

The King's Men

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[0 : 00] I invite you to open your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 13. Did I say 13? I meant 23.

2 Samuel 23 and verse 13. 2 Samuel 23, 13.

3 Samuel 23, 13.

3 Samuel 23, 13. 3 Samuel 23, 13. 3 Samuel 23, 13. 3 Samuel 23, 13. 3 Samuel 23, 13. 3 Samuel 24, 13.

But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out before the Lord. 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?

[1 : 27] And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men. Last words are meant to be impressive words.

Our Lord Jesus had some weighty last words just before he ascended into heaven. Words for his church to the end of the age, till he returns.

We call it the Great Commission. The Great Commandment. Words that are meant to be ringing in our ears right down through the ages until we see our Savior again.

This time coming down from the clouds rather than preparing to go up. Into heaven. Words that are telling us what we are to be about as a church until he returns.

Making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything that he commands. Now, according to Christ, kingdom business is to be priority business for every Christian.

[2 : 30] Remember Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God. And so, the expansion of God's kingdom in the building of his worldwide church.

It's something that's to be right at the top of our priorities. And to set our mindset on why are we as a church here? What are we to be doing?

Well, here's our mission in the world spelled out for us. Now, we all have different ways of fulfilling that mission. It's not the same for everybody in the church.

But it is to be the concern and effort of every disciple of Christ. Just like the Ukraine. Think of how the whole country is mobilized for the war cause.

And yet, not everybody in the country is doing exactly the same thing. Some are going into the battle. Some are staying behind and helping with supplies and so forth.

[3 : 29] All kinds of jobs to do to carry on the war cause. And so it is with the fulfillment of this unfinished business of our Savior.

The whole church, every member, is to be mobilized to the task. I find it no small challenge to keep my own life centered, front and center, to have the mission of Christ front and center with my life, with the church life.

It seems there's much to distract us and to pull us aside. And that's by design, by the evil one. He hates the Lord Jesus and everything that is his.

He hates his name, his honor, his people, his worship, his church. So what Christ seeks to build up, Satan will seek to tear down. So if you're a Christian, his great commission matters to you.

His spirit is in you and is saying, yes, this is what we want. We want to see disciples won for Jesus. We want to see them baptized into local churches and taught to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

[4 : 41] Well, it matters to me, too, but I want it to matter more for myself, for you. I want us to have the same heartbeat in us as is in our Savior.

So what is it, then, that will keep the king's mission front and center in our hearts and lives in this church? My proposition is simply this, that a heart for the mission is maintained by a heart for the king whose mission it is.

That if we would have a heart for the mission, we've got to have a heart tuned to the heart of the king whose mission it is. Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem.

These words are found in our text this afternoon where we find David after his anointing, but before his coronation as king, still running for his life from King Saul and his army.

And here he is, hiding out in the cave of Adullam. I don't know if you've done any hiding lately. Maybe just a game of hide and seek with your kids or grandkids.

[5 : 53] If so, then you know that once you find a good hiding spot, there's not a whole lot to do. You just stay put. You don't do anything or go anywhere. And you just lay low.

Well, here's David laying low in the cave of Adullam and hiding. Not till someone counts to 30, but days on end. Hiding from Saul and his army.

Says they're being given tips. Oh, we saw them in this area and so on. And so David's laying low. And that's a lot of time just to sit and to think and to remember.

And we're told he was thirsty. Verse 15. He longed for water. And his thirst takes him back in his mind to his hometown of Bethlehem.

How well he remembered being out all day, caring for his father's sheep under the heat of the sun. And then coming home parched in the evening and stopping at this well near the gate of Bethlehem.

[6 : 57] And there he would just drink and drink and drink some more. Until his thirst was quenched with this clear, cold well water.

There was nothing to compare to it. He could almost taste it even now as he's thinking of it. Oh, to have a drink of that water near the gate of Bethlehem.

Well, it wasn't a command, was it? It wasn't even a request. It was more like a daydreaming man just thinking aloud, a whispered wish.

But that's all it took for three of David's mighty men who overheard him. And so they were off to fetch this water some 12 miles away.

They had to fight their way through enemy Philistine lines to get to the well, to fill their jug, and get back through the enemy lines and bring the water back to David.

[7 : 55] And when he realized what they had done, he was both humbled and horrified, showing us that he never intended for his wish to be carried out.

