

Sermon 20 7.2025 David's Mighty Men (2 Samuel 23:13-17)

Good morning, I'm Vanda, Vanda Noble and I'm a member of the Church family here at Davidson's Mains

We're continuing in our series looking at the Life of David. Last week Alan led us to think about David and his followers when they were living in a cave, or more likely a series of interlinked caverns, and we thought about what being in a spiritual cave or an emotional dark place is like.

So as we pick up the story; David is living in the Cave of Adullam as Saul was hunting for him to kill him. David wasn't alone but had gradually been joined by about 400 men, some of whom were family members and others who were rebels and outcasts. And this is where the last verse of last week's Bible reading ended at 1 Sam 22 verse 2.

Today we're taking a break from 1 Samuel narrative so that we can learn more about who these men were and what they were like. Our reading today is taking from words that David spoke much later as he neared the end of his life. He looked back on his life and tells of a particular exploit by 3 of these men who by then had become known as 'David's Mighty Men'. Don't worry, next week we will back in the narrative of 1 Samuel, this is just an aside. So today we are reading from 2 Samuel.

Let's read 2 Sam 23 :13-17

13 During harvest time, three of the thirty chief warriors came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. **14** At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. **15** David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" **16** So the three mighty warriors 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. **17** "Far be it from me, 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.

The scene is set with a enemy band of Philistine soldiers encamped near to where David was hiding and a whole garrison of Philistine soldiers in Bethlehem. Why is this significant? Well David's home town was Bethlehem and the Philistines were there to raid and plunder the crops at harvest time. If they succeeded in that then the people in the whole area would have nothing to harvest and therefore nothing to eat for months so they would starve. How did David feel about that – angry and frustrated that he was in a position of weakness no doubt.

David then says something rather strange. He then says that he is longing for water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem. Now he and the men were in a stronghold that was often used in times of warfare and it had a spring of water very close. So why would David ask for water if he wasn't thirsty?

The way that these words are written it seems to be a cry not for physical water but a cry from the heart expressing a longing for something else. Three of his best fighters have come to him (their names and a bit of their Cvs are written in the previous verses of chapter 23 if you want to read more about them). There are also more details written in 1 Chronicles chapters 11 and 12 where there are long lists of names of David's Mighty Men. Names and details may be tricky for us to read but they prove that the Books of the Bible are historical narratives and not just nice moral tales or legends. We can trust the Bible as truth.

So these 3 men hear or maybe overhear David speaking aloud to himself, They hear David's heartfelt longing for water from the well at the Gate of Bethlehem. What was David actually wanting or needing? The 3 men take his words literally and set off on what seems to be a reckless dare-devil exploit into the heart of the enemy HQ and miraculously return with a wineskin of water from, yes, the Bethlehem well.

This rather odd story then takes on another twist as David's response is recorded.

He doesn't say, 'Oh how stupid and reckless you all were you could have died' – well they knew that full well anyway.

Nor did he says 'Oh thanks guys that was totally unnecessary but very kind of you.'

No, he tips the precious water on the ground saying it has the value of blood and he is not worthy to drink it.

Let's investigate what's going on here.

Firstly it really was truly miraculous that the 3 men were not killed as they went in through the enemy lines, collected the water and then came back through the lines of soldiers again. They would have been considerably outnumbered and the element of surprise would definitely have gone when they were on the return journey! All of that says that God was protecting them. It was miraculous.

Secondly David wasn't longing for water from Bethlehem but was longing for what it represented. He longed for the freedom to be able go get this water himself. To him this Well evoked the memory of home and of freedom, of happier times like a corner shop that we might have visited as we were growing up, a sign of security and peace. Water from this Well represented the memory of times when David felt God's presence near to him and was confident that God had planned a bright future ahead. Really what David is longing for is to regain the confidence and deep sense of God with him, that he had before. David wanted to know for sure that despite the dire situation he was in, which was almost inevitably and soon going to get significantly worse, God was in control and was on his side.

Running from Saul was a terrifying and perilous way to live and David was wondering if God really did have everything in hand. Maybe he was thinking, 'Is this what giving your whole life to follow God should be like?' This was the heart-cry that David expressed in his longing for water.

These 3 mighty men were his close friends and companions so I think that they would

have known, they would have sensed in their hearts and from their own prayers to God that David was having a spiritual crisis. They wanted to do something to support their leader in his walk with God. So they trusted in God and did what they could, they went and got the special water.

How then, would these 3 heroes have felt when they saw their beloved leader pour out the water onto the ground? Would they have been cross, disappointed or completely confused? I think that they would have felt honoured, highly honoured that David poured out the water as an offering to the Lord, saying that only God was worthy to receive such a precious sacrifice. At that moment David realised that God had against all human odds enabled his men to get this water and therefore God was still in control. God was still working, was still with these men and by extension David realised afresh that God was still with him.

So what can we learn from these Mighty Men and this strange episode?

David was an inspirational leader – how else would he have controlled, trained and led 400 men. David had a heart for God yet, as a gifted and Godly leader he still had times of doubt and spiritual crisis. That gives us a reminder that we should remember to pray for and support our leaders in any way that we can.

David offered to God what was precious and costly. He poured out the water yes, and he also offered his life as a living sacrifice to God. We can do that too. Offer our time, money and talents to God.

But finally before we go away thinking of yes I need to pray more and do more and put a burden on ourselves to work harder, let's reflect on the most important thing. David is only an example of the better King to come, Jesus, He is our King, He didn't pour out water as a sacrifice, He poured out blood, His blood. He didn't run the gauntlet through lines of Philistine soldiers, He broke through the gates of hell and returned from death victorious over satan and all the powers of darkness. Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice so that you and I and anyone who believes in Him will have a choice to be in a loving relationship with Father God.

So yes, let us be inspired by David and his men but let us be even more inspired by Jesus so that our deeds of service and indeed the way we live our lives is not an act of duty but a response of love, giving our whole hearts to Jesus.

Jesus gave his all for you, that was the cost he felt was worth paying so that you and I can have that close relationship with God the Father and be filled with the Holy Spirit, like the cup in the jug of water earlier. We can be filled with God's Spirit and also know His presence around us at all times.

So today whether you feel that God is absent or whether you feel unworthy to claim

the forgiveness and love that He offers, know this, that God is with you, behind you, beside you, ahead, all around and inside you. And He always will be.

Before we sing let's pray;

Almighty God you are holy and awesome. You created us and have always loved us and we thank you.

Lord Jesus, You paid the most costly sacrifice ever by pouring out your blood in death. And we respond to You in love, offering all that we have and all that we are.

Holy Spirit thank You that You live in us and help us to know that we are never abandoned and never will be.

Amen