

We are nearing the end of our time in the Life of David. This morning we will be looking at 2 Samuel 23, the account of David's mighty men.

**2 Samuel 23:8-39** - *These are the names of David's mighty men: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter. <sup>9</sup> Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty men, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the men of Israel retreated, <sup>10</sup> but he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. <sup>11</sup> Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. <sup>12</sup> But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory. <sup>13</sup> During harvest time, three of the thirty chief men came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. <sup>14</sup> At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. <sup>15</sup> David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" <sup>16</sup> So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. <sup>17</sup> "Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!" he said. "Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men. <sup>18</sup> Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three. <sup>19</sup> Was he not held in greater honor than the Three? He became their commander, even though he was not included among them. <sup>20</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. <sup>21</sup> And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. <sup>22</sup> Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men. <sup>23</sup> He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard. <sup>24</sup> Among the Thirty were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem, <sup>25</sup> Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, <sup>26</sup> Helez the Paltite, Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa, <sup>27</sup> Abiezer from*

*Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite, <sup>28</sup> Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, <sup>29</sup> Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin, <sup>30</sup> Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai from the ravines of Gaash, <sup>31</sup> Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, <sup>32</sup> Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan <sup>33</sup> son of Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite, <sup>34</sup> Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite, Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, <sup>35</sup> Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, <sup>36</sup> Igal son of Nathan from Zobah, the son of Hagri, <sup>37</sup> Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah, <sup>38</sup> Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite <sup>39</sup> and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in all.*

Remember the context of the mighty men. David has been anointed as next king, but because Saul wants him dead, he has to flee for his life into the wilderness.

*1 Samuel 22:1-2 - David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. <sup>2</sup> All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.*

David is joined by a large group of people, among them some men who become known as David's mighty men. Three things we learn from this passage:

### 1) God honors courage and sacrifice

In light of the upcoming Memorial Day weekend, this is timely. God honors those who show courage and sacrifice in their life and attitude towards others. It is right to honor them.

Without trying to make comparisons between ancient Israel and America, let me just say that this passage shows us that God honors courage and sacrifice. There is a great deal of war in the Bible. Some love war a little too much, while others are uneasy about war in the Bible. But we do see that God is a warrior.

*Exodus 15:1-3 - Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. <sup>2</sup> The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. <sup>3</sup> The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.*

And Jesus returns as a warrior king.

**Revelation 19:11-16** - *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his **mouth** comes a sharp **sword** with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

In 2 Samuel 23, we read some of the stories of bravery of the mighty men who were willing to fight for the king. Josheb-Basshebeth, who killed 800 men. Eleazar, who fought against the Philistines until his hand froze to the sword. Benaiah killed a lion. These accounts show us the importance of courage. This is a more important quality than you might think:

**Revelation 21:6-8** - *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> But the **cowardly**, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

It doesn't take much courage to come here on a Sunday for most of you, although for some of you it does. But to truly be His disciple in this world, it takes courage and sacrificial service to give and serve and share with those in need.

## 2) **We need friends in order to survive the wilderness and the battle**

Community helps David survive the wilderness. David would not have survived without them. This world is a wilderness. Who is with you in the cave? Who is fighting for you in the battle? Addiction. Marriage. Raising kids. Standing strong in your faith. Resisting sin. Whatever the battle is, you need friends to help:

**1 Peter 2:17** - *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.*

As important as those two points are, ultimately this chapter is not about human heroes, nor is the Bible about following human examples. The last name listed is Uriah, who David had killed after impregnating his girlfriend. David failed as a king. These warriors point us to the ultimate warrior king, Jesus.

### 3) Our allegiance belongs to the ultimate King, Jesus

Look at one particular story:

<sup>13</sup> *During harvest time, three of the thirty chief men came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.* <sup>14</sup> *At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem.* <sup>15</sup> *David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"* <sup>16</sup> *So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD.* <sup>17</sup> *"Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!" he said. "Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men.*

This seems weird, as if David is saying "It's warm. Fetch me another, and this time with ice." What is going on here?

After Saul's death, David had been recognized as King by his own tribe of Judah. Seven years later he was king over all Israel. But in 2 Sam 5:17-18, we read that the Philistines invaded at harvest time and occupied Bethlehem, meaning that Israel could fall apart. David's home was in enemy hands. And so, he took refuge in the wilderness of Judah with his mighty men. His sighing for water was not really about water, because he had water where he was. It was a sigh of despair at his predicament, that he was failing as a king, that he could not even get water from his hometown. He was despairing that God's promises were being lost.

The men hear and take it to heart and go to get the water. The three men fought their way uphill through overwhelming odds, filling a water skin and fighting their way back. They instill hope that the city would be theirs again. They were fearless and loyal to their King and brought hope to him and to their nation.

But look at what David does.

*But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. <sup>17</sup> "Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!" he said. "Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not drink it.*

He pours it out as a drink offering. It's his way of saying, "I am not worthy of this devotion." This is the blood of my men. Your ultimate allegiance is not to me but to the Lord. Look beyond me to the true King.

David points us to a greater David. This greater David overheard the longing of your heart. He broke through enemy lines to gain living water for us.

**John 4:10-14** - *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" <sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

Living water is the presence and love of God. Jesus is our warrior king, breaking through the enemy lines to bring us the water of life. The water from Bethlehem was the blood of men that went at risk of their lives. The cup that Jesus offers to us is brought not simply at the risk of His life, but at the price of His life.

**Hebrews 2:14-15** *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their **fear of death.***

Knowing that will encourage you and give you courage and strength

**Isaiah 41:10** - *So do not fear, for I am with **you**; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will **strengthen you** and help **you**; I will uphold **you** with my righteous right hand.*

**1 John 4:18-19** - *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup> **We love because he first** loved us.*

And now we can be like warriors to our captain. His wish is our command. We want to please Him. We band together in community to serve our King and defeat the enemy.