

Introduction

Music is such an incredible gift of God. We rejoice with music. We lament with music. We state our love with music. We state our faith with music. It stirs emotions and calms our agitations. It can relax us or invigorate us. And yet the gift of music requires skillful musicians. I am thankful for the musicians that lead us here from week to week. You can't do what they do without a lot of practice. Musical skill is developed over time by repetition and discipline. I played trumpet and took piano for several years but never became as skilled as I would have liked because I wasn't willing to invest the time and determination necessary. But the skills we do develop are not for nothing. Those who do work hard to develop their skills can be used by God through those skills. It was so with David. In his providence God used David's development of musical skill to get him inside the walls of Saul's palace as we see in our text this morning.

[Read Text and Pray]

In our study of the life of David we have been introduced to him as a man after God's own heart. He has been seen to esteem and obey God's word and to possess a repentant heart when he disobeys. He was identified as the king of God's choice through anointing in a personal and private ceremony. He was the youngest of eight sons and the first one dismissed by human sense as a candidate to become the next king. But God does not work according to the plans and purposes of man. He "chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). God chooses people and things that way, and he also chooses paths that way as well. This morning's text is an example of just that. So David has just been anointed to replace Saul as king, and what is to happen next? Through the providential working of the Lord, David is brought straight into the palace, but not as king just yet. He enters as a musician. The progression of the narrative revolves around the skilled musician that David was. Four aspects of David the musician stand out.

I. The Situation for a Musician.

Verse 14 is a striking contrast to verse 13. When Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David as God's king, the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. Meanwhile verse 14 reports that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul and was replaced by a harmful spirit from the Lord. It is necessary to point out that the presence of the Holy Spirit now upon David and the departure of the Holy Spirit from Saul is indicative of gifting specifically oriented toward carrying out the role of king. It has to do not with regeneration but with empowerment. In other words when it comes to Saul, we are not talking about having and then losing salvation. It would appear that Saul was never a believer. Nevertheless, he was given a measure of the Holy Spirit for ruling, but he grieved the Spirit by not acting according to the word of God. As a result the Spirit departed from Saul and with the anointing of David, he came upon him for his role as king. Saul later realized that in effect the Lord was not with him but was with David (1 Sam 18:12).

With the departure of the Holy Spirit in this way, Saul was terrorized. The Lord sent to Saul a "harmful spirit." That is, he sent to Saul a spirit that would bring pain and distress to his mind. No doubt it was associated with his recognition that the Lord was NOT with him. Is there any condition that could be more distressing than to know that God had left you? I mean what can be more

comforting to the child of God than to know that Christ will never leave us nor forsake us? And what could be more undoing than to realize that he had indeed forsaken us? On top of that, a spirit from the Lord brought home to Saul's heart this terrorizing reality—the God you have disobeyed has abandoned you.

Brothers and sisters, if you want to experience the ongoing manifest presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life, do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Do not quench his working in your heart. Long for and protect your sensitivity to the Spirit by listening as he applies the word of God to your heart. Assurance wanes when we impede his testimony.

Saul had grieved and quenched the Spirit, and the Spirit's presence for equipping was now gone and Saul felt the weight and burden of governing and leading on his own, and it was unnerving to him. This was the situation which called for the ministry of a musician.

Saul's servants realized what was going on. Their recommendation was that they seek out an instrumentalist, someone who was skillful in playing the lyre. They reasoned that the music would bring relief to Saul when he was in the throes of torment. These guys reasoned as the world does. If you experience fear and anxiety, take a pill or engage in relaxation techniques. I am not saying that you don't need to learn to relax, but I would suggest that if the problem is directly from the Lord, that the thing to do first and foremost would be to go to the Lord and get things right. Matthew Henry commented, "How much better friends had they been to [Saul], if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and intercede with God for him."

