

## *Saul, the King who did not want to lead a nation*

Sometimes you do it all right. You send out the invitations. You even get the right time on them. The food is ready, and the people arrive except the one, the one you were really waiting to see. And so, you postpone a little bit and then you postpone a little bit more. By the time your VIP arrives the food is cold, the coffee is stale, and your other guests feel, well, unimportant to say the least.

Sometimes you do it all wrong. If you are like me the food is burnt before you've even sent out the invitations. Or like the last time I had Karen and Tammy-Jo over: it was the day all the fluff came off the trees, and there was a beautiful wind and I opened all the windows, including the one that didn't have a screen! By the time Karen and Tammy-Jo got to my newly dusted apartment there was fluff everywhere! I thought to myself I have done it all wrong and this day is just going to go down and down and down ....and then we had a wonderful time. It was the weirdest thing: nothing had gone right and yet somehow it was okay. Life is like this, we can try our very, very best or we can not try at all and we never know how it is going to turn out.

I have always felt sad for Saul. Saul was a good boy who did what his parents told him, and he learned the family trade. And then one day someone came up to him and said, "I am going to give you a new job. It is a job no one has ever had before. There is no job description. There is no budget and the enemy are coming so you better get the army ready." Oddly enough Saul said, "Okay." That's not what I would have said.

Saul goes about doing a job with absolutely no job description, no budget, and as I told you a little bit about last week, with Samuel as a supposed mentor (he called Saul into this weird 'King' profession, but then doesn't show up.)

Now Saul could have done a few things in today's story. He could have waited. He knew that a blessing had to be done properly before a battle and that Samuel was the proper person to do it. He could have waited.

He also could have said, "Wait a moment, Samuel does not seem to be coming. So, I am going to do what I am called to do which is be a King and we are going to get ready for battle and whenever Samuel gets here - then the religious ritual will also be done." Saul could have done his job, but not Samuel's job.

Instead Saul tries to be everyone to everyone. He thinks, "well I can get the ritual done and then the army ready." Well, that would be being the king, and the priest and he even confesses to Samuel: (when Samuel finally gets there and says "what have you done") *I forced* myself to do the ritual. Saul went against the grain, against his instinct and intuition which had taught him enough how to lead an army.

But the people around him were grumbling. They were starting to wander and wonder if this Saul fellow even knew what he was doing. And instead of saying, "yes I do, but but I don't know how to be a priest so I am going to leave that to Samuel. I will also let Samuel be responsible for the fact that he is late." - Saul went and tried to do too much. Now it's Saul's fault that he didn't wait, it's Saul's fault that Samuel was late, the ritual was done wrong and no one is following anyone.

What would it have meant if Saul had said, "I am not called to be your priest, and so your priestly ritual will need to wait, but until then I am going to do what I am made to do, which is to be your leader, politically and militarily and we will get ourselves ready. That way, no matter what Samuel decides to do (and when) we can live in faith and do what God has called us to do.

Hmm. Have you ever had that experience? Where you have seen something that needed doing, you've taken a breath, realized it's either not your job or not your skill AND THEN gone and done it anyway, because it needed doing.

We often go against our own grains. The grains that God put into us and made us into. We do it because as Karen said earlier, we are sometimes not looking where

we are going because we are looking for the stars. Our chin is up, and we become willing to do whatever other people forgot to do. It rubs the wrong way and feels weird and most usually we get told we did it wrong anyway. Someone comes in and says, ‘Leigh that is the weakest coffee I have ever tasted.’, or ‘Karen, really...another question?’ (Or worse, what if Leigh started asking the questions.)

Often, we are on the outside of the story. We walk in and we see someone trying to do something that they were not called to do. And often our first reaction is to do what Samuel did. We say, “**What?** Why didn’t you wait for me? I am the best coffee maker in the whole world.” It’s often what we do.

And so, I invited us, oddly enough, not to be like Saul *and* not to be like Samuel. I know you didn’t come here today to hear about how you should not do what the Biblical character says you should do! But can we need to trust God to not do those things that are not ours. And, when arriving on a scene and seeing that someone really tried their hardest to do something (that they probably shouldn’t have done) and instead of blaming them we should say, ‘Wow, thank you. Can I help you next time?’

The weirdest thing in life I believe is how *easy* it can be to do what we are called to do. The first time I was told I had found my calling, I replied, “but that was easy.” I hadn’t noticed that for some people it would have been hard. If it’s feeling hard that might mean you need to ask for help, either because you need to learn a new skill because this is your future call **or** because you are not meant to do that.

It’s not all your responsibility. And only by stepping back will the right person be able to step in. In all of this, we are asked to trust God, who so often is invisible, but in my experience, every time I have stepped back and every time I have stepped forward: God is there. When you go against the grain and become resentful: God will be there asking you to try it a little differently tomorrow. And when you follow your call and it feels too easy: God will be there giggling in your ear saying, “Ah, you were meant to be here.” May we listen to God and work together. Amen.