

Imagine two people in your life who you love and respect and are close to. Maybe a parent and your husband or a close friend and your wife or your prayer partner and someone who has been in your life since you were young. 2 people that mean a lot to you.

For Jonathan those two people were David and his Father Saul. He loved and honored his Father and he loved and respected his friend, as close as a brother, David. Jonathan knew God's law and he knew that to honor his Father was a command from God. His Father was also the man God had chosen as King over his people Israel. When David first came into Jonathan's life he would play the harp for Saul, the King, and it was clear the spirit of God was with Him. David then went on to be the only man (or boy) brave enough to trust God and take on God's enemies. As we heard last week he trusted God would help him, he trusted in God's character and in God's power. He trusted enough to step out in front of men who were trained in the army, who were wearing the king's armor, and he went out to face the giant Goliath with nothing but a sling. He put his life on the line for Israel, trusting in God alone, when no other man would. And this is the David that Jonathan got to know and love, who became like a brother to him. Both were young and trusting in the Lord and knew God's commands. Both grew into men surrounded by battles as Israel fought their enemies the Philistines. And we hear how this friendship and bond even became an oath that was to last beyond their own lifetime and into the next generation.

The two people you thought of, imagine what it might feel like for you if one of them hated the other....and they were open and vocal about it. And what is worse: that hatred isn't even based on truth but jealousy and pride and fear. As Saul used his power as King to serve his own fears and wants, as he chose not to trust God but use other methods and he went ahead disobeying God's commands (like making an animal sacrifice only priests were allowed to make because he was impatient and untrusting) and so God looked elsewhere for a king whose heart was for God, who knew him and trusted him and feared him above all else, a man after his own heart. And as we have heard he found this new king to be David.

David knew he had been chosen as king by God however Saul was actually still the king in terms of the armies followed him and many people (not God though) saw and obeyed him as king. They didn't question him at this time. Even David wanted to serve him in battle.

Jonathan was close enough to his Father to know the true hardships of being king, of ruling people and the insecurities this can make someone feel. But his Father knew people loved David, they called out his name on the streets praising his bravery and how many of their enemies he had killed. He was a true hero. And Saul hated this, he was jealous; he wanted to be in control, he was king. He compared himself and he felt less and this drove him to want to kill David.

Jonathan would have been aware of all of this and it wasn't the first time Saul had tried to kill David. But Jonathan knew

his Father and always hoped that he would see David's heart, one after God, and Saul would change and turn back to God and not hate David.

David wasn't rebellious; he wanted to serve the king because more than anything he wanted to see God's enemies defeated, as did Jonathan.

And like Jonathan with his father, it is true that we will see those closest to us, whether we love them or struggle to like them, in a certain light, especially our parents. They aren't perfect but mostly they have tried their best. We are asked by God to honor them. What does this mean and look like? Jonathan's father was tormented by evil spirits often, he didn't trust God, he had serious control issues and he was trying to kill an innocent man David who was his son's best friend. How was Jonathan to honor him? By ignoring his awful behavior and pretending it was all right? No. Jonathan knew there were consequences to Saul's evil actions and I think we can learn a lot of how to honor our parents from this.

Jonathan saw the bigger picture. He saw his father's struggles and weaknesses. He knew and accepted that his father wasn't perfect. And yet he knew God's ways are right and so rather than just walk away and hate him God was asking him to honor his father. His way, one among many, was to speak truth to his father and to love and trust God's ways above his own. David was chosen by God, he loved God, he was humble and brave. It was hard for Jonathan to really believe his own father would want to hurt his beloved friend but he didn't remain blind to the reality of the situation, he let himself face the truth.

With David's advice he tested his father to see his reaction to David having gone away, who took himself out of reach from Saul so he couldn't kill him. If Saul's reaction were relaxed it would have shown that he didn't mind David wasn't around and so meant no harm.... **but** in fact Saul was furious and anger over spilled into violence and he hurled a spear at his own son, who he loved! His was so fearful that David was better than him and people adored David and was so jealous, his identity as a powerful king was so shaken up, that he did something he didn't mean to do, he struck out in anger and violence.

Jonathan then really saw what his own Father was capable of and so understood now his violent anger towards David and knew he had to warn his friend. He disobeyed his Father and went and helped his friend escape. We often think to honor our parent is to obey them always, without question. This story helps us to see that God wants us to use the common sense, wisdom and the discernment he has given us and to obey and trust God above all else. God was using the covenant of friendship between Jonathan and David for a greater purpose and Saul's problems and evil commands would not stand in the way of His plans.

The people of Israel had asked for a King and God had found a man after his own heart to be king now that Saul had turned away from him. Jonathan trusted in God and in his friend's faithfulness in God. He didn't desert his Father, he

went back to town where he stood by this wretched man for years to come, however, as far as we know Jonathan never got swept up in his evil lead pursuits of David. In honoring his father he was honoring the parts he could, knowing his father was made in the image of God, a man who had once loved God. He did not fool himself as to who his Father was now and in his own life continued to seek God, in this He honored his Father, by living the life God held for him and seeking God above all else.

