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*“You and Your Kingdom”*

1 SAMUEL 20:24-42

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## At A Glance

At Saul’s royal table, two kingdoms collide—the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God. Consumed with paranoia and self-preservation, Saul clings to his throne and hurls his spear at anyone who threatens his control, even his own son. Jonathan, however, models a different way—the way of surrender, covenant loyalty, and trust in God’s sovereign plan. This message exposes our own temptation to protect “you and your kingdom” and invites us to lay it down for something far greater. In Christ, we find the freedom, peace, and abundance that only come when we stop building our own kingdom and start seeking His.

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## The Collision of Two Kingdoms

In 1 Samuel 20, Saul’s royal dining table becomes the stage where two kingdoms collide — the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God. The king of Israel sits against the wall, clinging to his throne, his spear close at hand, his mind consumed with paranoia. His son Jonathan, seated opposite him, defends the innocent David and discovers what his father truly worships: *“As long as the son of Jesse lives...neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.”*

That’s it. Saul’s god was his own kingdom — his own legacy, power, and control. And when Jonathan refuses to join that crusade, Saul hurls a spear not at his enemy but at his own son. It’s what happens when self-preservation becomes our highest value: we wound the very people we’re called to love.

We may not throw spears across the dinner table, but the same temptation beats in our own hearts — to protect what is mine, to control outcomes, to make life revolve around us. Jonathan shows another way: the way of surrender; of trusting the Lord to build *His* kingdom.

Let’s read our passage this morning and then pray — that our hearts would be free from the tyranny of “you and your kingdom,” and that God’s Spirit would advance His kingdom through us. Let’s also lift our eyes beyond this room — praying for the gospel to go forth through the **Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes**, and for our brothers and sisters in **Nigeria and Sudan**, who cling to Christ in the midst of hostility.

### 1 Samuel 20:32-34

<sup>32</sup> Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” <sup>33</sup> But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. <sup>34</sup> And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him.

## Saul's Paranoia

**Verses 24-25** So David hid himself in the field. And when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. <sup>25</sup> The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty.

**Abner** was the commander of Saul's army and would become pivotal in ending Israel's civil war and unite Israel under David.

**Verses 26-27** Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, "Something has happened to him. He is not clean; surely he is not clean." <sup>27</sup> But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

The repetition suggests that Saul is trying to convince himself; to quiet his mind. He's got no peace. His back is against the wall (literally and figuratively) revealing his paranoia.

## Jonathan's Dangerous Deception

**Verses 28-29** Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. <sup>29</sup> He said, 'Let me go, for our clan holds a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

That Jonathan lied to his father elicits similar thoughts as when Michal lied to him in chapter 19. As I explained in more detail on September 7, it's generally regarded as acceptable to lie to protect innocent life, as is the case here.

**Verses 30-31** Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? <sup>31</sup> For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die."

Saul was right in a sense. David did represent a threat to Jonathan's throne. But only from a natural, human perspective. But Saul is a raging maniac with no self-control and no ability to reason. He demanded that David be brought to him so he could kill him.

## Saul's Heart Exposed

**Verses 32-34** Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" <sup>33</sup> But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. <sup>34</sup> And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him.

This is unrestrained authority. Saul was a man who rejected any moral authority over him. He was a man who refused to submit himself to God. He presumed upon God when he offered the unauthorized sacrifice. He presumed upon God when he kept what was devoted to destruction. He presumed upon God when he tried to kill the man he knew God had chosen to replace him.

## The Sorrowful Goodbye

In **verses 35-40** Jonathan executes the plan he and David devised. He shot his arrows and called out to his helper, <sup>36</sup> "Run and find the arrows that I shoot." - a coded message that David could hear and know that Saul was indeed after him to kill him.

Jonathan sent the boy back into the city with his weapons in **verse 40**; a visual representation that Jonathan came to David in peace.

**Verse 41** And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most.

David's initial response was to show reverence to the crown prince, bowing three times. Jonathan countered David's humility by embracing David with a kiss, a customary farewell greeting. The two would meet only once more (23:16-18) where Jonathan encouraged David.

Contrary to what progressive theologians falsely claim, David and Jonathan were not in a homosexual relationship. It was, and is, customary in the middle east to greet one another with a kiss on the cheek. David and Jonathan were best friends; this was a devastating loss to them both.

**Verse 42** Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'" And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

Literarily, this is Jonathan's disappearing scene. From chapter 14 to now, Jonathan has been a prominent figure in the story of Israel. Here he fades into obscurity, only to resurface once more in chapter 23 prior to his death in chapter 31. I'm reminded of John the Baptist who said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" *John 3:30*

Thus is the life of a faithful man or woman – He must increase, I must decrease. This is a message the world rejects and our flesh abhors. The internal temptation and external pressure will always be to protect our own kingdom rather than surrender it. With that in mind, let's consider three points of application today.

### 1. The World Teaches Us to Protect "You and Your Kingdom"

Saul's motive surfaced with his final appeal to Jonathan, **as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.** What has been underlying Saul's motives from the beginning now becomes apparent: the most important thing to Saul is Saul. Specifically, that his own kingdom and his lineage continue.

The stakes were clear: if you defend David, you are giving up your own kingdom – something Saul felt was unthinkable. It's unthinkable to the world that anyone should give up their own kingdom. "Protect you and your kingdom" is another way of saying, "*Look out for number 1!*"

However, Saul's appeal to **you and your Kingdom** was lost on Jonathan. Jonathan was a man committed to covenant loyalty to David because he was a man committed to covenant loyalty to the Lord. Jonathan epitomized Jesus' words in Luke 14, "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.*" *Luke 14:26*

If Saul serves as representation of selfish man, Jonathan serves as representation of man surrendered to the Lord. Jonathan represents what you and I are called to in our discipleship. It's what the gospel frees us to do.