Our culture turns to myriad devices. Medications, booze, mental exercises, drugs, sensual pleasures—all are continually being employed to ease minds that are troubled fundamentally because they lack peace. These things may provide temporary relief from unwanted symptoms of shame and guilt, but they have no lasting effect. And they certainly may mask sensations; they may calm nerves momentarily, but they will never address the root problem. The root of all our problems is sin, and no matter what we are experiencing the fundamental solution is Jesus Christ. The descendant of David is our peace. By his death on the cross, he has eliminated our sin debt and wrought reconciliation as mediator between us and God. He died and rose so that we might experience the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell with all who believe. And part of the fruit of the Spirit is peace. Sin is the cause of our troubles and the remedy is to repent of sin, trust in Jesus Christ, and humbly walk with our God.

Saul's servants were not tuned in to the word of God. They sought to relieve Saul's terrors with music. And although it would not permanently cure his problem, it would bring some temporary relief. So Saul gave the command, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me."

II. The Suitability of the Musician.

The search for a man who could play well did not take long. One of Saul's young men piped right up. "Behold I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing." And not only that, "he is a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence," and to top it all off, "the LORD is with him."

This list is quite strong. He is a skilled musician but he is also a man of character and strength, is well-spoken and impressive. This is the kind of guy a king would want around him. He knows when

to speak and when to keep his mouth closed. Perhaps it was known how he had protected his sheep from lions and bears. But most importantly, it was recognized that the Lord was with him. Why would that be important? Well, just think about it. People who do not walk with the Lord often want to be associated with those who do because they think proximity will bleed over in blessing to them. They do not pray but they want the godly to pray for them. They may even do good to the godly thinking they will reap some benefit for it. Perhaps the young man was thinking, we know this is an evil spirit from the Lord. If we bring in a man and the Lord is with him, maybe that will work in Saul's favor and he will get some relief.

At any rate the point is that David, although relatively unknown to the masses, was well-known to this young man who served in Saul's court. And his reputation was stellar. He had seen the son of Jesse play and he stood out for his courage, his character, and his walk with God. Accordingly, we should ask whether those with whom we come in contact on a daily basis see that the Lord is with us? I appreciate Joel standing in for me last week. He directed our thoughts to letting our light shine in this dark world. The question here is are we like David? Do we let our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works and know that God is with us? It certainly is the way Jesus lived. His character was impeccable. Never any sin. He knew no sin. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. He was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin. No one's light ever shone more brightly than Jesus's. And because he was without sin, he is qualified to be our substitute. We ourselves should follow in his steps and joyously live for the glory of God.

This musician certainly seemed suitable and Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David, your son, who is with the sheep."

III. The Sending of the Musician.

We come to verse 20 and the response of David's daddy. "And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul."

Saul's need was dire. He was terrorized and needed someone to come and play for him that he might be calmed. Jesse's son was to be that musician. Jesse knew that his son had been anointed. Why should his son enter the service of the king he was to replace? Why should the future king enter the residence of the man God abandoned and be his servant to bring him relief in the midst of his disobedience? But not only did Jesse send his son, he also sent a gift of good will. David the anointed was sent to Saul not with weapons to judge, condemn, and overtake, but with kindness and willingness that Saul through David might be saved from his torment. Jesse was a kind-hearted man.

Jesse is a picture of our heavenly father. Our heavenly Father beheld humanity languishing in the misery of sin. He beheld us in need of a suitable savior who meets all the qualifications, knowing no but Jesus would do. His son was destined to be king of the universe, but in light of our need, he sent forth his Son in kindness and good will. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. He came into the world to save sinners from our torment. Behold, our God!

IV. The Service of the Musician.

Verse 21 says, "And David came to Saul and entered his service." And here at the beginning, Saul greatly appreciated David. Whenever the evil spirit was upon Saul, David played his lyre and Saul was refreshed and the harmful spirit departed.

A. If Jesse is a picture of our heavenly Father, David is a picture of Christ Jesus. The anointed king left his home. God was with him, and He came to the aid of a rebellious man whom God had left. He made himself nothing and took the form of a servant, humbling himself to minister to Saul's need.

