

Prayer: We thank you, Lord, that the even the smallest of us can trust you to be on our side and stay present no matter what. We ask that you continue to build our trust in your strength and wisdom so we gladly accept your role for us in this world as your presence, in the power of your Spirit we pray. Amen.

One of the dominant personalities of our faith story is David, son of Jesse of Bethlehem. We began to be reminded of his story, (within our greater story), two Sunday's ago when we were called to reflect on how God's people wanted a king – *so they could be like all the other nations*. We heard how Samuel was offended on both a personal level and for God. *Because until then* God – through Samuel (or God's high priests) ruled the people by faith politically and “now” the people were rejecting this model Δ God.

In grace, God let the people to go ahead. So last Sunday, the Girls Brigade gave us a re-enactment of Samuel looking for; finding the youngest of Jesse's sons, ‘little’ David and Samuel anointing him as the **next** King of Israel. **This** week we quickly work out that Samuel's anointing the ‘boy’ David, could *easily* be treason, because Saul was still king and his son – Jonathan should have been the next in line – the eldest prince becomes king – right??? Well in our human thinking, that's what we know happens, right???

Not so in God's thinking! Our passage today tracks the progress of David's rise in popularity, skill, experience, political astuteness, militarily success, ... actually there's not much it seems, he fails in. Even Jonathan – prince, yet to be king, loves David so much he makes him an equal.... cV

When something seems too good to be true it usually is and so we know there's going to be fall out??? Today it starts with Saul – no matter how he tried to discredit David he fails, no matter how much he tried to kill him – he fails.... The younger man is taking over and Saul fights it with everything he has in his power. At this point in the story David's ability, honesty and integrity ratings are strong. He has just killed the giant, Goliath, beating the current Israelite enemy – the Philistines and said he did it by or in the power of God. David has powerful 'friends' in court guiding him and allowing him room to grow and prove himself – which he does **because** the Lord, his God is with him. He knew that and so then, do we.

What Saul knows is that the spirit, the presence of the Lord **has left** him, and into the spiritual vacuum, the Bible says he has what is *described as an evil spirit*. Jealousy would be my first call although I wouldn't describe it as evil, of its self but to me **it is** one of the most powerful emotions humanity is subject to. I imagine all of us here know just how powerful it is and how quickly it takes over and shifts us away from God's ways. Almost out of God's reach, which then creates spiritual vacuums within us which are so easily filled with the wrong spirit... Saul knows all of this – **but is caught** only able to watch as he is stripped of his power, authority, sense of success / of belonging / of doing God's 'thing'...

Saul has to be experiencing a huge sense of loss – of power, authority, love, control, but most of all loss of the presence of God. I don't know if I want to go as far as to invoke evil – but my strongest definition of hell – is to be without, be beyond the presence of God. Saul's position is **sharply** contrasted with David, the young man who is *perhaps over confident*, but **knows what it is** to live in the presence of God.

Sometimes in our lives we struggle with how we know God is with us... **One** of the ways we are taught is through the lives of the ancient ones of our faith. So Saul's story tells us what happens when we lose that presence. Everything 'dies' – our love, our joy, our priorities for good and health and wellbeing of others.... This scriptural teaching says we die from the inside out.

One of the facts of our faith is that our 'inside' / our inner being has to be as clean / good / aligned with Jesus ways as we show our “outer being” to be. A lot of our New Testament teachings especially from Paul is about this. We know how hard it is to keep both our inner / outer lives completely as **Jesus wants**.

*1J Petty, *2 K Matthews from Fredrick Buechner (*Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*).

We know how we are much better at hiding an inner problem or storm or conflict or worry... but as Saul's story tells and Jesus taught – eventually what is on the inside shows for everyone to see.

In Saul's story today we were told twice that he was “afraid” of David. This is the fear that starts on the *inside* – about ‘inside things’ but which eventually shows on the outside - somehow. Just maybe for Saul its power within him was not overcome in the power of the Spirit of God, was not destroyed, and so contributed to his destruction. There is another kind of fear that starts on the outside – it is to do with external ‘things’. In the Greek language of Jesus time there were two words used so people knew which one was meant. *For us* – we have ‘fear’ ‘afraid’...

In Mark's story of the disciples with Jesus both kinds of fear are talked about. The first, the ‘inner’ fear is *deiloi*. It also carries with it a sense of something not working right/ something defective contributing to the experience. Jesus uses this word when **he asks** the disciples about being afraid. This means his question is much stronger than just worrying about them / or being ‘caring’ pastorally. When he asks why they were afraid, **what Jesus says**; *after* they have woken him up because they are afraid of the storm (external fear); Jesus says: ‘Why are you *deiloi*? – Why are you **cowards**? How do you not have faith?’

^{*1}The great preacher [Brian Stoffregen](#) noted: "One is afraid because one lacks courage...Jesus indicates that there is something defective about the disciples--they are fearful, cowardly, timid, and lacking in faith." In the middle of this storm – Jesus says their fear is an inner defect that has to be overcome for them to ‘get-through’ the storm. So the **good news** is that this inner (and defective) fear **can be beaten** – if we know about this kind of fear – (*and we do!*) then we **need to know** about how to overcome.

Jesus immediately links overcoming with **trust-and faith in him** so it means this kind of inner (fear) is something his presence helps us overcome – when we call on him and trust him when the storms of life are swirling around us. *I have a little* side question here I heard ‘afresh’ in verse 36 “Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.” Did you hear it - There were also other boats with him!!! **So** what happened to them? Maybe it's exactly like our life experiences – when we are in the middle of a storm – all we can see is what is immediate to us – only those in the boat with us. And just how like fear – defective and disabling fear to decrease our vision, our support, the ‘other’s’ in our lives who might offer support, help, comfort, vision....

We **know** this - right? We also know how ‘lost’ Saul became when he lost the spirit of the Lord's presence. Now we have Jesus disciples ‘lost-at-sea’ and calling on him to wake up and rescue them. **They had** the presence of the Lord **in their boat**, but they *didn't understand*, trust, and make it a faith thing. In Mark's Gospel the disciples just don't get Jesus – they just don't understand – and it shows in stories like this one where Jesus is asking if they simply haven't the capacity to understand, trust and have faith in him – so he calls them cowards, because they don't get what it means to have him with them.

They do not know who he is! They call him ‘teacher’ – in the middle of a storm, and it is a fact on the Sea of Galilee storms come up very quickly but to call for a teacher!!! Remember I said there were two Greek words for fear? *Deiloi* – the inner kind, and the other is ^{*1} *Phobos*, this is a fear experienced as some kind of threat from the outside, an external circumstance, like the fear from a storm. Fear from something done to you – and out of your control. Rather than struck with great awe- literally they were ‘fearing a great fear’ / struck with a great fear – ie: they were terrified. We know storms do this to us, so what do we do?

Allow the inner defective fears to take over like Saul – and the presence of the Lord to leave – or listen to the ‘teacher’ and trust in faith that he is with us – asleep in the deepest parts of our being to hold us true through the storms – of our lives? ^{*2} Jesus says to us just as clearly as he said to his disciples – “come let us go”. **What we know** is that on that journey storms are going to ‘hit’ us. Jesus doesn't say – stay! He says “I am with you – find peace – find me”. And when we do – we know it! Amen

^{*1} J Petty, ^{*2} K Matthews from Fredrick Buechner (*Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*).