

Flawed Hero: Sparing Saul

Matt Hessel | 1 Samuel 24

Traders Point, how are we? It's good to see you guys. Hey, if you are a guest, welcome. My name is Matt. I'm one of the pastors here. I would love to get the chance to meet you so if you see me afterward out in the lobby somewhere, please come up and say, "Hi."

Our lead pastor, Aaron, is on his sabbatical break right now. Here's what that is. Every seven years our elders give all of our pastors a chance to get away and recharge, refuel, study, spend time with our families and then come back for the next season of ministry. That is where he is right now. I'll go ahead and speak for Aaron. I know that he personally would love to meet all of you as well when he gets back in August.

Today we are in part four of our series *Flawed Hero*, so go ahead and open your Bibles to 1 Samuel 24. Let me ask you something. Is it fair to say that we don't like to wait for things? Is that fair? I don't like to wait. I don't know anyone who enjoys waiting. Because of that we've sped everything up for ourselves. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Apparently, fast food is not fast enough anymore. It's one thing to order food and then it's ready in two minutes. That says something in and of itself. It's another thing not to even have to get out of the car to get the order. But apparently drive-through is not fast enough anymore. Have you noticed that some places now have two lanes in the drive-through because we desperately need to shave off seven seconds? It is vital.

Here is another one. At nighttime have you ever flashed your headlights at a stop light? You have, haven't you? I'm not the only one. I'm not the only one. Apparently, I have no idea if this is true or not, but the rumor is you can flash your headlights at certain stoplights and it will actually affect the stoplight. You can actually change it sooner. I have no idea if that is true. I might just be a fool. But I'm still going to do it. I'm still going to do and hope that I can shave off 20 seconds. And you all are going to flash your headlights tonight at the stoplights. Don't act like you won't.

Here's another. Raise your hand if, in the past week, you have yelled at a screen. If you have yelled at a screen, if you have thrown a device, or here is one of my personal favorites, vowed in a moment of frustration never to buy a particular brand again. If you've done any of those three things, there are groups for people like you. I promise that there are. We don't want to wait on a download. If our connection speed isn't lightning fast, there is something terribly, terribly wrong.

But it hasn't always been this way. This era of instant access, live feed, streaming live shows to any device you want. It hasn't always been that way. Not too long ago there was something called, maybe you've heard of it, there was something called dial up. Dial up, let me tell you, was an incredible technology. If you are not familiar with it, let me explain it to you.

First of all, you had to have a landline. What's that? You had to have a landline that would connect into your enormous computer tower, to start you off. One of the greatest features of dial up, maybe the

most overlooked things, was that dial up would actually let you know, audibly, when you were connecting to the internet. It would tell you when you were connecting. It would sound something like this: beep, beep, beep, [static] for like two or three minutes.

You would know you were connected to the internet when Siri's predecessor would tell you, "You've got mail," then you were on. You could download with dial up. You could download one picture from your Florida vacation in about 36 hours; it was awesome, unless somebody picked up the phone. Then you were out of luck, "Where did my connection go? Who picked up the phone?" That was dial up. That wasn't that long ago.

There was nothing that was instant and now we're not a fan of anything that isn't instant. There is a difference between efficiency or urgency and impatience. Impatience usually doesn't end well. Usually more is lost than gained from impatience. But if you're like me, patience is hard to come by sometimes. A common command throughout Scripture, which actually turns out to be a praise and a blessing for the people who follow it, is to, "wait on the Lord." It's patience to wait on the Lord.

David writes in many of his Psalms, "I'm going to wait on the Lord." This command that we see in Psalms and really throughout Scripture to, "wait on the Lord," is capped off in Isaiah 30:18. Isaiah says, "Blessed are all those who wait for Him." Blessed are those who wait on the Lord.

We would all agree that there is great benefit to patience. Nobody is going to be pro-impatience. It's easy to see the benefit of patience after the fact. What about in the heat of the moment? That's a little harder. And it's easy to be patient with things that are trivial like traffic, or restaurant lines, or internet connections. It's another thing to be patient when you have a lot riding on the line.

