



### *Honing in on the Heart!’ Sermon Series*

#### **Sermon #42:**

#### **‘Nightmare at Nob!’**

#### **1st Samuel 22:6-23**

Wednesday, July 9th, 2025

#### **Three weeks since we’ve been in the book of Samuel:**

- It’s been three weeks due to VBS and the week of the fourth, since we’ve met on Wednesday evenings for Midweek Worship!
  - *Reaching back into our minds, you may remember that in 1st Samuel 21, Pastor Steve preached through, that while David was still running from Saul that he ducked into Nob.*
    - A city between Jerusalem and Gibeah which was the priestly city since Shiloh had been destroyed.
  - *His body was famished from running, and he ran into the temple and ate the Holy Bread.*

- *The priests there helped David and provided what he needed. They were kind to him.*

- Then in the first 5 verses of 1st Samuel 22, we saw firsthand that David hides in a cave, is visited by his family and others come to his aide and unite with him in his fight for survival against Saul.

#### ■ *In that sermon we looked at:*

- **Truth #1: *Family Comforts.* (v. 1)**
- **Truth #2: *The Forgotten Come.* (v. 2)**
- **Truth #3: *The Father Calls.* (v. 3-5)**

- Tonight we go back to Nob, for what would become a horrific night for so many.

#### **‘Nightmare at Nob!’**

#### **1st Samuel 22:6-23**

#### **Sermon in a Sentence:**

*As the Nightmare at Nob unfolded due to Saul’s rage we see Intimidating Interrogation, Intentional Killing and then Immediate Notification.*

#### **Intro:**

- Sadly, but due to sin certainly not surprisingly, killing between Human beings has occurred regularly since Cain killed Abel.

- *All the way back in Genesis 4, we see that Cain killed Abel out of Anger, because God accepted His brother's offering and not his own.*

- Even in the first act of murder in the history of humanity I believe that we see the reason why another human being would take another human being's life.

- *Instead of dealing with one's own feelings and personal shortcomings, a mental blindness ensues in someone's mind when they are angry, and terrible acts occur.*

- *Cain's killing of his brother was the very first one, but it would not be the last.*

- ***Biblical Examples of mass murder:***

- #1: In Genesis 6-8, many were killed when God sent the flood in order to purify the earth of the sinfulness of man and to 'start over'.

- *But in this instance we must be clear to mention that there was a chance to be saved from the flood, by getting on the ark.*

- Outside of Noah and his family no one did so, just like how many choose not to be saved today.

- #2: In Genesis 18:20-21 we are told that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from Heaven.

- #3: In Exodus 12:12, as apart of the plagues that God sent on Egypt, the first born Son of every family that didn't have the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the doorpost died by means of the death angel.
- #4: In Numbers 16, we are told that Korah and his rebellious comrades went against Moses (so they were against God as well), and in Numbers 16:31, God allowed the ground to swallow them up. 250 people died.

- ***In the history of our world, countless, senseless killings have occurred.***

- From 1929-1953 it is believed that Joseph Stalin killed 20-60 million people.
- The Romans loved to see people die and would gather in the Roman colosseum just to see the death of others occur.

- *In one particular case, 10,000 people died in the Roman Colosseum at one time.*

- The 6 Million+ Jews who were innocently murdered during the Holocaust.

- *There are so many more mass murders that occurred, but to discuss them is truly gut wrenching...*

- ***Sadly, tonight in our text we come to innocent lives, 85 to be exact, that Saul decided to execute.***

- *To show just how absurd Saul really was as a leader, the people he commanded at first, to kill these 85 lives wouldn't do it.*
  - Trust me, passages like this are not 'fun' and I don't necessarily look forward to preaching them, but they are the next text in our series.
- *It also gives you and I a front row look at just how serious sin is and what it can lead to in our lives when it is not personally dealt with and repented of.*

