

Leadership in Biblical Perspective
Officer Ordination
“Leadership as Worship”
II Samuel 23:13–17
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January 10, 2021 • Sunday Evening Sermon

I love the Lord’s Day Sunday worship and I’m thrilled that we are able to start back our evening worship services this Lord’s Day since the pandemic started back in April 2020. Let’s start by looking at II Samuel 23:8–17 which says [8] *These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.*

[9] *And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel withdrew. [10] He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword. And the LORD brought about a great victory that day, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain.*

[11] *And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. [12] But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory.*

[13] *And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam, when a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. [14] David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. [15] And David said longingly, “Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!” [16] Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the LORD [17] and said, “Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?” Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I do want to set this around the whole theme of leadership and outline a couple of things on this. Whenever our Lord decides to do something the Scriptures are clear and church history is clear – He always raises up leaders. Whenever there is an opportunity that He opens up to expose to God’s people or a challenges that’s coming to God’s people, He always raises up leaders. He works through leaders. We know the value of leaders and why it’s so easy for us to go beyond what we ought to do which is to encourage, honor and respect our leaders and sometimes we end up depending on the leader instead of the Lord that put the leader there. The answer is not to discount leadership because is discounted why does the Lord keep raising them up to meet challenges and adversity. Moments like this serve as very important moments in the life of God’s people – the ordination and installation of formal leadership in the church.

I believe we face adversity in the coming year – in the culture, in the winnowing of the church and to some degree in our very own denomination. We desperately need leaders and I

believe we're going to face extraordinary opportunities as well for the Kingdom of God to make advances. In fact, in moments like this our crutch is that we'll take God's blessings that we enjoy within a society, culture or nation and unbeknownst to our nature we come to depend on those things more than the Lord, therefore when that crutch is kicked out that sends us back to the Lord in a fresh way, a way we've never been to Him before. But, we need leaders at that moment who point the way to the Lord, who mentor and disciple.

One of the great blessings we enjoy at Briarwood which I'm forever grateful, is the predominance of some wonderful male and female leaders. We have men and women who lead wonderfully and well, all over what we call informal leadership but in this time we're here for the sacred covenant and oaths in that community of formal leadership, those offices that the Lord has ordained. There are the ministers of the Word which are the ruling elders and then there are the shepherding elders and deacons of the church who compliment the work of the ruling elders so they can focus on what they need to as deacons uphold the administration, mercy and the stewardship of the congregation.

I also don't want to discount the value of all those who are leading small group Bible studies, accountability groups, counseling groups, congregational communities and serving as shepherds in those communities so that we can properly care for the people of God's church. Jesus had the 3, the 12, the 70 and the multitudes so we see how informal leadership is needed. Informal leadership is crucial but as important as that is you can't have the informal without the formal. It is the formal that lays the framework, sets the pace, and takes the responsibility by oath before the Lord. It's the formal that steps up to that passage in I Timothy 3:1 which says *[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.* Those in this office aspire to a noble work.

When I was in Charlotte, I remember some who came to me to ask if I would consider running for a national office and there were a number of reasons I said 'no.' These three people were wonderfully persuasive and said to me 'you're a Christian and a pastor so you at least need to pray about this.' I said 'No, I don't need to pray about it because one I don't think the Lord is going to do that for me, I don't think He wants me to do that but two, I don't think I can do that and three I don't want to do that because that would be a demotion for me. I can't think of anymore important calling of leadership than the church of Christ.' It's the one institution bought with the blood of Jesus and that's headed to eternity. And we have been given the privilege to take the bride of Christ, the army of the Lord, the family of God, the body of Christ and lead her.

When we lead her well we make room for all that informal leadership to burgeon up. When we do it well we set a pace for marital leadership and family leadership and when we do it well God gets all the glory because there is no way we can do it well without Him. I love this II Samuel 23 text because it affirms the importance of leadership. Leadership is so important that not only is God going to bring His people to face a challenge or create an opportunity He raises up leaders, like Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha etc. but there is something else He does. The leaders He raises up intentional mature, multiple and mobilize more leaders that will be there when they go.

When David leaves a scene he doesn't leave a vacuum. David has 30 mighty men with three chief men that are ready to step in when he is not there. When Elijah goes he doesn't leave a vacuum for he has already put others through the school of the Prophets and even as spent time with one in particular, Elisha. When Paul sometime between 65 and 67 A.D. was taken to glory he didn't leave a vacuum. There is Luke, Silas, leading women, Aquilla, Priscilla, Timothy, etc.

When Moses gives up his life looking over the Promised Land, there is Joshua, Caleb and all the elders that have been developed from the tribes. There was no vacuum there. That is what that called formal leadership does – always maturing, multiplying and mobilizing other leaders because everyone knows how important leadership is.

What kind of leadership do we need? I have written one book of it titled 3D Leadership: Defining, Developing and Deploying Christian Leaders Who Can Change the World and I'm under contract to write another one on it so if I get to it, here is one thing I will include in it; I believe leadership is ultimately an act of worship. In this II Samuel 23 text we meet the 30 mighty men of David and the leadership of those men, the three. It kind of reminds me of Peter, James and John who were the three that Jesus would use. In this text an illustration of the three men that David would use is given of their lives. In all three of the illustrations the enemy came and even mighty men were retreating but not these three, they stayed to fight. One of them fought so hard they couldn't even pry his hands from his sword. The other would stand his ground even though everyone else had left. The third would not turn his back and flee but would give his all.