That's where we are in David's story. David is about to have his patience really, really tested. David's been anointed the king of Israel but he hasn't taken the throne yet. In fact, the period of time between when David was anointed and when he actually took the throne was a span of about nine years. He had to wait for nine years before he took the throne. He had no idea he was going to have to wait that long. He was patient.

Even though he hasn't taken the throne yet, he goes and serves the guy who was sitting on his rightful throne. It's patience. And even though the king didn't act like the king, and even though David's not on the throne, he goes and acts like the king to protect the army because that's what the king would do. And he protects the army from the enemies but he doesn't demand a reward. He doesn't expect to have the crown handed to him right in the moment. He was patient.

Then Saul sees how advantageous it could be to use David. So Saul says, "You're going to come and serve me. I'm going to use you for my own good, for my comfort," and David quietly replies. He actually goes and plays the harp for Saul. That's patience. Then Saul gets incredibly jealous and paranoid about David. He tries to kill him. He turns him into an exile. Up until this point David has not done anything wrong in the Lord's eyes, at least not yet. But to Saul, David's very existence is wrong.

David is the chosen, anointed king of the Lord. He's the one the throne has been promised to. Yet he is constantly in hiding. He is constantly in caves and small towns. He is running for his life. It is starting to heat up. Saul has been sending out assassins to try to kill David, but he is really going to step up his game here. Now Saul is going to focus all of his attention and all of his energy on finding David, chasing him down, and killing him. He has spies all over the place who will let him know where David is so that at

a moment's notice he can muster up the army and take off after David. Saul is so paranoid, so jealous of David he thinks he is such a threat that he is willing to lead his army after a fugitive harp player. How ridiculous does that sound?

How do you feel if you were David? David didn't ask for any of this. He didn't ask to be anointed king. He wasn't looking for fame when he killed Goliath. He wasn't asking to serve the king in this way. How do you feel if you were David?

I'm sure he was probably scared and he is wanting to shake his fist at God, "God, you said I was going to be king, but instead I'm just getting chased around by this lunatic who is trying to use me as a target for a spear. God, when you said I was the anointed one, when you said you were going to give me the throne, God, I have to be honest, this really isn't what I had in mind."

He doesn't do that. Instead he has patience. At this point Saul is closing in on David yet again. He is about to capture David. This really looks like it is it for David. Right before Saul gets ahold of David, he gets word that the Philistines are raiding Israel. So he has to give up his chase for David, at least for now, and he has to take care of the Philistines.

That's what is going on at the start of chapter 24. David is constantly on the run, constantly in hiding. Saul is relentlessly chasing David, trying to kill him. Look at verse 1: "When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, 'Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.' Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats' Rocks. And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself.

"Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. And the men of David said to him, 'Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, "Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you."' Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe. He said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed.' So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way."

So if this is not a blown opportunity, I don't know what is. David has Saul in the palm of his hand. Never is there a time when someone is more vulnerable than when they are going to the bathroom. That's what's happening. Saul has no idea David is right behind him. Why doesn't David jump at this opportunity?

You know his men said, "This has to be it. This is too good to be true. This has to be the Lord giving Saul to you so do what seems good to you. Do it. This is your chance." With one swing of his sword, it could all be over for David. With one swing of his sword, the throne would be his. No more poverty, no more running, no more being chased like a dog, no more hiding in caves, but instead wealth, security, protection, peace, the promise—all his.

And killing Saul makes a lot of logical sense too. From a military standpoint, you are killing your enemy. If you have a chance to take out the top general, you do it. From a kingdom standpoint, this makes a lot of logical sense too. Because Saul's leadership, really the lack thereof, had weakened and hurt Israel for years. It really weakened the nation. Saul even tried to murder, he actually does murder, an entire town

because he thought they were conspiring to help David. So if David kills Saul right here in the cave, he can bring stability to the nation.