#### Question to Ask:

*What does Saul do that created a nightmare for the people in Nob?*

#### Truth #1: *Intimidating Interrogation.* (vv. 6-10)

- Way back in 1st Samuel 19:1, we were told that Saul had gotten his troops together and informed him that they were to kill David.
  - *Since then in our series we've been following the saga of David running for his life, while Saul keeps trying to find him.*
    - In our text tonight, Saul is not going to achieve his goal of finding David, but he is going to get revenge (in his mind) on people who had successfully helped David.
- *Let's carefully look at the first four verses:*

- 'Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. **7** And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, **8** that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day." **9** Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, **10** and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

- Lots to unpack here. I believe there are **3** things we need to look at in these verses:

#### ● *Saul is Notified.* (v. 6)

- 'Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him.'

- *By this time, we know that David has at least 400 men with him, and Saul is made aware of who these men are.*
  - *Remember, Saul has spies all across the countryside, and rest assured they are taking names of who has sided with who.*
  - I believe there is no ‘wonder’ as to how Saul found out where David was and who was with him, due to the secret service (spy network) Saul had assembled.
- *The last time we were in the location of Gibeah in our study in Samuel was back in chapter 20.*
  - This was the occasion when Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan in rage that Jonathan was defending David’s innocence.
    - Since then, we’ve followed David as he left Saul and went...
      - *To Nob.* (1st Samuel 21:1)
      - *Then to Gath.* (1st Samuel 21:10)
      - *Then to the cave of Adullam.* (1st Samuel 22:1)
      - *Then the side trip to Moab.* (1st Samuel 22:3)

- *Then to an unidentified stronghold.* (1st Samuel 22:4)
- *Then the forest of Hereth.* (1st Samuel 22:5)
- All during this time, Saul is waiting for his secret service to get back with him concerning David’s whereabouts.
  - *I find it interesting from a historical perspective that Saul during his reign was inept at gathering information on foreign enemies but was really good at national security issues at home, in his mind those issues were solely King David.*
    - It’s sad, but true, Saul was obsessed.

#### ○ *Tamarisk Tree*

- In Genesis 21:33, Abraham planted a Tamarisk tree after making a treaty with Abimelech, the king of the Philistines.
- This tree was associated with the Worship of Yahweh after Abraham did this.
- There were/are different varieties of this tree that exist and are common to the southern Palestine region. (they often have pink and white flowers).

- *It's also interesting to note that according to 1st Samuel 31:13, Saul was buried beneath one of these trees at Jabesh-gilead.*
  - *Not only is Saul sitting under this tree, and probably treating it more like a throne, but he has his spear in his hand as a sign of his royalty but also I think to symbolically show and foreshadow the anger Saul was capable of.*
- Either way, he's under the shade in Gibeah when he gets this news.
- **Saul's Nepotism. (vv. 7-8)**
  - 'And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, **8** that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day."
  - In verses 7-8, it's clear that Saul has insecurities about what's going on here.

- *One of the things that jumps out to me the most here, is the phrase 'people of Benjamin'.*
  - *Evidently Saul has given his family members from his tribe that he's from the highest positions of government employment.*
  - *Saul hears David's name and immediately jumps into a state of paranoia and that is no different here in this text.*
- But what flows from Saul's own paranoia of David and what's going on?
  - **Nepotism.**
    - Definition of Nepotism=the practice among those with power or influence of favoring relatives, friends, or associates, especially by giving them jobs.
- Do you remember what Samuel warned the people of Israel of when they wanted Saul to desperately be their king?
  - *'He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. 12 And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to*

*reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants.’*  
*1st Samuel 8:11-14*

- Saul had done that, and made his own family powerful in the land.
- *This is a warning for us.*  
*Whether it's volunteer or a paid position, we must be careful to promote those in our own family others those who are also our family but in the Lord.*
- *Even though it's his own family members, Saul berates them and reminds them of the carrot over their heads.*
  - Saul informs them of the positions that he has personally given them and reminds them that with David, you'll risk your life, but with me, I'll give you commands, fields and vineyards.
- *At this point, Saul had heard rumors that David had been spotted, but no one had spoken up and given the exact location.*

- This is obviously when the interrogation with Saul intensifies and it is obvious that he is seeking to intimidate them.

