

The Life of David

Long Live the King

Study 6 | 1 Samuel 22:1-5

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- Ministry Leaders' Meeting: *May 20, 7:30 @ office, read Chapter 7.*

"The Community of the King"

1. What kind of existence is David leading at this time and what type of king has it made him? Who comes to him and joins his entourage? Why would these sorts of people align with his kingdom? How does David look after others?

We're only dealing with five verses this week and the passage is more evocative than it is full of didactic content. Our study guide, therefore, will be a bit more thin than in other weeks; we'll do our best to provoke your discussion in the most helpful directions, which, in this case, happen to be more broadly related to larger themes in the Bible and their application to our own lives rather than to more obscure biblical trivia limited to the concerns of 1 Samuel itself.

As we've seen over the last few weeks, David has been living life as a fugitive. He has no place to lay his head, no permanent home. He is not able to settle down with his family. He's been wandering enemy territory as a refugee, in a precarious situation even there. We know from earlier in Samuel what type of man David was: courageous, deeply dependent on God, strong in the Lord, and humble. These God-given characteristics have guided him so far in his exile and they are beginning to bear fruit in the types of followers he secures. The character of a king is reflected in his subjects, and visa versa. We learn much about David in reading this description of his followers: "everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became captain over them." Everyone from his "father's house" flocks to him, as well. These are the sort of people who had not benefitted from the kingdoms of this world. They had been disappointed and let down; furthermore, they are not exactly the type of rabble many kings would be happy to call their own. But that is exactly who flocks to David and whom David welcomes and protects. Samuel revels in that description for his readers. David goes on to make special arrangements to have his aging parents cared for while he is in such a dangerous and itinerant situation.

2. What parallels do you see between the existence Jesus led and how it shaped him as a king? What sorts of people aligned with his kingdom? Why? How did Jesus look after his followers?

There are many parallels to be drawn between the life and kingdom of David and that of Jesus. Again, this passage is meant to be more broadly evocative of biblical storylines, so you should encourage your group to feel a sense of interpretive freedom in thinking through the significant thematic allusions. For example, Jesus went into exile after he was anointed king and before he was

inaugurated fully as such. He was in conflict with a reigning ruler of this world. He had no place to lay his head and wandered around from town to town. He gathered to himself the sick and sinful. Not many of his followers were wise or of noble birth. And of course there are a million examples of the gracious ways Jesus similarly looked after these followers, not the least of which was his making sure his mother was provided for as he went to battle Satan and sin and death on the cross.

The deeper questions here about David and Jesus are twofold. 1) What was it about their *experiences* that made them they types of Kings whom the world-weary were drawn to? What does suffering and patient waiting for exaltation do to a person? How are they shaped by it? 2) How do they then in turn shape their kingdoms and their subjects to *embody and reflect* the types of persons they have become as leaders?

3. What sort of king and kingdom are Samuel's readers meant to long for while reading this passage? How is a kingdom like this different than the kingdoms of this world? In what ways does the Christian church approximate this picture? In what ways could our own church grow in this regard?

There is no doubt that Samuel meant for his first readers to appreciate and even cheer for a kingdom made of these types of subjects. The very people the world rejected are those to whom his readers are to show honor. And long to be themselves. No other king or kingdom is like this. It is utterly unique in history, at least with regards to being an attribute that is sought out and celebrated. Other kings trust in might and power and beauty and riches. God's kingdom is characterized by its healing qualities for those who have been left out of the dominant structures of the kingdoms of this world. And of course Jesus' kingdom is centered in his body, the church. His rabble is the center of his work and presence in this world. The church, therefore, is to be--and mostly has been--characterized by its ability to bring together the outcast, the poor, the downtrodden, the diseased of body, heart, and mind along with those rich and successful people of this world whom God has granted poverty of spirit, humility, and a chief love for the kingdom of God over all their success in this world. That is the singular genius and power of God's kingdom, in and through Solomon, and in and through Jesus, great David's greater son.

How are our congregations doing in this regard? Are we growing in our representation of King Jesus? Are our ranks characterized by those who are in distress, in debt, bitter of soul? Why or why not? How could we grow to more and more represent our King and his kingdom in these ways? Have we been shaped enough, like our king, by suffering and exile and patient anticipation such that we attract these types of people to our community? What is needed? One thing is sure, if we want to follow King Jesus, we will inevitably one day be described as is this community of King David.