These three take a moment to go visit David who right now has the Philistines rampaging all over the land of Judah, where the tribe of Judah and Benjamin would have been. The Philistines even have control of his hometown, the City of David, Bethlehem. Bethlehem has now become a Philistine stronghold. As David thinks about he utters something that he probably remembered from his childhood as a shepherd boy. I believe it was something like a reminiscence of to where you were raised – oh I'd love to go back to that park or I'd love to play baseball again there, etc. Can imagine how many times David remembered that well that had such sweet water that he drank from coming in from a tiring day which was at the very gates of Bethlehem. Here David is isolated in a cave and as his three mighty men come he just remarks, 'oh to have a drink of water from the well at the gates of Bethlehem.'

Little does David know that these three men hear him, meet and they go. They break into the lines of the Philistines. What is the most defended place in a walled city? It is the gates because that is the weakest place and that is where most of the Philistines armed guards would be. We're not told exactly how they got this water, whether it was by stealth or an on out onslaught but somehow they got this water and were able to transport all the way back to where David was. They probably didn't spill a drop but can you imagine that moment when they brought this water to David, whom they loved and supported even in the midst of a moment where seemingly everything is going to overwhelm them. Will the Philistines have the victory or will we?

David leads by the confidence he has in the Lord and even though he finds himself in a cave, he has not given up. He is still in the fight. These men are men like him and with him in the fight and they take on a fight that wasn't even strategic but just out of love to David they go and get him that water. I remember when I first read this as I was reading through the Scriptures in my first ministry in Miami. I'm trying to imagine this moment, I'd say sanctified pride at this moment was how they felt. As they give the water to David they say 'here's your drink David.' It is obvious that he is overcome with emotion. He not only can't drink it but he won't drink it. Right in front of them, David pours it out and you would think they thought 'how insensitive can you be?' He pours it out because he knows every one of them probably could have or should have lost their life doing what they did and he saw that water as their very life blood. He saw it out of their devotion, not to him, but to the Lord who had called it. So when he poured it out any

more than hundreds of years later a woman, seven miles from there, will open up and pour out an unbelievable expensive bottle of oil to anoint Jesus.

David is not wasting it and the clue is in the last phrase of II Samuel 23:16 where he poured it out, not on the ground but to the Lord. He saw this leadership as something sacred and glorious. He saw this leadership with all of its marks. I see this leadership marked by three things – courage in the day of challenge, conviction and commitment. Think about how many times we say ‘are we doing the right thing’ but they saw this thing through. Then they had the courage to go to the gates of Bethlehem, a stronghold of the Philistines, to get the water. They had courage, conviction and commitment. David sees those three marks as leadership as worship.

I thank the Lord for our elders and deacons. I thank the Lord for those who walked you through the process and those who nominated you. I thank the Lord for the spouses who prayed together to get to this point and you have now sought an office. I do not know what this coming year holds but I do know it will hold challenges. If someone could have told me the kind of challenges we had last year before they happened I would have thought they were crazy. I will tell you that as I get to the end of this previous year, not knowing what is coming this year, I can’t tell you how many times I have thanked God for the elders and deacons I have had the privilege to serve with and under here at Briarwood, who have attempted to meet the office with their eyes fixed upon Jesus, to make decisions not framed by the world’s politics or the fears of men or the insensitivities of others but have attempted to lead us in the way that honors the Lord and has manifested to us as people who love the Lord with all their heart, soul and mind and who want to love their neighbor as themselves.

In this coming year I don’t what the challenges we’ll face will be or the opportunities we will have but I’m one of these who do not close my eyes in denial to the realities of challenge but I do anticipate the majestic opportunities that may be there for the advancement of the Kingdom this year. We will not be able to migrate and make this journey to lead God’s people without leaders who have courage from the Lord, who have a commitment out of their love to the Lord and who have conviction that there is no greater task and privilege than to lead the church of Jesus Christ to extend the Kingdom of our Lord throughout the world.

Here are these men who come back and make this glorious statement and we can just see how much this affected David for he knew this represented an unbelievable love. To all of those who you will enable in this office of leadership, I would say our love is to One greater than David. Praise God for David but David is only the type of our great Leader, the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God for there is where our love is focused. There is no stronghold we will not invade. There is no battle that we will run from. Courage. Conviction and commitment. You can be assured that there will always be the naysayers outside and on the inside and if you lead for the applause of men you will always fail in leadership, but if you lead for the Lord then we just pour that leadership out before the Lord. That kind of leadership is worship and praise His Name forever!

We will not do it perfectly but we can do it intentionally. We can do it empowered by His Spirit. We can do it guided by His Word and we can do it because of His grace. We can do it because of Him. Without Him I can do nothing (John 15:5) but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). Last year’s leadership this time in this moment I pour it out to give Him praise, this year’s leadership I can’t wait to see the praise that accrues to God because you lead us with faithfulness, a God-given courage, conviction and commitment. Praise His name forever, let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father for the privilege to serve You as those whom You have called, unworthy as we are to lead Your people. God, please help us lead Your people into the world but not like the world. Help us not to be defined by worldly wisdom leadership or its boastful arrogance. Please allow us to lead with humility yet courage, with thoughtfulness yet boldly, with conviction and with compassion. May the leadership of Your people be a statement of praise to Your Name through those whom You have called and those whom You have set aside even now to that leadership for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.