That is precisely what Jesus did when he took on the form of a servant. In Philippians 2, Paul teaches that "He made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross." The king left his home in heaven. God was with him. He came to sinners living in the misery of our sin, without God and without hope. But he came into the world to address the guilt and misery of our sin and bring relief. That is why he died and rose from the dead. And if you will love and accept him as savior and as Lord he will be music to your spiritual ears. He will be relief to your soul's shame and guilt and the terror that faces you to stand before God the Judge without him on your side.

If today you have not surrendered yourself and turned to the one who came to serve you, you may. If you will just embrace him joyfully and deny yourself to follow Christ, he will save you this very moment.

B. Now there is more to the narrative here as well. There are truths about God's providence and God's promises that we need to see.

First, you have to stop and marvel at the providence of God. The Spirit rushed on David while the Spirit had departed from Saul. Then Saul was tormented. His servants recommend music to sooth Saul's distress. Saul agrees. Then one of the young men right there recommends a son of Jesse who is a skilled musician and well-qualified to serve in the presence of the king. He is unaware that this son is none other than the one who had just been anointed to be the next king. It looks like happenstance, but you know that God is in these details. He is weaving together one event into another to produce a tapestry of divine providence which accomplishes his purposes. For David to rule effectively, it would be helpful to be around the king, to observe the goings on in the court, to see how he handles himself in the midst of battles, and so forth. God had singled out David for the throne and now he was grooming and preparing him to rule effectively when he actually ascended to it. Without any scheming on David's part, God just opens the door and brings his man in.

Pink says, "It is only the eye of faith that looks above the ordinary happenings of daily life and sees the divine hand ordering and shaping them for the accomplishment of God's counsels and the good of his people."

What was true of God's providence in the life of David is no less true in our lives as well. Ephesians 1:11 says that God "works ALL things according to the counsel of his will." You may not be anointed to be king of Israel, but you have a place and purpose in this world that is ordered by the Lord. He is in the details and things that seem to just happen don't just happen. God opens doors and he closes doors. He guides our path and directs the events of the world to his end for his glory and purpose. And we can rest peacefully in the flow of the providence of God. No need to become anxious or worried. No need to panic. But there is a need to marvel. Sometimes people are determined to do us evil yet God overrules their determination. Sometimes events are perplexing and even disturbing to our considerations, but God is never perplexed or even surprised. He is constantly at work to accomplish his will even through what seems so the foggy to us.

After attending a family wedding, Melissa and I flew back to Milwaukee on Tuesday. It was a rainy day and the clouds and fog were thick. As we began our descent it seemed like we should have landed but all we could see was fog. I thought for a moment about the instrumentation that allows pilots to navigate even when they cannot see. And I was at peace. Listen, we are blind to many of the purposes and plans God has for us, but we need not be anxious because he always sees clearly and he is always at work. Psalm 139:11-12 says,

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

God is always at work and he sees clearly and he orders our paths by his providence. Rest in the comfort of that fact this morning.

And not only do we learn about God's providence in this text, we also learn about God's promises. At least it is implied. I count the anointing of God through Samuel on the life of David as a promise to David that he would reign on the throne of Israel one day. The anointing contained within it an assurance from God that David would be king. However, we observe that God's promise, sure as it is, was not to be fulfilled instantaneously. In fact it seems rather ironic that immediately after the promise was given, David was brought right into the palace but NOT as king. He was brought as a servant to the rejected king. And so it was to be some time before the promise was fulfilled. David would not know when, and he would have to trust God for God's timing.

This pattern is one we observe elsewhere, particularly in respect to Abraham. The Lord promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation and that he would give to him and his descendants all the land of Canaan. Years and years went by and yet Abraham did not even have a child. And then when the Lord gave to Abraham and Sarah a child, the Lord called Abraham to take and sacrifice Isaac.

God makes promises and yet he himself allows his people to experience circumstances which appear to threaten the fulfillment of those promises. Even in the case of Abraham he issues a command which seems to put the fulfillment of his promise in jeopardy. Time is one of those circumstances. Danger is another of those circumstances. Humiliation is another of those circumstances. Why does God do this? There are three reasons that occur to me. God allows his promises to be put to the test to teach us patience, to test our faith, and to grow us in humility. He wants us to be patient. He wants us to trust him no matter what. And he wants us to be humble.