Then from a personal standpoint it probably makes the most logical sense of all. Kill the guy who's trying to kill you. At the very least, this is self-defense. So why doesn't David jump at this opportunity? With one swing his problems could be over. With one swing of his sword his blessings could begin. David doesn't do it because he knows that if he kills Saul he will have to do it by sacrificing his own faith. God promised David the throne, He promised it to him. He promised him provision, He promised him possessions, He promised him protection but in His timing, not David's.

His men are saying, "This is it. This is your chance. This is so set up for you that this has to be from the Lord." The reason that David restrains himself from following the advice of his friends, the reason that David doesn't do what you and I think is the logical response, is that David knows he will have to sacrifice his faith.

He knows that to do it would mean sacrificing countless priceless moments in the future enjoying God's care, and God's guidance, and God's provision. He knows that to do it would sacrifice his faith that God is who He says He is, and that He'll do what He promised He would do. At that price David knows the throne is not even worth it. He'd have to sacrifice his faith.

Faith in the Lord is being willing to wait. That may seem completely illogical. It definitely did to David's men. But here is the lesson that you and I have to learn. It's a lesson we are going to have to learn over, and over, and over again. Sometimes it's completely illogical to follow the Lord. Sometimes it won't make sense. A lot of times it won't make sense.

Now hear me on this. 1 Corinthians 1 says, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." The message of the cross is foolishness to the world. It's foolishness to the thinking pattern of the world. It doesn't make logical sense not to look out for number one. It doesn't make logical sense not to get what is yours. It doesn't make logical sense to give yourself up for something greater than yourself.

It doesn't make logical sense for you to give up vacation time to go on a short-term mission trip because you only get two weeks a year, if that. It doesn't make logical sense for you to give up every other Wednesday night to join a Life Group. It's meant to push you into a relationship that's closer to Christ and develop relationships with other people but that's one more thing you have to do on a weeknight.

It doesn't make logical sense for you to get up earlier on a Sunday morning and come serve before or after you get a chance to worship, because now that's one more thing on the weekends that you have to do. It doesn't make logical sense for you to tithe 10 percent of your income because the country hasn't completely rebounded yet and bills are hard enough as it is every month.

It doesn't make logical sense to follow a God who says, "Come and die," not "Come and get." There are going to be times when it's really hard, logically, to justify following the Lord because you have to give yourself up. When those times come, lack of logic requires abundant faith. Logic lets us see the temporary; faith lets us see the eternal.

Logic is not a bad thing. Logic is a gift from the Lord and it should be used. Here is what I think our problem is. Far too often we lean only on logic and not on faith. Logic has an endpoint and that endpoint

is usually the end of your life, or maybe a generation or two after. So if I'm basing all my decisions just on logic, it's going to affect just that time period. It's a limited perspective.

But faith lets us have an eternal perspective. If I have an eternal perspective then I'm willing to make decisions just on faith. Having an eternal perspective means going on a short-term mission trip is completely logical because I see where it fits into eternity. Having an eternal perspective means joining a Life Group, that's a blessing. Having an eternal perspective means serving is the obvious choice. Having an eternal perspective makes tithing completely logical.

So what's your perspective? Do you see things temporarily or eternally? If your perspective is only temporary it's going to be really hard to justify following the Lord, logically. But if your perspective is eternal then there is nothing more logical than following the God who is eternal. The call of Christ is not the call to the temporary. The call of Christ is the call to the eternal. And eternity doesn't start for us at death. For us eternity started at, "Let there be light," and it keeps going. We're in the middle of it right now. So what's your perspective? Is it temporary or is it eternal?

If David had an eternal perspective, then killing Saul is foolish. If it is temporary, he is foolish if he doesn't follow the logic of the world. Just like this didn't make any sense from the temporary perspective, it didn't make any logical sense at all for Jesus to let the Pharisees and the Romans kill Him. Make no mistake, Jesus was in complete control. He let them kill Him.