We see in this story an unusual trust and love between two friends. We see how God used this friendship as part of his greater plan. David and Jonathan made a promise to each other that meant their friendship wouldn't be broken whatever difficulties came; they would stand by each other. David was a man after God's own heart and Jonathan was drawn to this in David, he wanted to help him and see no harm come to him.

When Jonathan went to warn his friend of the danger and they said goodbye to one another, not knowing if they would see each other again, David loved and honored his friend Jonathan by bowing down three times to him with his face in the ground. David was the king chosen by God and yet he humbled himself before his friend and bowed down. We often think of King David as heroic and inspiring and yet here we see him also as humble. He knows the danger Jonathan has put himself in and that he has disobeyed his father to keep David safe.

We also see David's heart which mirrors Jesus's heart. He is a man chosen by God for a purpose, One who doesn't need to bow down, who is king, who is God, and yet through love does bow down and puts his face and life in the dirt for us. He knows he is chosen and there is sacrifice and he willingly makes it, he humbles himself before us, and to God. We see in David's actions his heart, a heart willing to serve and a heart that knows what it is to be loved and to love. He loved his friend Jonathan as a brother and as these two friends departed Jonathan said "Go in peace, for we have sworn loyalty to each other in the Lord's name. The Lord is the witness of a bond between us and our children forever."

This wasn't a friendship for a time but one to go beyond the grave. Jonathan actually died in battle many years later and his son was adopted into David's own family. And as God leads us into friendships and relationships we can also learn what it is to be loved and to love others. Some of us find it easier to receive love and actually want more, others prefer to give it and give it, receiving can be painful and hard.

David, a man after God's own heart, shows us a friendship with Jonathan that was forged out of love and seeing God's image in the other. David had a lot going for him, was able to slay a giant and many others in battle, he was strong but he also had to learn to need his friend; he now was in a bad situation, the king wanted to kill him, and he had to trust and rely on his friend to help him. We can't be in a real friendship if it is only one way. At the arch where we share life together we are from many different backgrounds where friendship and relationship can feel hard and complicated and when things get hard many of us would find it easier to walk away than work it out. However, we are trying to know and

follow Jesus together and we are learning that it is better to risk discomfort and a little pain and learn to receive another person into our lives - which involves forgiveness and saying sorry and addressing problems and putting ourselves out for one another- than being separate from the body. God has made us to be His bride, his family and we aren't meant to be in it alone. To follow him means to learn relationship. And this is God's heart too....

That we would grow in a relationship with him that is 2 way. A relationship where we can worship him and praise him, love him, and obey him, talk and pray to him, trust him when we are in a tight spot, when we don't know what to do, and when people around us have let us down. Do we turn to him? Do we talk to him, do we ask for help and then let him help us? Do we admit we can't do it on our own?

And the other way. Maybe we are good at asking him, we may do the right things, obey him, pray a lot, serve and love our neighbours and give our lives to him.... but are we able to receive love from him? Can we know his help and strength in our weakness and his loving words and receive them in our hearts and receive his goodness and plans and fatherhood over us. Can we receive our place as his beloved? I try and spend time every morning with God the bit of reading his word and praying is great but actually receiving his love and letting him speak love over me is what keeps my heart soft and our relationship good, I need him, his need his words of love.

We talk about loving Jesus and being loved by him and use language about intimacy and relationship. For women it is often a more natural language so it is fairly also easy to relate to. This loving friendship between David and Jonathan though may be help men in God's invitation to love another man in friendship and brotherhood and intimacy, those friendships that can last a life time. Maybe this openness and acceptance of love we read about here can help us all have a better language and understanding of an intimate relationship with Jesus, a man who is asking us to be in an unusually and challengingly intimate in relationship with him. A love that is held in a vow, a promise. We can think it's ok to know about him and know him in certain parts of our lives but he is asking every part of us, to love him and receive his love.

Learning to receive for free brings us to asking then 'can we receive what Jesus Christ has done for us?' By his death God's covenant and promise has been made true to us. We are no longer separated from God. Like the promise that David and Jonathan made to each other that meant their relationship could last through all difficulties and through time, can we trust the promises God has made to us that stand through all situations and believe it lasts for eternity? We see David trust in God knowing he was a part of God's plan but not seeing the end. He was chased and persecuted by those who supposedly followed the Lord. He had extraordinary relationships with some of those close to him like Jonathan, he was humble enough to recognize he couldn't do it in his own strength and he even bowed down to honor those around him. He was not afraid to love his friend and also to need his help. Through him we are reminded of the promise of the new covenant through the death of Jesus Christ in Hebrews **10 v15-17**

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says

“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

that now stands for us and the invitation for us to walk in it and to live out of it bringing us into true relationship with our neighbours and church and with Jesus Christ himself.

Questions

What does it mean to honor our parents?

How does this story help you to see a way of holding difficult and complicated friendships? How can we trust God above the situation we are in?

Why is the vow David and Jonathan make so valuable?

Why is God's covenant to us so valuable?

How is it relevant to us to day?

Is the language of love with Jesus easy to use, how do we understand it and receive it?