- *Always remember that insecure people would rather intimidate than invest into people's lives.*
- *Even though they are his family, Saul doesn't care about them. He wants David dead, but he will dangle any carrot or advantage over their heads that he can.*

- Someone who was 'standing near' the general as he basked under the tree, was about to step up... For 85 Priests, this would end up being their death sentence.
- *The Foreigners Snitches. (vv. 9-10)*
  - 'Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, **10** and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."
  - Remember in 1st Samuel 21:7 where we are told a certain individual was present at Nob the evening the nightmare occurred?
    - 'Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the

Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen.  
1st Samuel 21:7

- *Three times in this entire episode Doeg is called the 'edomite' which refers to the fact he was a foreigner.*
- *This could explain why the others wouldn't give up David's location...*
- Most of what Doeg said was true, but not all...
  - *Doeg did see David come to Nob and to Ahimelech.*
  - *He did see the priest give David food and the sword of Goliath.*
    - *But what he did not see was Ahimelech inquiring of the Lord for David.*
    - *I believe that Doeg added this element into his version of the story so that Saul may be even more enraged.*
- *Imagine how David might of felt when Doeg, a foreign onlooker spilled the beans to Saul. Well, David wrote of this exact situation in Psalms 52...*
  - 'Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day. Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, you

worker of deceit. You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right. *Selah* You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.' Psalms 52:1-4

- Saul gets all the info he needs out of Doeg for now, but later tonight you'll see that Doeg will participate again in a gruesome way...

#### **Truth #2: *Intentional Killing.* (vv. 11-19)**

- Now that Saul has the location where David was and the name of the person who helped David and gave him aide, he's on a mission to make this person pay.
  - *With someone like Saul, who certainly has an anger problem, once he has a target that he can launch his anger on, he will do so.*
    - That's going to happen here and it's not going to be pretty.
- *The Confrontation.* (vv. 11-13)
  - 'Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. **12** And Saul said, "Hear now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." **13** And Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"



- *Saul didn't just summon Ahimelech, but all of the priests who served at Nob.*
  - It would have been a two mile journey for the priests to travel from Nob to Gibeah where Saul was.
- *Previously in Saul's corrupt mind, he thought that it was only his son and son-in-law who were 'against him' (though they really weren't).*
  - Now he learned that David has a small army and that the priests at Nob aided him, so in his mind, they are against him too.
- *According to 1st Chronicles 24:6, Ahimelech and his priestly family were Ithamarites and may have thought the nature of their visit with the king was to care for the Ark of the Covenant once again.*
  - Saul held a trial of sorts in which he was the main prosecutor.
  - He wants to know why Ahimelech gave David bread to eat and Goliath's sword...
- *The Call Out. (vv. 14-15)*
  - 'Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over [c] your bodyguard, and honored in your house? **15** Is today the first time that I have inquired of

God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little."

- *Most times in Scriptural examples as well as the hierarchy of the ancient world, we see that men in this situation before the king would often bow down and plead for forgiveness.*
  - Not Ahimelech. He calls Saul out, and defends David.
  - *I am personally convinced that we need more Ahimelech's in this world.*
    - Men who will stand up for what's right and aren't afraid to call out what is wrong.
- There are five aspects of Ahimelech's response to Saul:
  - #1: In verse 14 Ahimelech makes it clear that David is Saul's servant.
    - *'your servants'*
  - #2: None of your servants are as loyal and faithful as David. Yet you're trying to kill him?
    - *'faithful'*
  - #3: He's your son-in-law. He is your family member.
    - *'The king's son-in-law'*
  - #4: Military commander over your personal detail. He's a gifted military



leader. He can help you! Be an asset to you!

- **'captain over your bodyguard'**

- #5: He is respected in your own home (certainly in the land).