### 2. The Gospel Frees Us to Surrender "You and Your Kingdom"

When Paul says that Christ "emptied himself" in Philippians 2:7, and when he said that he was willing to suffer the loss of all things and to count them rubbish in Philippians 3:8, these find a real-life example in Jonathan.

Like Christ, Jonathan refused to cling to what was rightfully his. He laid it down willingly. Like Paul, he considered the treasures and pleasures of royalty as nothing compared to serving God's kingdom.

But it is not as though surrendering our kingdom and prioritizing God's kingdom is totally benevolent. No, the gospel invites you to surrender your kingdom and to gain something far greater! *"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* Matthew 16:25

The irony of Matthew 16:25 is that the life you "lose" for Jesus' sake is selfish, short, and vain. It's a life centered on you and your kingdom, which makes you selfish, controlling and rigid. Anything and anyone that threatens "you and your kingdom" must be eliminated.

The end result is resentful bitterness as you watch the inevitable take place – no matter how hard you work to preserve you and your kingdom, it all vanishes away. The writer of Ecclesiastes speaks a word or two about the vanity of a self-focused life.

Perhaps the wealthiest man to have ever lived penned these words, *"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity."* Ecclesiastes 5:10

Thus, the life we lose for Christ's sake is one that could never fulfill us. And the life we "find" when we lose the vain one, Jesus calls "abundant" in John 10:10, and "eternal" in John 10:28.

The truth is this: real life, abundant life, eternal life, is not found in protecting "you and your kingdom." Instead, it is found in surrendering it.

The night my daughter Kennedy passed away was the night that I lost my life for Christ and found life in Him. I was much less wealthy than Solomon, but I had accumulated what I considered a wealth for myself – an education, some possessions, and a position. In one moment I understood that all was vain. All but Christ.

In that same moment, Jesus held out before me *true* life. *Real* life. Abundant, and eternal life. I sensed a decision– protect my kingdom or surrender it and gain His. When the scales of my eyes were pulled back and I could see life clearly, the truth was obvious: "you and your kingdom" was empty. *Rubbish.*

It was no sacrifice, then, to throw it all away and gain Christ. Not a *real* sacrifice. If you think that Jesus asking you to surrender "you and your kingdom" to gain His is sacrifice, you have not yet beheld His glory and the glory of His kingdom. To quote Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:22, in Christ "everything is yours." In Christ, you are co-heirs of all that is His!

Brother and sister, the gospel frees you to surrender "you and your kingdom" because it holds out to you something that is immeasurably greater. Namely, Christ, and life in Him! No more clinging to what is yours. Let it go. No more jockeying for position. Let God handle exalt you. No more frantically trying to control the outcome of your life. Just *"Be still, and know that I am God."* Psalm 46:10

In the words of Jesus, *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you."* Matthew 6:33

It's hard to experience this transformation of the mind and heart, and to be filled with the Spirit of Christ in our conversion and not seek first the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God is ever advancing.

### 3. The Spirit Calls Us to Advance His Kingdom, Not Ours

God is not content with stagnation or regression. The enemy will gain no ground. Even where it appears to be regressing, the Spirit of God is at work advancing His Kingdom. Don't take my word for it. Listen to what God says in His Word:

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed... it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants."* Matthew 13:31–32

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* Matthew 24:14

This is deeply personal; it's not automatic. The Spirit uses us in His kingdom advance. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* Acts 1:8

*"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."* John 15:8

*"Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."* John 15:2

And again, even when it appears we're losing ground, God is at work just as he was with Joseph in Egypt. *"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..."* Genesis 50:20

*"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Matthew 16:18

Every true believer, renewed by the Spirit, is drawn into the ever-advancing work of God's kingdom — a kingdom that never retreats.

### Christ Connection

Jonathan's final words to David here are, **Go in peace**. It's incredibly ironic and almost absurd that Jonathan thought David could do that. Saul was seeking to kill him! What peace?

Peace in the covenant relationship with Jonathan. This one relationship of covenant loyalty was enough to grant peace in a hostile world.

Jonathan essentially says, "Because you and I have peace, you may go in peace. Because we have sworn an oath to one another, there is peace even in the midst of conflict."

Is this not a beautiful depiction of the peace we have in Christ? Because of this one covenant relationship, we can **go in peace**. We can go into the hostile world that constantly pressures us to protect our own kingdom, and resists Christ's call to surrender it, with peace.

We can face tribulation with peace. We can endure afflictions (Romans 5:3), face hardships, weather storms, withstand pressure to conform, and walk through life's trials with peace because of one unchanging, immovable, rock-solid truth: we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And how, exactly, is it that you and I have peace with God? The bible says that we were, or still are, at enmity with God — His enemies. That's because in our sin, we reject Him as God and place ourselves and our own kingdoms ahead of the One whose Kingdom deserves it. So how do we have peace with God? Paul says in Colossians 1:20 we have peace "through the blood of His cross."

Let me ask you plainly, what is most true of you? Is it that you have experienced Christ's covenant peace and you see the vanity of life and the glory of life in Christ? Or is it that you so wish you could have peace in this life but you're so focused on protecting "you and your kingdom"?

Be honest with yourself. This could be the most important moment of your life. Have you lost your life for Christ's sake? And have you found it in Him? If not, I pray that today is a day of deep surrender, genuine repentance, and sincere faith. May the Lord grant you eternal life, even today!