In fact, he refused to drink the water that they had risked their life's blood to fetch. Far be it from me, Lord. God forbid. To do this, he said, is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?

And so with the highest regard for these fellows, he poured out the water before the Lord. And then the scene closes with this comment.

Such were the exploits of the three mighty men. Now, to be sure, these exploits do reveal to us much about these mighty men of David.

Their courage, their commitment, their strength, their sacrificial service. But I'd like for us to think of this.

[9 : 00] Don't their exploits tell us as much about David as they tell us about them? What I mean is, yes, they risked their lives, but it was for David that they risked them.

What must David have meant to these men? That they would not count their lives dear to themselves, charge right into the very jaws of death, if only his cause may be furthered, not even that, if only his wish might be fulfilled.

So they clearly saw something in David that had won their heart, that had grabbed their hearts and motivated them to venture their very lives just to bring him pleasure.

What was that? Was it the kind way he treated these men who says of them that they were in distress, in debt, and discontented?

Or was it what David had done in the Valley of Elah years earlier, that they never got over, when on their behalf and the behalf of the whole nation, he single-handedly went out and destroyed their enemy that all of them were dreading, that would have made them slaves to the Philistine.

[10 : 22] It was the stuff of legends. But whatever it was, it's clear that their captain himself had inspired these exploits for him. And I'm asking you this afternoon, brothers and sisters, if it's any different in the greatest mission that has ever been undertaken on earth.

Has not David's greater son won the hearts of his servants such that we no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died for us and rose again?

Have we not found in our great captain, Jesus Christ, that which motivates us to lay down our lives in service to him, to his unfinished business, which is so dear to his heart?

And that's why I say, a heart for the mission is to be gained and maintained by a heart for the king whose mission it is. So let's think just briefly, how has our king captured our hearts?

Well, when he saw us in need, the sentence of hell over our heads, condemned already, awaiting the sentence forever and ever, the Bible tells us that he who was in very nature God thought it not robbery to be called equal with God, not something to be grasped and held on to, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

[11:59] And why did he do it? For love. Love, no doubt, for his father who sent him, but also love for us who needed him. There's a song we sing rarely, but it's number 119, that says, Love caused your incarnation.

Love brought you down to me. Your thirst for my salvation has won my liberty. And so our mighty captain left the deserved comforts and glories of heaven in order to come on this saving mission that had his heart.

for all eternity, the mission of saving us from slavery to sin and eternal torments, to bring us into that everlasting Trinitarian fellowship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to lift us up to God.

A love that's better than life, a fellowship of joy unspeakable and full of glory. He became poor to enrich us forever. It was his eternal love for us that broke forth in the incarnation that has won our hearts forever as his servants.

But then it was his love in the many battles with temptation as well that he suffered for us. And it's in those battles in the wilderness, we learn that he would rather starve than sin because he was working out a righteousness to give to us who had none before God.

[13:34] And if he just sinned once, there would be no righteousness for him. It would be condemnation in hell forever. And so it was for our sakes. That's what Jesus says in John 17, for their sakes, I sanctify myself that they too may be sanctified.

And over and over in every temptation and again in Gethsemane, he denied himself out of love for us that he might have a perfect record of obedience to give to us to make us right before God.

That's won our hearts to see him fight against sin that we might have salvation. But it is supremely his love at Golgotha that has won our hearts because it was there that he not only broke through the lines of our enemies, but he conquered them.

He conquered sin and Satan and death and hell for us. Now David's men risked their lives for him, but our captain actually laid down his life for us.

They did it to get David a drink of Bethlehem's water. Jesus did it to get us a drink of living water, which if a man drink, he will never thirst again.

[14:50] He drank the cup of God's wrath that we would have been drinking forever through the endless ages and never get to the bottom of God's wrath. He drank that cup that we might with joy draw water from the wells of salvation.

So our Jesus was made to thirst or we had been thirsty forever without so much as a drop of water off of someone's finger to cool our tongues in the agony.

Cecil Alexander, again in our hymnal, writes of the Creator, Redeemer. His are the thousand sparkling rills, rivers, that from a thousand fountains burst and fill with music all the hills, and yet he says, I thirst.

But more than pangs that wracked him then was the deep longing thirst divine that thirsted for the souls of men. Dear Lord, and one was mine.

It's that thirst that drove him to become a man for us, that drove him to become sin for us, that drove him to become a curse for us, forsaken for us, that we might never be.

