happy about the death of another human being, even if he was a bad person? Everyone, even Osama, is a human being, and we should never rejoice in the death of a fellow man.

[...]

"I hastily backtracked and said I wasn't happy per se, just surprised and relieved that all of this was finally behind us.

"And I genuinely believed that day that I had found some unexpected good in people – that everyone I knew was so humane and compassionate that they were unable to rejoice even in the death of someone who hated them and everything they stood for.

"Then a few years later, Margaret Thatcher died. And on my Facebook wall – made of [the same people so distressed by my post about bin Laden] – the most common response was to quote some portion of the song 'Ding Dong, The Witch Is Dead'. Another popular response was to link the videos of British people spontaneously throwing parties in the street, with comments like 'I wish I was there so I could join in'. From this exact same group of people, not a single expression of disgust or a 'c'mon, guys, we're all human beings here.'

"I gently pointed this out at the time, and mostly got a bunch of 'yeah, so what?', combined with links to an article claiming that 'the demand for respectful silence in the wake of a public figure's death is not just misguided but dangerous'."

Scott Alexander was puzzled by this apparent contradiction. But then, he says, it clicked for him. Alexander spends much of his article explaining the categories he came to see in what was going on in incidents like this ... but without getting into all that, we might frame it like this.

Alexander realized that each social group – each cultural tribe – tends to have some set of people they are willing to dehumanize and disparage and mock in their downfall. But they won't do that with others ... which is how they tell themselves that they are good and respectful people.

And the people they are willing to dehumanize are not necessarily – in fact they are somewhat unlikely to be – the people they think are actually the most evil. They are instead often a group that they feel personally threatened by some way, and so they respond by dehumanizing and mocking them when they fall.

We do this in all sorts of settings. It can be the callous way we speak of a national church leader who has fallen into disgrace. It can be the vicious way we speak of cultural or political leaders we oppose. It can be the little shot of glee in your stomach when that person you struggle with – that frenemy you have in some social circle or at work or somewhere else – when they face misfortune or trouble or a setback. It can be internal responses we never tell anyone about, or mocking celebrations of the downfall of others we post on social media. Who are the people you feel threatened by and who you are tempted to dehumanize and degrade as the Philistines did to Saul?

We all have people we can be tempted to do that towards ... and as we consider that, it's helpful to realize that David must have faced the same temptation.

David had a true enemy in Saul – and David was in the right while Saul was in the wrong. They were not just rivals, but Saul was trying to murder David while David was trying to be faithful to Saul. David longed for God to deliver him from Saul's aggression, and now Saul was dead. It would seem that David would have all sorts of reasons to gloat in Saul's downfall – to degrade him for where he had ended up despite all his arrogance.

But David does not do that.

The first temptation is that of the Philistines – to respond to the downfall of others with gloating mockery and degrading glee. We can be tempted towards it, but David resists.

The second temptation when the mighty have fallen is the temptation of the Amalekite: the temptation to self-seeking ambition.

This is what we see in the beginning of chapter one.

We, as the readers, already know that Saul died by falling on his own sword. We read about it in chapter thirty-one of First Samuel. But now, in chapter one of Second Samuel, this man – an Amalekite – shows up and tells a very different story.

He shows up and tells David that *he* is the one who killed Saul, and that he did it at Saul's request, as the battle turned against him.

What is going on here?

Well, the man would seem to be lying in the hopes of receiving a reward from David. The king is dead, and this Amalekite is hoping to turn a profit from it. Saul's attacks on David would be common knowledge in Israel, and so he hopes that David will be pleased with him for killing Saul. He adds to that that once he had done it, he immediately brought the crown and the armlet

– both signs of the king’s authority – to David. The mighty have fallen, and this Amalekite is seeking to turn it for his own gain.

And again, we can be tempted to the same thing. When misfortune falls on others – especially those who we may find ourselves at odds with, our minds can quickly turn to how we can use it for our advantage. How can we use it as leverage? How can we use it to grasp at more for ourselves? How can we take credit for it? It can happen in a range of ways – from maneuvering to grasp more power in the workplace to manipulating mutual friends for more influence in a group, to the enthusiasm with which we use the failings of leaders we don’t like as leverage for our own aims.

When the mighty have fallen, it is easy for us, like the Amalekite, to respond by seeking our own gain.

But once again, what is striking is that though David must have felt the same pull – though he must have been tempted to try to capitalize off this himself as well, David doesn’t do that. He not only doesn’t do it, but he carries out judgment on those who do.

David asks the Amalekite in verse thirteen where he is from. David already knows he is an Amalekite from verse eight. He’s not asking his ethnicity. Instead, he is asking if the man is part of Israel, and if he understands the treasonous act he has claimed to commit. David is determining if the man is liable to the laws of Israel for what he has done. The Amalekite replies that he is the son of a sojourner – which would make him a resident alien in Israel, and subject to Israel’s laws. And killing the king – killing Yahweh’s anointed – is against Israel’s law, whether the king asked for it or not. And once he hears this, David sentences the man to execution.

