

Coram Deo
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi
Deo Volente

Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church

By the Rev. Dr. John S. Niles MSM CD

“Hurt People, Hurt People”

5th in the Series on David

1 Samuel 24:1-22

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbZAq2zvq2k>

Have you ever noticed that hurt people, hurt people?

I came across a website that had this as its opening line. “Have you been wronged, mistreated, annoyed or ignored? Is someone tormenting you beyond what you can bare? Are you ready for some payback?! Explore our site and find piles of good ideas and novelties.” The website: Revenge Unlimited. There you can buy from the store, read from their stories of successful revenge and get even with those who have wronged you. The site puts as their purpose/mission statement: “Revenge Unlimited believes that there are people in desperate need of a good dose of humility and we exist to help you make sure they get it!” Then, it does give this disclaimer: “By entering this site you agree that you take full responsibility for your actions.”

That, however, is part of the problem. People do not want to take full responsibility for their actions. They want to blame everyone else, or have everyone else change instead of themselves. Because Hurt people, hurt people.

One day Francis was speaking with a member of Assisi’s nobility. The count was bewailing the chaos and scandals that were spreading throughout the region. “Your lordship need not grieve for these things,” replied the saint, “for there is a remedy for these problems.”

The count quizzically asked, “What remedy can there be for such evils?” Francis said, “It’s actually simple. You and I must first be what we ought to be, and then we shall have cured what concerns we have. Let each individual do the same and the reform will be effectual. The worst is that everyone talks of reforming others, without trying to correct one’s own area of chaos and scandal. In this way evil remains as disorder everywhere.” (Appleseeds.org)

When David was on his own, he had the opportunity to make a fresh start, chart a new course, distinguish himself in leadership and detach himself from Saul. In Chapter 22 of Samuel, David assumed responsibility for his brothers and parents and the outcasts of society. It was clear to everyone that David was very different than Saul. He treated those rejected by society like family and those forgotten like friends. Yet, the final test of a person’s character is how they treat their enemies. The test of a person is how they treat people who do or seek to do evil to them; especially when you now have the upper hand. What would you do to your enemies, rivals and critics given a chance to prove them wrong?

I

What do you do with someone hurts you? You begin by **using your better judgment**.
“24:1 After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the Desert of

En Gedi.” 2 So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats. 3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. 4 The men said, “This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. 5 Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. 6 He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.” 7 With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way. (1 Sam 24:1-7)

Saul welcomed wrong and evil reports about David, but David weighed what was true against what might be false when being advised by others.

I love the story told of a truck driver sitting in a restaurant minding his own business when a motorcycle gang came in and began to harass the trucker. One hoodlum in particular, got right up in his face and said, "You think you're a big man when you're in that 18 wheeler. But you get out of that truck and your nothing but a wimp." The trucker just ignored him and kept on eating. Finally, after some more verbal abuse that the trucker disregarded the gang member took his orange juice and poured it all over his food and said, "How do you like that?" The trucker just pushed himself back from the table went over to the cash register, paid and walked out. And the hood looked at the waitress and said, "He's nothing. Once he gets out of that truck he's not much of a man is he?" And the waitress who was looking out the window said, "No, and he's not much of a truck driver either, he just ran over 6 motorcycles on the way out of here."

Bob Dole in his eulogy to Richard Nixon, quoted from the fallen leader who sought rehabilitate his damaged reputation and who would often be sought out by sitting Presidents on both sides of the aisle for advice said that best advice Nixon ever gave was, "I just get up every day to confound my enemies. You do the same."

II

What do you do with someone hurts you? You begin by using your better judgment, and secondly, **act in good faith.** *“8 Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. 9 He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? 10 This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’ 11 See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. 12 May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. 13 As the old saying goes, ‘From evildoers come evil deeds,’ so my hand will not touch you. 14 “Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? 15 May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.” (1 Sam 24:8-15).*

Norwegian coach Bjørnar Håkensmoen gave Sara Renner a ski pole after hers was broken when a competitor stepped on it during the cross country team sprint at the 2006 Winter Olympics. Norway's ended up fourth, implying that this selfless act of sportsmanship may well have cost the Norwegian team a medal.

Renner gave Håkensmoen a bottle of wine as a thank you, while other Canadians responded with phone calls and letters to the Norwegian Embassy. Canadian businessman Michael Page donated 8,000 cans of Maple Syrup to the Norwegian Olympic Committee to show his gratitude

So much of what we think is important – isn't. We fret and fume over some small issue and then wonder – later – why did we even bother. For all that pleases is but for a moment, and all that troubles is but for a moment. And if we were somehow able to grasp this we would, like David act in faith instead of in fear when people try to hurt us or speak evil about us.

David did not kill Saul when he had a chance, but he did challenge Saul on his conspiracy theories (1 Sam 22:8), selective hearing (1 Sam 24:9), unfounded anger (1 Sam 18:8), jealousy (1 Sam 18:9) and fear (1 Sam 18:12). And in doing this he acted in good faith.

III

What do you do with someone hurts you? You begin by using your better judgment, act in faith, and thirdly, **respond with kindness**. *“16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” And he wept aloud. 17 “You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.”*

Samuel Johnson once said, "Kindness is within our powers, fondness is not." That could be a liberating sentence for some of us. We sometimes feel we have an obligation to like everybody and when we can't manage it, we grow discouraged and feel guilty. But fondness is not within our powers. Kindness is however and we know that we can be kind even to people we don't like. And then the surprise! What begins in kindness often leads to fondness? When we treat people right, we begin to feel right about them. We all know that people can be illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered, but we are called to love them anyway. As Christians we are to be benedictions to one another--you to me, and me to you. We know all too well how Christians can be *maledictions*--there are some Christians that make it hard to be a Christian aren't there? But there are some that make it easier--these are the *benedictions*.

In Thunder Bay yesterday there was a run for Truth and Reconciliation. It was to raise money for indigenous causes. It had a 5km, 10km, 15km run but also a 500m run for children. There were dozens of children at the starting line, but one child stood out for he was in a walker disabled but still able to want to do his part to make a difference even though he knew he won't win or medal. The bell when off and the raise began, and the fastest pulled in front the slower though still pulled past the little guy in the walker. Though undaunted, he continued even after every single runner had passed the finish line.

The children looked back to see him still struggling to finish and without a word every one ran back to him and joined him shouting words of encouragement as they joined him as he passed the finish line and his family and all the crowd joined in shouting and clapping.

Kindness is such a simple thing, but profoundly important.

At 21 my mother gave me a card with the words of Rudyard Kipling – words that I have carried with me in my briefcase everywhere I go all these years since. Words that have inspired challenged and convicted me to aspire for a better way.

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
'Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

You think about that. Amen.