[16:07] Oh, who am I that for my sake our Lord should take frail flesh and die? So it's our captain's exploits of love for us that have captivated our hearts.

Then no wonder he has men in his service who can say from the heart, your wish is my command. If you want it, I'm all in. That's the kind of men David had.

That's the kind of men our captain is worthy of. Such love constrains us to answer his call, follow his leading, and give him our all.

A heart for missions maintained by a heart for the king whose mission it is. So let's compare the two. If David's men were willing to risk it all for him, then surely our captain is worthy of nothing less

from his blood-bought servants.

They did it to satisfy a physical thirst of David. David, we do it to satisfy a deeper thirst in our captain. A thirst for the souls of men that are precious in his sight.

[17 : 18] Love gifts from his heavenly father to him. They ventured their lives to fulfill a mere wish of David. Oh, we have a whole lot more than a mere wish of our savior.

He wasn't there on the mountain that day just sort of daydreaming, oh, to have souls brought to me and saved. No, he gave us a command. This is a royal command from the king of kings that was given to us.

That's far more than a wish when he said, go, make disciples, baptize them, teach them to obey everything that I've commanded. And David's men flew into action to satisfy a wish.

Could we do any less to obey his royal command? And this command is no arbitrary command. It's not like there's no reason for making it.

He just makes this command, okay, well, we'll obey it. Rather, what we find is that this command is a revelation of himself. That Jesus' commands are windows into his heart, revealing his own deep desires, his own deep thirsts, and what he really wants.

[18 : 28] Read his commands, and you see his heart. And this last command of our king, he's opened wide his heart to us, revealing his thirst for his worldwide bride to be gathered to him, to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

I wonder if that's how we hear the Great Commission, the thirst of our Savior to bring his bride home, to be with him, to gather them.

He's telling us of his thirst, his longing to save sinners, of not seeing one missing of all that the Father gave him. That's what lies behind this Great Commission.

It's his pleasure, and seeing sinners turn and live, it's his pleasure. And is that not worthy of our self-denying exploits to make disciples? And then think again, David's men went without any promise of success, did they?

They went without any promise, willing to lose all in the mere attempt. He's thirsty. Let's give it a try, man. Well, we might lose our, let's go.

[19 : 39] And they were off. We go with the best of promises, of our captain's presence and power with us, of the ultimate success of the mission.

He introduces the mission by saying, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Now you go, in my name, with my authority, with my power, and I will be with you to the very end of the age, not just watching you from heaven, with you, on the battlefield, to the very end of the age. We go with a sure promise that the earth will be covered, will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Not one will be missing of those that the Father has given me, but I will raise them up at the last day.

The promised ultimate success of our mission ought to be all the more enough to make us go and be willing to live and die for the desire of our captain.

Well, there are difficulties, aren't there, in fulfilling the Great Commission as a church? There were a few difficulties in fetching some water from Bethlehem's well to be overcome, but they did it out of love for their captain.

[20 : 57] There are fears to overcome. We all face that, the fears of men, to tell somebody about the Lord Jesus and what he's done for us and what he would do for them.

There's fears of failure and rejection. They face those same fears of failure and fears of being counted a fool by the world, being counted a failure by other churches.

We send a missionary and he doesn't make it. He's got to come home. That'll be shame on our face. So be it. We're going, said the three.

We might not come back. We're going, said the three. So there are fears to overcome. J.C. Ryle speaks of men who are overly cautious, play it safers, men eaten up with caution, who seem so afraid of doing wrong that they hardly do the right.

I find something of that spirit in me. We do need to face our fears down. Someone was criticizing the way others were evangelizing in doing missions to D.L. Moody and they asked him what he thought and he says, I like the way they're doing it better than the way you're not doing it.

[22 : 20] Well, we need to be about our master's thirst and longing to get the gospel to every creature under heaven and our fears notwithstanding.

There's love of ease to overcome that would allure us just to carve out a comfortable life and that requires little of us in the way of the cross and self-denial faith.

There is a lot to oppose us but the question I'm leaving with you today is, is there not something we can learn from these three mighty men of David? That as the king has the hearts of his servants, his mission will have all that we are laid at his disposal, offered up in his service, even as we've been memorizing, our very bodies laid down on the altar as a sacrifice.