- **'honored in your house?'**

- ***Ahimelech describes 5 ways in which Saul should not be so angry with David because of all that David does and WHO he is.***
  - ***Ahimelech tries to reason with someone who does not think logically.***
    - Some people, like Saul, who are Narcissists can not be reasoned with. No matter how hard you try.
- ***Ahimelech also admits to praying for David, but I don't think it was the way that Doeg tried to say that it was.***
  - ***I think Ahimelech is talking about routinely praying for David as he was a leader in Saul's 'cabinet' so to speak.***
- Ahimelech does call himself Saul's servant 'your servant' there in verse 15.
  - He admits that he is not apart of any plot against him saying 'your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.'
  - ***This is a courageous response from Ahimelech. One of bravery***

***and courage. But it won't be enough for a mad man.***

- ***The Coward's Way Out. (vv. 16-19)***

- 'And the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." 17 And the king said to the guard who stood about him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the LORD. 18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn and strike the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. 19 And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.'
- ***Instead of reasoning with Ahimelech, taking what he said to heart and trying to understand it, Saul takes the cowards way out.***
  - ***He kills them. All of them.***
    - A weak man will look for the easy way out instead of having the hard conversations, which includes swallowing his pride.

- ***The crime that Saul believes the priests have committed is that they knew David was fleeing and they didn't tell Saul about it.***
  - Saul orders his closest soldiers (proximity wise, standing next to him) to execute the priests.
  - These men according to verse 14 were under David's leadership just days before.
- Back in ***1st Samuel 21:5***, David did make it clear that these men were careful to observe cleanliness regulations, which indicates they were close to the Lord.
  - 'And David answered the priest, "Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?"' 1st Samuel 21:5
- ***These soldiers wouldn't lay a hand on these priests despite what Saul was telling them to do.***
  - ***Another reason they didn't lay hands on the priests when Saul commanded them to do so was because this would have been an unjust death.***

- The priests were accused of having conspired against Saul, but that was not true and didn't happen.
- So, the priest had no reason today, Saul just couldn't get ahold of himself and his personal pride was controlling him.
  - ***I think this is a powerful OT reminder that the Israelites obeyed God over men.***
    - Which was hard to do in ancient cultures.
- ***Acts 5:29*** comes to mind in this situation:
  - 'But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.'
- In verse 18, Saul turns to the dependable Doeg to commit this awful crime.
  - Doeg was a non-Israelite and had no problem committing this egregious act.
- ***Verse 18 is clear that 85 priests were killed that day.***
- ***In verse 19, it gets even worse:***
  - 'And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.'
  - ***Doeg went on a mass murder spree. Not just the 85 priests, but he made the 2***

***mile trek to kill everyone and everything at Nob.***

- This kind of mass execution was authorized in the Torah ONLY for use against non-yahwistic peoples living in Canaan (Deuteronomy 20:17-18).
  - Instead, Saul ordered for the people (and their families) who were to be teaching Israel the law of God to be killed.
- ***This is the second time in Samuel where Aaronic/Ithamartie priests were killed by foreigners as the result of Israelite sin.***
  - In 1st Samuel 4:10-11 the priests are killed because of their own wickedness, in our text tonight they are killed because of the wickedness of the King.

**Truth #3: *Immediate Notification. (vv. 20-23)***

- Saul didn't know about it, but a Survivor did sneak out of this horrific nightmare.
- ***A Survivor. (v. 20)***
  - 'But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David.'
  - ***By God's providence, someone survived, Abiathar, who would end up being David's personal priest for the rest of his life.***
    - Isn't it amazing how God works?
- ***A Sad truth. (vv. 21-23)***

- 'And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. **22** And David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house. **23** Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping."
- ***David hears the awful news.***
- In verse 22, David acknowledges that he was significantly responsible for the death of all those at Nob.
  - ***Not because anything that he had done, but for what he did not do.***
  - ***David didn't kill Doeg that night with Goliath's sword when he had the chance and had a suspicion that he would go and tell Saul.***