

November 18, 2018  
National Presbyterian Church  
**The Courage to Lead**  
I Samuel 18:1-6, I Samuel 13:14  
Joyce Emery

“The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be the ruler over his people....”

When we move through the waters of Baptism and take on the vocation of Christian, each one of us is called to be leader. Oh you may say, I’m not cut out to lead anything, or you may be in the midst of a profound leadership position. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:1 “begs all believers to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” We start by learning to lead our own lives, no matter what befalls, not as a victim but as a victor through Christ. Inspiration comes from the life of David. It is my privilege in the Story which this congregation is reading together, to cover the first part of the life of David today, from shepherd boy to King of a both Israel and Judah – all 12 tribes. Pastor Donna Marsh will pick up at the tragedy of David’s personal life next Sunday. Then we will head to Advent, and highlight the Messianic prophecies in Isaiah.

We dig into the engaging story of David, and find the essence of his courage to lead. David’s courage was rooted in prayer and praise, practice, patience, and persistence.

Please join me in prayer. Gracious God, the Story captures our imagination, and these stories come alive. Open our hearts to living Word that we might be inspired for our walk together in faith. Encourage us! Amen.

Last week Dr. David Renwick introduced the prophet Samuel to us through the story of his Mother Hannah. She prayed fervently for this son. We learned that our private prayer life intersects with our public life. Our connection to God informs how we live our lives. Samuel learns to listen to God so he can be a conduit for God’s will and way through-out his entire lifetime. Now the Word of the Lord first comes to Samuel when he is a little boy in the service of Eli at the temple in Shiloh. Samuel is taught to say “Speak Lord, Your servant is listening.” The word received from the Lord is a word of Judgment to Eli and his disobedient sons. Eli’s priestly role will end. Can you imagine the courage it took for this little boy to speak these words to his superior. He did. Samuel learned to listen to God and so he was ready to attend to the Lord’s direction when the grumpy people of Israel called for a King – to be like all the other Nations of the world. Samuel would anoint first Saul and then David to be King.

Samuel, leading the people in the prophetic tradition may have been tempted to take this request for King as a personal insult against him, but God says: This is not about you this is about me and my people – they don’t want me, God Almighty to be the King of their lives. So God directs Samuel to Saul – a very reluctant King. Saul sins by not waiting for Samuel at a key point and loses his reign. So there is to be a new King. Samuel is directed to the sons of Jesse out in Bethlehem and the eldest son looks like a fine specimen, but none of these boys are the one. Samuel asks for another Son – yes, the youngest, the Shepherd, the lowliest David, out in the

field is called to come on in – and yes – he is the one – anointed to be King of a United Israel. But David will not take the reign for quite a few years, could have been 14, maybe even 22.

We meet David and marvel at his courage to step up and take a stand – his ability to lead. For David it is all about practice.

David is a practiced musician and shepherd.

1 Samuel 16:14-23 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

David Plays the Lyre for Saul

<sup>14</sup> Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, ... <sup>17</sup> So Saul said to his servants, “Provide for me someone who can play well, and bring him to me.” <sup>18</sup> One of the young men answered, “I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the Lord is with him.” <sup>19</sup> So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, “Send me your son David who is with the sheep...” <sup>21</sup> And David came to Saul, and entered his service. Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. <sup>23</sup> And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

David in the chapter 17 is the young shepherd boy that brings provisions to his older brothers on the battle field and decides that he can answer the call to face down the giant Goliath of the Philistine Army. With no armor, which is offered by King Saul, David takes up his slingshot and five smooth stones and knocks Goliath down. David had been practicing his skills with club and slingshot as a shepherd. He had protected his sheep from bears and wolves. His muscles had the memory. He was at the top of his game.

Last week as many of us pondered WW1 from many angles, I was fascinated to learn that American soldiers were trained in American, French, and German hand to hand fighting tactics. Grenades were a brand new tool in this war – and the Americans quickly mastered throwing grenades – why? Because so many young men had played baseball and knew how to throw a ball well. They had been practicing.