But what would have happened if Jesus said, "You know what? Forget these false accusations. Forget these illegal trials, these beatings, these floggings, being crucified. I'm out. I think I'm going to leave. I think I'm going to call in an army of angels instead, because it just doesn't make sense, logically, for Me to willingly die for a people who continue to reject Me and sin against Me. I just can't make sense of that logically."

What would have happened? Where would you and I be if Jesus would have followed the logic of the world? Where would you and I be if Jesus had a temporary perspective? On the cross He's not thinking about just the moment. Christ wasn't thinking about the disciples or just the generation after that. No, the cross is the greatest example of an eternal perspective that ever has been.

On the cross, your name and my name were written in Jesus' wounds. He was thinking of us 2,000 years later, just like He was thinking about people 2,000 years before Him. And He was thinking about our kids, and our grandkids, and our great grandkids, and the generation after that, and the generation after that to whatever point when He comes back. And then He was looking after that. It's the ultimate example of an eternal perspective.

What would have happened if David would have had a temporary perspective? Saul would be dead. The throne would be his, at least for a while. But he'd have to sacrifice his faith. He'd have to give up on the Lord. And now, if David does that, is murder the model for the throne? David realized how incredibly important it was for him in his relationship with the Lord and in his status as the Lord's future servant for him to restrain himself from the convenience and the logic of self-serving sins. And sin is always self-serving. Sin always looks at the temporary.

If David kills Saul right here in the cave, he's taking God's promise and he's taking God's timing out of God's hands and putting them in his own. How do you restrain yourself though to wait on the Lord's

promises? How do you restrain yourself from taking what is rightfully yours when you have the ability to do so? The answer is faith. The answer is faith in Jesus. I know that.

But it's not just lip service. What David is doing right here, that kind of faith, that's hard. You cannot manufacture that. How do you have the kind of faith where you're willing to restrain yourself, wait on the Lord's promises, when every other form of logic is telling you you're a fool? How do you do that?

The only way to have this kind of faith, the only way to come by it, is if you've experienced it yourself because authentic faith comes from an authentic relationship with Christ. Authentic faith isn't blind. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. It's the conviction of things not seen. It's experience. It's experience with Jesus through a relationship because you're not going to trust someone and you're not going to put your faith in someone you don't know.

I'm not going to let some random guy off the street watch my kids. But we are going to let them stay with a family that Kelly and I know. We've spent time with them. We've talked to them. We've seen how they live and act and we've seen how they live out their word. We're going to have faith that they'll do what they promised to do because we know them, not just things about them, but we know them and who they are.

It's the same thing with the Lord, when you know the Lord, Himself, not just things about God, but you know God Himself in a relationship then you can have authentic faith and put authentic faith in Him because you know He's trustworthy, you know He makes good on His promises, and you know that He loves you. The only way to have that kind of relationship with the Lord is by seeking Him in His Word and in prayer. God's Word is the Lord speaking to us in relationship. Prayer is the continuation of that conversation that started in Scripture.

David knew it. That's why he was able to restrain himself. That's why he was able to wait on the Lord's promises. Because he waited, because he had faith in the Lord, that was proof of a reverent heart for the Lord that had been trained by continual consumption of God's Word. Here is the question: Do you consume God's Word? Not just to know things about God, but do you consume God's Word to know God Himself? Because it's really hard to have a relationship with someone you don't talk to.

As if letting Saul go wasn't enough, David even takes it to another level. Here's a greater display of faith. Look at verse 8. "Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, 'My lord the king!' And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. And David said to Saul, 'Why do you listen to the words of men who say, "Behold, David seeks your harm"? Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, "I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it.'"

So this is a bold move. David follows Saul out of the cave. Saul is going down the side of the hill to rejoin his army and David comes out and calls after Saul. He says, "Look, here is proof. I could have killed you, but I didn't. I'm not after you. I'm not a threat to you. I'm not trying to overthrow you." David is doing this and if it backfires Saul is going to kill him right there. What kind of faith does that take?

