

The First Sunday after Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon
1 Samuel 24:1-22: “Your Life Is in the LORD’s Hand.”
June 21/22, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Lord, the supreme Judge over all the earth, thanks be to You, because You judge equally and deal rightly with the children of men, abasing the wicked and exalting the pious. Teach us to trust Your providence, and whether we rest on beds of ease or must wade through turbulent waters, grant us grace always to say: The Lord is good and His ways are right. Amen. (*Reading the Psalms with Luther*, CPH, Ps. 58, p. 138)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is written in the twenty-fourth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:

When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, “Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.” Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats’ Rocks. And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. And the men of David said to him, “Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.’” Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. And afterward David’s heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD’s anointed.” So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way. / Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. And David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Behold, David seeks your harm’? Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, ‘I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’s anointed.’ See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes wickedness.’ But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea! May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.” / As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, “You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the LORD reward you with good for

what you have done to me this day. And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house." And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold. (ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who *"works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed"* (Psa. 103:6), so that we always have hope, dear fellow redeemed:

Last week, we heard how young David took down the champion Goliath with no sword or spear in his hand. This made David a hero to all the people of Israel. By David's hand, the LORD had delivered them from the Philistines. When the Israelites returned from battle, the women met King Saul with singing and dancing. *"Saul has struck down his thousands,"* they sang, *"and David his ten thousands"* (1Sa. 18:7). It was quite a compliment to say that Saul had struck down thousands. But he was very angry that the song praised David even more highly than himself. From that point on, Saul looked at David with suspicion and as a threat to his throne.

It is true that David would take Saul's throne. The LORD had chosen David for this, and the prophet Samuel had already anointed him as the next king. But David would not take the throne by force. Saul had nothing to worry about in that regard. At every step of the way, David showed himself to be a loyal servant to Saul. But sinful envy and jealousy do not often stand on evidence and reason, and they don't result in anything productive. The proverb says, *"For jealousy makes a man furious"* (6:34).

Jealousy made Saul furious. David was and could have continued to be a source of great success for Saul. Saul's kingdom and rule could have expanded. Instead, Saul wanted to destroy David. On multiple occasions, when a harmful spirit came upon Saul, and David was playing music for him, Saul threw his spear at David (1Sa. 18:11, 19:10). Another time, he tried to have David ambushed and killed at his house (19:11). Each time, David escaped which made Saul even more afraid of him.

Today's account shows how far Saul was willing to go to kill David, pursuing him even into the wilderness where David and his men were hiding in a cave. David did not deserve this. He had done nothing wrong to Saul. How many times had he played music for him when Saul was troubled? He had never gone against him. How had he become Saul's enemy?

You have wondered the same thing if you have ever been targeted or bullied by a classmate, a coworker, a boss, or a neighbor. You wonder: How did I get on this person's bad side? What have I done to deserve this? These experiences hurt. Even years later, you can remember the pain of being singled out, attacked, feeling alone. You wish there were a way to make the unjust treatment stop. You wish there were a way to get justice.

Now there isn't a great distance between the desire for justice and the desire to have revenge. The desire for justice can be godly; the desire for revenge is not. Let's take the example of one sibling picking on or provoking another. If the sibling who has been harmed brings the matter

to the proper authorities—his parents—he will have justice. But if he lashes out at the sibling who offended him and strikes back, he may have gotten revenge, but he has also gotten himself in trouble. And he won't really receive the justice he might have deserved.

Revenge never brings the satisfaction that we think it will. Our natural, knee-jerk response is to hurt the person who hurt us. But causing someone else to feel pain does not make my pain go away. Imagine if David had stabbed Saul to death in that cave. Perhaps Saul's men would not have known who did it. But David's men would have. And what kind of precedent would that have set for them? Wouldn't it teach them that as soon as they felt wronged by David, they would have the right to take his life? And imagine the burden on David's conscience, the burden of knowing he had murdered Saul.