I have shared that part of my life has been in ministry with Native Americans. I am fascinated by the various dances which men and women learn to help their bodies learn the movements to engage in protecting and feeding and caring for the community. A grass dance taught by the Yakima Nation leaders, teaches each one the most efficient way to stomp down grass on the hunting trail, or for a sojourn at night. The Siberian Yupiks dance through the winter darkness, teaching their muscles the move into a hunting vessel, the moves to throw a spear with strength, fascinating.

How do you and I train our muscles to be courageous leaders? We practice being leaders. I want to think for just a moment about how we train our children to be leaders. As parents we want to provide our children a wealth of experiences. But what opportunities give them a chance to learn leadership skills? It is great to play a team sport – but few get to be the team captain. There are offices to take on in school – but few get to do that. Of all the models of leadership training I have seen, I must say that scouting, in all of its forms, still provides some of the best opportunities to let kids lead at the youngest age. Making decisions and implementing them with your peers is a profound way to practice leadership. I have observed ROTC to provide a great

training ground in high schools for those who are interested in military service. In the Church, before my time, Christian Endeavor and Westminster Fellowship – each of these movements had a leadership structure that developed leaders. There was self-governance and sustainability.

In our families, children gradually learn to lead with us, respecting each member of the family and their wishes – not making it all about them. Learning to be a courageous leader takes practice.

David's life was rooted in prayer. He was surrounded by people like Samuel and then Nathan who practiced the presence of God – they listened. The Psalms give us a window into David's profound prayer life. His Psalms would be used for worship through the centuries – for song!

Psalm 15

Who Shall Abide in God's Sanctuary?

### **A Psalm of David.**

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, who may abide in your tent?  
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

<sup>2</sup> Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,  
and speak the truth from their heart;

<sup>3</sup> who do not slander with their tongue,  
and do no evil to their friends,  
nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;

David also loved to dance before the Lord. He did it at the beginning of his career as a warrior and later on when David claimed the Ark of the Lord. This was not a private prayer closet dance but a public praise service!!!

2 Samuel 6:12-15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing;<sup>13</sup> and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.<sup>14</sup> David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod.<sup>15</sup> So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

Prayer and praise, dancing were the skills of this courageous leader. The scripture, the music must be hidden in our minds and hearts to build a life of courage.

Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian missionary, General Assembly Moderator, Seminary professor in his book "hostage bound, hostage free," tells of his capture in May 1984 on the streets of Beirut, Lebanon. The kidnapping was done by an [Islamic fundamentalist](#) group, [Islamic Jihad](#), that later evolved into [Hezbollah](#). He was freed 16 months later in exchange for US anti-tank weapons, as part of the [Iran-Contra Affair](#).

He describes being literally chained to a old fashioned heat register. He was only released to use the facilities. To maintain his sanity he prayed, he recited scripture from memory, and he sang our hymns and spiritual songs of faith. These gave him the courage to survive. How essential it is to memorize the words of faith, the songs of faith, so we can draw upon them when it is time to lead.

David was also persistent and patient. Samuel anointed David to be King when he was around 15 years of age. He would be 37 years of age when he would be declared King of a United Kingdom.

One summer while living in the Bay Area I took a course on the life of King David from one of our Old Testament Professors at San Francisco Theological Seminary, Dr. Robert Coote. It was so much fun to dig into the life of David. Dr. Coote had the grasp of all of the names of people and places named in I and II Samuel. These are names and places that we often skip over – boring. But Professor Bob made them come alive and he encouraged us to map the names and relationships. It was astounding. If you have ever organized strategic maneuvers you would appreciate the profound strategic work David did. Yes he was a warrior, making deals, protecting villages, recruiting soldiers, all the while building coalitions and uniting the divided tribes of Israel. It is remarkable. He even married and worked his own relatives to bring about the unification. God at work through David. And this work will bring peace to the people. It is worth studying. David was persistent and patient.

Here is another story about patience. David is hiding in a cave – Saul enters the same cave– and he is so close to David that David can kill him – instead, he cuts a piece off of Saul’s garment and then later confronts Saul and says....