Before David goes into this speech with Saul, the text says, “He bowed his head to Saul and paid homage to him.” So here is the thing I want to know. How do you honor the man who is trying to kill you? How do you do that? The Bible says, “Give honor where honor is due,” but Saul has done nothing deserving of honor. How do you honor the dishonorable? How do you do that?

Really what’s happening to David here is he is being persecuted because he is the anointed one. He is being persecuted because he belongs to the Lord. And if you are following Christ, at some point you are going to face persecution too. It may not mean someone is trying to kill you, at least I hope not, but that’s a very real reality for Christians all over the world today. That’s a very real reality today. If you are following Christ, at some point and in some form you will face persecution. It may not mean you have to die for your faith. It may mean you get mocked, maybe you lose some relationships, or maybe you even get passed up for a job.

At some point you’re going to be persecuted and, when that happens, how do you honor those who persecute you like David did for Saul? Because honoring, that’s not the first thing that comes to my mind. I am thinking more along the lines of a right hook. How do you do that? David honoring those who persecuted him? That foreshadows the way Jesus honors those who persecute Him.

Jesus is the ultimate example of how to honor those who persecute you. Jesus says, “Hey, blessed are you if you are persecuted because of Me.” He says, “If you’re persecuted because of My name, because of your faith in Me, you are blessed because I was persecuted. If you are persecuted it means you are being identified with Me.” There’s no greater blessing in this lifetime than to be identified with Christ.

And then Jesus says this is how you are supposed to respond. He says, “Here is what I want you to do. Here is how you are supposed to respond to that.” In Luke 6:27 He says, “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” Say that again, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”

That’s exactly what Jesus did. Is it just me or does that sound really hard to anyone else? Maybe even a little unrealistic? Love your enemies? That has to be really hard for Christians in Iraq who are fleeing from ISIS. Do good to those who hate you? Bless those who curse you? Pray for those who abuse you? As a pastor I’ve heard way too many stories of people being abused in the most god-awful, horrific ways imaginable. How do you pray for your abuser?

Love your enemies, pray for those who abuse you? That does not mean you allow it to happen. It doesn’t mean that. It doesn’t mean that the pain doesn’t exist or that the pain is not real. What it is; it is an invitation for you to grow. It’s an invitation for you to heal, for you to hope. Because if we can see Jesus’ command to love our enemies, if we can see it through the lens of Romans 5, that doesn’t mean that the pain will go away, but it does mean that loving them is possible.

Look at Romans 5. It’ll be up on the screens. This is a classic verse, starting in 8. It says, “... but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Verse 10, here is the key, “For if while *we were enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son...”

So we have to understand that we were first enemies of Christ. We are the ones who have been His enemies, yet He loved us. We’ve hated Him, yet He blessed us. We’ve cursed Him, yet He does good for us. We’ve abused Him, yet He prays for us. That’s what our sin does.

So if we can see that the Risen Lord, that the Son of God died for us to reconcile us to Himself so that we can be held friends, not enemies. If we can understand that we were first in the position of enemies then loving our enemies, it becomes possible. It doesn't mean the pain goes away, it doesn't mean it's a snap of a finger, but it does mean that loving our enemies is possible, because we were once enemies of Christ yet He loved us so much that He got nailed to a tree for us.

Then Romans 8:18 caps off the hope of this. Underline this, circle this, whatever you have to do. This is our hope, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

It's saying, "Hey, the suffering that's going on right now, it's not even worth comparing to what is coming. It's not even worth comparing. So know that however you've suffered, however you've been persecuted, however you will be persecuted, know it's temporary. One day the pain, the scars, the memories, they are going to be gone. They have an expiration date. The glory that's going to be revealed to us has no expiration date. It's eternal.

The Bible is saying, "Your suffering, your persecution, the pain, the abuse; view it from an eternal perspective." Because if we view suffering from a temporary perspective suffering is almost unbearable. That's why for non-Christians suffering is the hardest question to get around, because they view it from a temporary perspective. If I look at suffering from a temporary perspective, any amount of suffering in this lifetime is not worth it. It's completely unjust.