David opted instead to leave the matter to the LORD. He recognized that as evil as Saul was acting toward him, he was still *"the LORD's anointed."* As long as the LORD allowed Saul to remain the king, David would continue to rely on the LORD for justice. It was all in the LORD's hand. David held up the corner of Saul's robe as proof that he could have harmed him but didn't and said, *"May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you."*

Now David had put himself in a very vulnerable position. He had just revealed his presence to Saul. Saul could have ordered his three thousand men to charge the cave, and David with his small number of men would have likely perished. We also make ourselves vulnerable by not going on "attack mode" against our enemies. Doesn't that just leave us exposed to further attacks by them? If we don't try to "take them down a notch" and "give them a taste of their own medicine," won't they just continue to wrong us and treat us even worse?

The inspired Epistle to the Romans says, *"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'"* (Rom. 12:17-19). We don't need to take revenge because God promises that He will take care of it. He knows what injustices have been done. He sees every wrong that we experience. And He promises to make everything right in the long run.

That is difficult for us because we don't want to wait for justice. How long does God expect us to sit still? One month? One year? Ten years? How long will our enemies go unpunished for their evil deeds? It is popular in our culture to talk about "karma" —that bad things will happen to bad people, and good things will happen to good people. But that is not how it works. We don't always see people get the punishment they deserve. Being on the lookout for "karma" is the same as being focused on revenge.

That is how the world would write the account of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Luk. 16:19-31). Somehow, somehow, the places of the rich man and the beggar would be switched. The rich-man-turned-beggar would learn the hard way how selfish he had been and end up with nothing, and the beggar-turned-rich-man would laugh all the way to the bank. But that isn't how it went. The beggar whom no one wanted to help died, and the rich man kept on throwing his lavish feasts. Justice was not done in this life, but it was done in eternity. Lazarus who

trusted in the LORD was brought to heaven. The rich man who trusted in his riches was sent to hell.

Like Lazarus, we don't always receive good things on earth. Sometimes we suffer unjustly while our enemies prosper. It isn't fun. It doesn't seem fair. But it is the way of our Lord Jesus. St. Peter wrote that *"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly"* (1Pe. 2:22-23). No one was treated more unjustly than Jesus. He did nothing wrong, but He was attacked, tormented, and nailed to a cross.

Justice was not done in Jerusalem. The justice system of the Jews and the Romans failed. But on a higher level, justice was done. Jesus bore this injustice and carried these griefs and sorrows for the salvation of the whole world. He took on Himself all the mistreatments, injustices, evils, and violence that sinners had perpetuated against one another. And more than that, He took on Himself all the wickedness that we sinners had done against the holy God.

This is where we remember our place. We might feel we are treated badly by others. But what makes us think we deserve so much good? What we deserve is the same punishment the rich man received in hell. We deserve to have to pay for all of our sins. But that is not what we get. What we get is forgiveness, righteousness, and life from the gracious hand of our God. He does not treat us like enemies. He does not pay us back for our sins. He saw that justice was done on our behalf by His Son who gave Himself in our place. He paid for our sins to reconcile us with the all-powerful, all-holy God.

And this was David's comfort as well, that even if Saul opposed him, God did not. His life was in the LORD's hand just as Saul's was. He had no right to take Saul's life. Shortly after the LORD says *"Vengeance is mine"* in Deuteronomy 32, He says, *"there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand"* (vv. 35, 39). That is a warning to those who oppose Him. But it is a promise to all who put their trust in Him.

Your merciful LORD gave you life, He redeemed your soul, and brought you to saving faith. He gives you this day your daily bread—everything you need for your existence on earth. He guards and protects you from threats you are not even aware of. And when you do suffer, He strengthens you through His Word to endure.

Because He is with you, because you are on His side, you never stand alone. Even if the entire world opposes you, and there seems to be no way to turn, you are safe with Him. **Your Life Is in the LORD's Hand.**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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