Here I am, Lord. Take me. Use me. Use all that I am, all that I have for this cause that will not fail and that will be proved to be the most important work that has been undertaken since the beginning of time to redeem sinners.

So we must keep our hearts close to the king himself if we would have the king motivating our labors for him. The scary thing is that I can be busy about the king's business and still not be close to Jesus.

[23 : 47] We can get busy doing, doing, doing and somehow he's miles away. Robert Murray McShane must have felt it too. He warns us there's no labor in the king's service that will make up for neglect of the king himself.

It's too easy to get busy doing and just to neglect that heart-to-heart dealings with our savior. It's only near his heart that we catch and keep his burden.

It's only in this close fellowship with him that we feel his thirst for souls such that it becomes ours.

It's walking with him in the gospels. It's seeing him fish for men.

It's seeing him seek and save the lost. Whether with the crowds the very sight of which caused his heart to run out of him with compassion and then to move toward them in mercy because he saw them as sheep without a shepherd harassed and helpless or whether he saw them as a harvest rotting in the field for lack of workers and so tells us to pray for workers to be sent.

But what are we seeing? We're seeing the heart of Jesus for the souls of men. Whether he's in that crowd or with individuals meeting alone with a proud Pharisee named Nicodemus or an immoral woman at the well of Sychar.

[25 : 11] It's hearing him sob over unrepentant Jerusalem sinners and yet seeing him rejoice with celebration over one sinner that repents. It's hearing him tell of his pleasure and seeing sinners turn and live.

It's in these ways as we're walking with Christ in all that we see in the Gospels that we sense his deep thirst for souls such that it becomes ours and our hearts beat in sync with his.

And so when he has our hearts he'll have our money he'll have our labors he'll have our time our life and his thirst will be our thirst and then nothing will seem too much to lay on the line to see his thirst satisfied.

So let's never substitute service for Christ in the place of communion with Christ. It doesn't need to be one or the other does it? Let all of our work for him be done in moment by moment fellowship with him and independence upon him.

fishing for men with him gathering with him sowing watering reaping with him and then it will be our increasing joy in life to bring people to our wonderful savior and to bring pleasure to our thirsty lord who longs to see his children gathered home.

[26 : 40] Oh that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem so said David. David's greater son would say oh that someone would fetch me glory from among the nations.

Oh that someone would raise their children for the kingdom of God. Oh that someone would pray for those greater works to be done so that I might bring glory to my father.

Oh that someone would say here I am and all that I have send me use me take me I'm not my own I'm yours it's that deep desire and thirst in our savior it means nothing to the world outside absolutely nothing to them but by grace it has a powerful pull in the hearts of the king's men and women and so let us then who know our king be strong and do exploits even as these men did for David their king their captain let's pray and give ourselves up afresh to our savior we're thankful father for this portion of scripture that reminds us how dedicated David's men were to him that they would run on an errand to fetch water to satisfy a wish for a drink from that well and we know that you are our captain and you have won our hearts by all that you've done for us and satisfying our greatest need for a savior and so much more than that you've saved us from a useless life received by tradition from our fathers you've saved us from the bondage to sin you've brought us into your family and you've given us a destiny that takes our breath away if we ever get a glimpse of it and so

please keep us close to you and keep winning our hearts thank you for the Lord's day thank you for this day and already our hearts have been captivated afresh at your mercies your goodness your commitment to your own so thank you for that and now reap the harvest of it in our lives that we would lay them down we would offer them to you again today a sacrifice here I am sacrifices are always costly so take us and take our time and our money make us warriors on our knees who will learn to advance the cause of missions and of the gospel yes on our knees send us out with our feet to be moving to our neighbors and to the person across the street and then buy our monies and our prayers and yes Lord would you even raise up someone to go from this church and to take the living water of the gospel to those who have never heard of our savior bless each missionary that we know of bless all those that we don't know of and bring home your bride

Lord Jesus and gather us to yourself we pray in Jesus name amen well let's stand and sing rise up oh church of God two verses of it from the overhead as our response to the Lord's word praise the Lord Christ the Lord church of God and God with master praise give heart and life and soul and strength to serve the king of kings when high the cross of Christ and where his he has come as followers of our son of him lies the whole church of God if you didn't get one of David's prayer letters from France please pick one up and that's one way you can advance the very heart of our savior by praying for

[31 : 16] David and Nikki and all those requests that were made known in that prayer letter were dismissed lic ■ hi