But if we can look at suffering and persecution and abuse from an eternal perspective like the Bible commands us to do, that doesn't mean the pain goes away, that doesn't mean it's any less unjust, but we know that eternity so dwarfs suffering that suffering is only a blip on the radar. Romans 8 is a call for hope. It tells us that suffering and persecution are only temporary. That's why David doesn't kill Saul. That's why David does the completely illogical here.

And then look how Saul responds to it. Verse 16, "As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, 'Is this your voice, my son David?' And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, 'You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.'"

So David's plan doesn't backfire. Instead, Saul is completely taken aback by what David has done. The king who kills an entire town, who goes on a constant manhunt for David, now he breaks down crying and says, "David's the rightful king." Why? It's because of mercy. Saul just realized the mercy he experienced. He says, "David, you are the rightful king not because of ability, or power, or authority, or influence, or because you are a great warrior. You are king because of your mercy."

The way that Saul talks to David in verse 24, this is the exact same way we should talk to Jesus. Because, just like Saul, you and I have been in the position of great guilt, yet Jesus has shown us great mercy. Just like David is king because of his mercy, we know that Jesus is the One True King because of His mercy. Biblically, mercy is a reflection of kingship. This is how we identify with the King of Mercy, by showing mercy ourselves. Love your enemies. Honor those who are dishonorable.

That's one thing. It's an entirely different thing to show mercy especially when you have the ability to stop the attacks, the taunts, the mocking, the ridicule, the persecution. If you have the ability to take revenge or show mercy, which one is easier? Which one is more gratifying? Love your enemies. It doesn't make sense does it? Show mercy to the merciless, it doesn't make sense if you have a temporary perspective.

Mercy is the same concept as authentic faith. Mercy can be shown when mercy is experienced. So, have you experienced the mercy of Jesus Christ? Because you can't give undeserved mercy unless you've experienced it yourself. Saul had no idea that he was experiencing undeserved, unwarranted mercy until it was pointed out to him.

Jesus is offering you the exact same undeserved, unwarranted, mercy that will take you from death to life. You just have to take it. It's right there for you. Have you experienced the mercy of Jesus Christ? And if you have, if you're following Jesus the mercy doesn't stop. That's what's awesome. Keep running to the throne of mercy and experience it over and over again.

We experience the mercy of the Lord in everything: the small things like waking up in the morning. That's the mercy of the Lord. Breath in your lungs, that's the mercy of the Lord. The sun rising and the sun setting, that's the mercy of the Lord. So enjoy it, celebrate with Him, and worship Him. And then there is mercy in the great things too: Jesus taking our sin and our punishment and giving us His righteousness and eternal life. That's the mercy of the Lord.

Mercy is always undeserved, that's what makes it so great. And because we've experienced such great mercy, we are called to show it ourselves. What does that look like? How do we show mercy? We can talk about that on, and on, and on, but here is where we start.

Number one: We show mercy in our speech. Is your speech seasoned with mercy, or is it more like murder? It's easy to talk with mercy to a friend, but how's your speech when you're on the phone with a customer service rep after your internet's gone out three times and you're back to dial-up. Yeah, how is it then? Is your speech dripping with mercy or is it more like a rifle range to the people you talk to?

Number two: We show mercy in our conduct. Now this is going to look different to everyone, depending on how we are wired. But you, as an individual, wherever you are most likely to lose your patience, that is your greatest opportunity to show mercy. Maybe it's in the parking lot, maybe it's with your kids, or maybe it's when you're behind the guy in the left lane on 465 going 45 mph. If that's you, stop it! I'm kidding. But seriously, get out of the way.