Patience has to do with waiting. David's promise of becoming king was not quickly or easily fulfilled. Was David willing to wait for God to fulfill God's promise God's way? The same can be asked of us. Are we willing to wait? Are we willing to hold on when it seems like the Lord is slow about his promise? Are we willing to be tested by time and refuse to relinquish our hold on the word the Lord has given us? God's promises are great and his power is equally great. And he wants his people to be living breathing demonstrations of patience.

God also wants his people to trust him no matter how large the obstacle. Do we truly believe that he is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we could ask or think? I could imagine that David might experience some degree of fear being summoned to the palace. Why Samuel had been

concerned about going to Bethlehem to anoint the next king. He was afraid that Saul might want to kill him if he found out why he was there. What if the word got out that David had been anointed? What if Saul found out? What if he actually summoned David into the palace to kill him?

When Abraham went down to Egypt he was all worried that the king would try to kill him in order to take Sarah as one of his wives so he lied. Ultimately, however, Abraham did trust the Lord. His faith was demonstrated to be genuine. Paul has an extensive discussion of Abraham in Romans 4. There he lauds the faith of Abraham. He points out that Abraham "did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in faith and gave glory to God fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness."

God does not want us to compromise obedience because we lack faith in his ability to protect us and keep his word. How many times do you and I suffer anxiety because we feel threatened by our circumstances? How many times do we worry when it is all based on what we imagine MIGHT be? God providentially works oftentimes to allow time to pass so that we will have the opportunity of demonstrating an undying faith in the goodness and power and faithfulness of God. Trials of various kinds are the occasion for the testing and proving of our faith. We may say we trust God but until that trust is put to the test, it is just words.

Finally, God does not provide immediate fulfillment of his promises sometimes because he wants to teach us humility. David was anointed to an office of supreme authority and command. But here he is entering the palace not as a king but as a servant to the man he was anointed to replace. That had to be a test of his pride, but he went and he served and he blessed Saul. You know, human pride expects not to have to serve but to be served and that especially if we are promised great things. But the scripture shows us that we humans are deserving of nothing good. We should naturally be humble, but we are not. Jesus taught us that he who is great among us is so not because he can command people what to do but because he serves. True greatness is not in being served but in serving. And it takes humility to serve. It takes thinking of others first.

Before he would be ready to sit upon the throne, David needed to sit beside the throne and minister to the one who sat on it. And we are no different. We need to learn humility by serving. And here is one of the reasons why God does not give us everything he promises to us all at once.

Think of what we have been promised—Glory! We who believe and trust in Christ Jesus shall be glorified with him. It is so sure that the Bible speaks of us as being glorified. But the fulfillment of it is not yet. We are not worthy to be glorified. And we need to learn it. Trials and tests help us learn it. Suffering helps us learn it. Christ's disciples are fellow heirs with Christ and we shall reign with him, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Meanwhile, we must grasp with Paul that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. God is not slow about his promise but he is teaching us humility and growing us into the image of Jesus so that when the time comes, we will gladly and joyously but also humbly enter into rest and be seated with Christ on his glorious throne.

So be patient, brothers and sisters. Keep the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And let us humble ourselves before God and before one another, serving one another, ministering to one another and rejoicing to be able to do so, knowing that true greatness among us is demonstrated when we count others better than ourselves and serve their interest.

Conclusion

Coming back to where we started, we see how David served and was used. He had developed a skill in music and with it he was able to glorify God. And God used that skill in his plan to grow and develop David not just as a musician but in time as a king. So let's close with an encouragement to take a look, each of us, at our skills. What are you good at? What talents and abilities do you possess in which you can become skilled and increased in usefulness? Build on what you have been given for the glory of God, and you can never tell how God might use those skills to minister to others but also to move you in a direction of further usefulness for His kingdom.