David will not reward the one who claimed to kill Saul, just as David would not kill Saul himself. David refuses to seek selfish gain from the fall of the mighty.

This is the second temptation David resists.

The third temptation is the temptation to despair. We don’t have an example of this in the text, but we should be able to see how it must have presented a real temptation to David.

There is a lot of discouraging information in these chapters, really. First of all, Jonathan, whom David loved as a dear friend and loyal follower, is also dead – killed in battle. Second, it is not just Saul and his family who are dead, but many among the people of God have died – so much so that the Philistines have to sort through all the bodies before they realize that Saul and his sons are among them. Third, Israel as a whole has suffered a terrible defeat – the Israelites living across the Jordan have had to flee their towns, while the Philistines who defeated Israel have moved into their land. A reverse conquest is happening here – with Israel being driven from the land rather than conquering it. Fourth, we need to realize that the end of Saul himself, while being a form of deliverance, must also have been a discouragement for David. David repeatedly tried to be reconciled with Saul. He repeatedly called him to repentance. But in this passage, Saul followed his path of self-destruction to the end. David cared about Saul and must have felt deep sadness about his life ending like this. But along with that, having seen how Saul ended, we must wonder if David considered the dangers of the kingship for himself. If he had any humility, he must have felt fear and trepidation about assuming that power. Look what it did to Saul. What might it do to him?

With all this discouragement, the temptation must be to despair – to just withdraw – to pull away, and resist any further call or action. The mighty have fallen – so why even bother going forward, if even they can end like this?

And we can certainly feel this temptation when we see the fall of those around us. Whether a moral fall, a failure of responsibility, a loss of health, an unexpected misfortune, or something else – when the mighty fall ... we can feel a sense of discouragement and despair. We can wonder what the point of trying even is.

And yet ... David resists this temptation as well. He laments – yes – and we'll speak of that in a moment. But then he continues forward. That is what we read of in the first verses of chapter two.

When the mighty fall – especially when they are the mighty whom we found ourselves at odds with, but even when they are not – when the mighty fall we can be tempted towards gloating that dehumanizes them, toward self-serving ambition that seeks to profit off of their loss, or towards despair that considers giving up on trying in discouragement.

What we should see in all these temptations is that each one is a temptation to rely primarily on ourselves. At root, each one is a temptation to put *us* at the center of everything.

To gloat over the downfall of others is to, in some way, attribute our continued standing to us – to assert that the main difference between us and them is that we are better than they are. We can degrade and dehumanize them because that helps make clear our superiority to them. Gloating says that our worth depends on ourselves.

In a different way, self-serving ambition places our success in our craftiness and ability to grasp at what we want. It doesn't look to others – even to God – to provide what we need, but it relies on itself to out-manuever others in grasping what we desire. It is, in many ways, the original sin of Adam and Eve – craftily grasping at what we want rather than relying on God to provide for us. If gloating is self-assured self-reliance, selfish ambition is active self-reliance.

And despair then would be disillusioned self-reliance – self-reliance that has lost faith in its own abilities. But since it keeps the belief that we are at the center of what happens or doesn't happen, it wallows in hopelessness, but still does not look outside of itself.

When the mighty fall, we are tempted to focus on ourselves.

Instead, in our text, we see that David, in faith, laments and then follows the call of God.

In faith, David both laments and then follows the call of God.

First, David laments. And the difference between lament and despair is key.

Despair is a loss of hope. Lament is grief expressed that something in this world is not the way that God intended it to be.

David's words are not words of despair. They don't result in his giving up. They don't express a lack of faith. Instead they are an expression *of* faith – faith that God did not and does not desire the world to be broken in the ways that it is.

The mighty are not supposed to fall. They are not supposed to fail morally. They are not supposed to fail in their faith. They are not supposed to destroy themselves as Saul has. They are instead supposed to be faithful servants of God who do as God wills, and who succeed in God's intentions for them.

The innocent and faithful, like Jonathan, are not supposed to be swept up in the self-imposed disasters of the righteous. The sheep are not supposed to be slaughtered because of the failure of the shepherd.

But we live in a world marred by sin and brokenness. And often, the proper response to that is lament.

This world is not the way it is supposed to be. Each and every one of our lives here this evening bears the scars and the still-open wounds that sin and brokenness have inflicted in our lives. More than that, in each and every one of our lives we can see the damage in ourselves and others that *we have inflicted*, as sinners ourselves.

The proper response to that is not indifference or despair. Both the indifferent shrug and hopeless surrender reveal a lack of faith – a lack of faith that God intends this world to be different than it is.

But faith laments. Faith boldly *names* the ways this world is not as it should be. Faith boldly states – either explicitly or implicitly – that God did not intend for it to be this way. Faith helps us see things as they truly are – both the problems with this world, and the goodness of our God.

And so it is worth asking yourself if you have the faith to lament.