Wherever you are most likely to lose your patience, that's your greatest opportunity to show mercy. So seize it. David certainly did. Jesus did. But that's not easy. Showing mercy, that's not natural, not at all. It's hard. But the more we do it, the more it can become ingrained in us. So let's practice showing mercy and let's ask the Lord to give us opportunities to show mercy. The more we do it, the more ingrained it becomes in us, and then it can become natural.

Here is number three: We show mercy in our thoughts. This is the hardest one because no one knows if you are being merciful in your thoughts; only you do and only the Lord does. But however our thoughts go, if they are full of mercy or if they are ruthless, eventually that will manifest itself outwardly. So if we set the foundation of being merciful in our thoughts that will eventually play itself out in our speech and our conduct.

Traders Point, this is how we have to be known. That's a church of Jonathon's. That's a church that shows great mercy because they've experienced great mercy. David showed great mercy because he experienced it. He had the faith to wait on the promises of the Lord because he had an eternal perspective.

So are you willing to wait on the Lord? What's God asking you to wait on right now? Is there something you are trying to take on your own? Maybe it's a promise of the Lord but you are trying to take it in your timing, through your power. You are trying to cut corners somewhere. David had a huge chance to cut corners. Instead he just cut the corner off a robe. Are you willing to wait on the Lord?

If you are following Christ there is a reward. Salvation is a gift. It cannot be earned. But a reward can be earned. There is a crown that is promised to us, but that crown does not come via the path of least resistance, just ask David, just ask Jesus. The crown of Christ comes through the cross of Christ. You'll pick up your crown after you pick up your cross. So have the faith to pick up your cross and follow Him daily.

That's exactly what David did. David had the ability to end the suffering, end the pain, and end the persecution. He could literally pick up the crown in the cave, but he doesn't because he's not willing to sacrifice his faith. He knows it's not the Lord's plan. Instead of picking up the crown in the cave, David picks up his cross. The persecution is going to keep going on, the pain is going to keep going on. He knows that he can't trust Saul's word. He doesn't pick up the crown, he picks up the cross.

Jesus is saying, "If you are following me, there is a crown, I promise you, but it comes after you pick up the cross. It comes after you wait on Me." So are you willing to wait on the Lord?

I want to close by reading something over you. This isn't going to be on the screens. I just want you to hear the words. This is Lamentations 3. I'm sure you're all doing your quiet time in Lamentations right now. A really famous hymn comes out of this passage. Just listen to these words in Verse 22.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

Traders Point, let's wait. It's hard to be patient, but let's wait on the Lord. Great is His faithfulness, He comes through with His promises. Let's seek Him. Let's wait on the Lord.

I want us to go into a time where we get to worship by waiting on Him. We are going to go into communion now when we can focus on how great His faithfulness really is, reflect upon what He's called us to wait on, and reflect upon the promises He extended to us on the cross. That's what communion is. The crown is offered to us through the cross.

So if you are following Christ, this is the time for you to go to the Lord, to worship, to reflect on the cross, and to ask Him to give you great faith to wait on Him. If you're not a Christian, then you can just let the tray pass. It's okay. Nobody is going to be watching you, nobody is going to be paying attention to that. Just let it pass.

I'm going to pray for us and then I want the servers to come.

Father, great is Your faithfulness. Your mercies are new every morning. Father I pray that You make that so real and vivid to us. God, thank you for being trustworthy. Thank you for being powerful. Thank you for being strong enough that we can wait on You and we can trust You. Father, when suffering, when persecution, when trouble comes, I pray that we have faith in You, that we are willing to show mercy because we've been given such great mercy. Overwhelm our church with the mercy of Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that You will overwhelm our city with the mercy of Jesus Christ. Let us be a church that extends that kind of mercy. Let us experience it, let us know how undeserved it really is. That's just a testament to how great You are.

Father we want to humble ourselves before You. Thank You for seeking us and pursuing us in a relationship. We know we are precious in Your eyes, that You love us. Like David said, "Who are we that You are mindful of us?" God, You are great. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You most of all for Your love and Your Son. It's in Jesus' precious name that we pray. Amen.