1 Samuel 24:8-11

“My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. <sup>9</sup>David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of those who say, ‘David seeks to do you harm’? <sup>10</sup>This very day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared<sup>[a]</sup> you. I said, ‘I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is the Lord’s anointed.’ <sup>11</sup>See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak, and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life.

David, in God’s time was patient and persistent, strategic, a profound leader.

Finally, I love the word encourage – it is about living in courage – having others around you call you to God’s best self, others calling you, encouraging you to step up in lead in your own life and with others. David led with courage, but he did it encouraged by others. Samuel was his first encourager. Jonathan would step into that profound role. The passage read from the lectern today is about David’s friendship with Jonathan. Jonathan, the son of Saul, knew that God had anointed David to be the next King, not him – and he was willing to support David, and protect David and love David like the closest of brothers. Jonathan risked much to encourage David.

Mickel, the daughter of Saul was given to David as a reward, she would not encourage – and her story is a stark contrast in the scripture.

As I have stood in the Chapel and other places with you for prayer, and heard your stories in other settings, I am in awe how so many of you face life with courage – and lead in profound ways in difficult settings. In many ways I would rather tell your stories and I encourage you to keep telling your stories to one another, I tell two from my own life where it took courage to lead– one public and one personal.

The community I served in rural Colorado in the late 1980's was depressed. The church was small and the children of our community, if they graduated from High School, often could not find employment – they had to leave. And they certainly were not coming back after college. We got our little church organized and then the session with me as moderator decided to commence on some projects to serve our community. We also commissioned an elder to go to City Council meetings each week on our behalf and report back ways we could pray and mobilize to help our little City of 2,000. The Session asked me to go be an evangelist in the community by getting involved and meeting people. I took on several endeavors. We joined the Chamber of Commerce as a congregation. I was elected Secretary of the Chamber. We began an effort called Asset Based Community Development. To make a several years story short. We learned that our two greatest assets were prisons and antiques. People going West dumped their antiques on the Eastern slope before heading over the Rockies. We had 10 penal institutions in our County and the infrastructure to support the workforce. I was recruited to be one of 12 people from the County by the Federal Bureau of Prisons to become an expert in Federal Prisons, a speakers bureau, because in this process the Federal Bureau of Prisons was prepared to build the largest penal institution in the United States just south of town. I learned and spoke across the county as an advocate for the prison – not a role I ever imagined. Today if you go to Florence Colorado you will see ADMAX south of town and cute little antique stores along Main Street. I was a small part of courageous leadership teams. Persistent, strategic. Prayerful – in so many settings and conversations I could never have imagined.

A personal story. When I was five years of age the life of my parents fell apart. My Dad had to leave his pastorate in Calistoga California and we literally fled as a family to Washington State and my Mother's Mother, my Grandma's home. My father had to struggle to find a new job to support his family, which he did. But through all of this, I suffered as a little five year old. We had a new baby and there was little emotional energy for me. I took care of myself. Fast forward to my parenting the first of four five year olds, our eldest. Now at five we make some major transitions in our growth in identity, but I did not do well as a Mother of a five year old. I was often angry and impatient. I did not like me. In a women's prayer retreat, I realized that I was parenting out of my own hurt and pain. So, with some fear, I faced the little five year old me and participated in a spiritual exercise called the healing of memories. I Let that five year old be loved by the power of Jesus. It took some time – but by the time our next child was five I was ready to parent him and not the hurt little girl in me. Prayer brought healing. I have found it takes courage to lead in our own lives.

Leadership takes courage at the personal level and in the public arena. King David, becomes a profound model for us. He practiced a life of prayer – staying connected to God. His prayers led him to music and dance. David was patient, strategically pursuing God's will and direction. He would unite a Kingdom. And the people would long for the reestablishment of the Kingdom of David. Jesus would come and teach of a Kingdom that has no end – that would be built on his courage to face the cross and death for each of us – and rise victorious that we might live in his grace and strength and mercy.

Please join me in prayer.

Almighty Father, you know the challenges that each person in this congregation faces. Plant seeds of courage in each heart. Give us a Spirit of encouragement that we may support one another as we move out in faithfulness, in our homes, in our communities and in the world. We

want to be courageous in the name of Christ in a world that needs leaders who move in your name. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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