Do you have the faith to look at and openly identify the sin and the brokenness that are in your life right now – both that sin which comes from you and that sin which comes from others? Do you have the faith to look at it and say “This is not the way it's supposed to be? It is not how God wants this to be.”? Or is that too scary for you? Lament takes faith. It takes faith both that God did not intend for our world to be the way it is, and it takes faith to believe that God will not leave us to the mess we have made of our world.

And so, David laments.

But then second, in faith, David also follows the call of God. We see that in the early verses of chapter two. After he laments, David turns to God, and asks him whether he should continue to follow God's call to the throne. And God says yes. David asks him where to go, and God calls him to Hebron. And then David goes.

David goes not in a display, in order to gloat ... he goes not as an ambitious opportunist in order to grasp at advantages for himself – because David steps forward not relying on himself, but relying on God. David steps forward in obedience – following the call of God and working for the good of God's people.

When the mighty fall, David's response is not to dehumanize, to grasp, or to despair – his response is to faithfully lament and follow God's call.

And as we see this in David, we should pause to remember that we are told in the Bible that David is a man after God's own heart. [1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22]

And as we reflect on that truth, we can see how David points us to the heart of God.

Because to whatever extent Saul gives us a picture of the fall of the mighty, it must pale in comparison to the fall that occurred when our first parents turned from God in rebellion. On that day – when sin and death entered the world, when God evicted his beloved creatures from the garden – on that day the mighty had truly fallen.

And God's response was not to dehumanize his creatures. It was not to disregard their good, and look out primarily for himself. It was not to despair of his creation and scrap it in order to start over. God did not respond to our fall like the Philistines, the Amalekite, or the person in despair. Instead, he responded like David. He, in some sense, lamented – in sadness he named the sin that had entered his world. And then he moved forward to bring healing and restoration. He remained faithful, even when we were faithless. He responded like David.

Of course, that is the backwards way of putting it. God was not like David. David here acts like God. And in doing so, he points to how God has treated us. He points us to the God who, as Ezekiel tells us, does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but instead desires that he would turn from his ways and live. [Ezekiel 18:23] He points us to the God who both confronted the sin of Adam and Eve and also promised them a Savior who would deliver them from sin and death [Genesis 3:15]. He points us to the God who again and again, in the prophets, laments the fall of his people, but does not abandon them for good. He points us to the God who looked over the city of his people who were rebelling against him and said “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” [Matthew 23:37]

David's treatment of the brokenness and sin in Israel points us to how our God has dealt with the brokenness and sin in us, and in all his people. He has not dehumanized us, even as we have dehumanized ourselves with our sin. He has not used us to his own advantage, even as we have used others. He has not given up on us, though he had every right to do so.

But he named our sin, named our brokenness, and then he moved forward in faithfulness and pursued us. And if you are here tonight, it is because in that faithful pursuit he has brought you to himself.

And because our God has responded to our fall that way, we, like David, are called to respond in a similar way to the fall of others.

This is not the pattern of the world. The pattern of the world tells us to denigrate others, to manipulate situations for our own gain, to give up when we see no advantage for ourselves.

But that is not how our God has treated us. And if we are his people – if we are the family of God the Father, the Body of God the Son, and the temple of God the Holy Spirit, then we must be a people who respond to the falls of others the way that God has responded to our falls.

We name it, we lament it, and then we ask what God is calling us to do to heal the sin and brokenness around us.

Where do you need to apply those realities to your life?

In what areas of life, in what relationships, in what interactions, in what parts of your heart, has your response to the fall of others looked far too much like the Philistines, the Amalekite, or the person overcome with despair? In what ways have you resembled the world more than the gospel to those around you?

And then what would it look like for you to begin to respond to others the way that the Lord has responded to you – the way that David responds to Saul, and Jonathan, and Israel?

Our text tonight calls us to look first at David. And from David to look to the heart of our God as it is reflected in the gospel. And from the heart of our God, we are called to look to ourselves, and ask how we must better follow in his footprints.

David reminds us that there is a place for lament – an essential place, really, for lament in the lives of the people of God, as they live in a world that is not the way it is supposed to be.

But he also reminds us that lament is not the last word. Lament, is a stepping-stone – not the final destination. Because even as we lament – *especially* as we lament – we know that God is not done. God is still at work. He was still at work in Israel, and he is still at work in your life, in the life of his Church, and in the life of this world. And in the end, he will bring the restoration both he and we long for. And then we will rejoice.

As the psalmist writes in Psalm 126:

When Yahweh restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then they said among the nations,  
“Yahweh has done great things for them.”

<sup>3</sup> Yahweh has done great things for us;  
we are glad.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O Yahweh,  
like streams in the Negeb!

<sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with shouts of joy!

<sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

Amen.

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**This sermon draws on material from:**

- Alexander, Scott. “I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup.” Spate Star Codex. September 30, 2014.  
<https://slatestarcodex.com/2014/09/30/i-can-tolerate-anything-except-the-outgroup/>  
Firth, David G. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.  
Leithart, Peter J. *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003.