

"NO RUNNING ALLOWED!"  
by Rom A. Pegram (4/16/17 – EASTER)

David went to the town of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw him. "Why are you alone?" he asked. "Why is no one with you?" <sup>2</sup> "The king has sent me on a private matter," David said. "He told me not to tell anyone why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later." <sup>3</sup> Now, what is there to eat? Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you have." <sup>4</sup> "We don't have any regular bread," the priest replied. "But there is the holy bread, which you can have if your young men have not slept with any women recently." <sup>5</sup> "Don't worry," David replied. "I never allow my men to be with women when they are on a campaign. And since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more on this one!" <sup>6</sup> Since there was no other food available, the priest gave him the holy bread—the Bread of the Presence that was placed before the LORD in the Tabernacle. It had just been replaced that day with fresh bread. <sup>7</sup> Now Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, was there that day, having been detained before the LORD.

<sup>8</sup> David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword? The king's business was so urgent that I didn't even have time to grab a weapon!" <sup>9</sup> "I only have the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah," the priest replied. "It is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. Take that if you want it, for there is nothing else here." "There is nothing like it!" David replied. "Give it to me!"

<sup>10</sup> So David escaped from Saul and went to King Achish of Gath. <sup>11</sup> But the officers of Achish were unhappy about his being there. "Isn't this David, the king of the land?" they asked. "Isn't he the one the people honor with dances, singing, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?" <sup>12</sup> David heard these comments and was very afraid of what King Achish of Gath might do to him. <sup>13</sup> So he pretended to be insane, scratching on doors and drooling down his beard. <sup>14</sup> Finally, King Achish said to his men, "Must you bring me a madman?" <sup>15</sup> We already have enough of them around here! Why should I let someone like this be my guest?" – 1 Samuel 21:1-15 (NLT)

Yes, I know. That's not the Easter story—the story of resurrection! But this, folks, is a story Jesus would have known well. It's a part of the scriptures he would have studied and known as a Jewish man growing up in Israel. And while scripture is full of stories about people facing Plan Bs, none are quite as exciting to me as the story of David in the Old Testament. It's a story that would have resonated with Jesus, who went to the cross (representing the disciple's shattered dreams), and who was resurrected for us on this very morning, many, many years ago. So, let me set up our story for today: It happens in the midst of David's very eventful life, so let me step back for a moment and tell you how David got to this place called Nob and his conversation with the priest there—where he took the consecrated bread for he and his men, as well as Goliath's sword for his own protection... Here's the summary:

- 1 Samuel 15 – *the story of a king of Israel named Saul*. Saul rejects the word of God, does some things God's not happy with, and loses God's blessing. The

prophet Samuel now tells Saul one of his neighbors will become king—a much better king than he was...

- 1 Samuel 16 – *Samuel sets out to find this new king*. He knew he'd find him in Jesse's home in Bethlehem. So Samuel goes there, looks over all Jesse's sons, and determines its David who's supposed to be the next king. The youngest son was traditionally the least privileged, but not always the case with God...
- 1 Samuel 17 – the story of David & Goliath. The young shepherd boy goes to the battle front (Israelites vs. Philistines) to take food to his brothers. Long story short, young David takes on Goliath ... and kills him with a well-placed stone from his sling. The tides are now turning in David's life. King Saul gives him a special rank in the army and wants him to marry his daughter. Maybe Samuel was right; David really will become king one day...

So, a dream begins to turn into reality. David's hope is growing; everything seems to be falling into place. But *then things start to change* ... kind of like when Jesus was arrested in the garden. *That wasn't supposed to happen!* Things were going sideways...

Well, David's not sure what the deal is, but something about King Saul was different—little things at first—a roll of the eyes, an irritated glance. Little hints the king wasn't entirely happy with David. Then one day *there's a Jerry Springer kind of a moment*. Saul throws a spear at David; David's fears are confirmed. Even if you're relationally challenged, getting a spear thrown at you is a pretty good hint something is wrong. And something is *very wrong*. David, you see, has been getting way too popular ... and Saul has grown jealous and bitter in the process. Jonathan, Saul's son, came to David his friend and basically said: "Dude, my dad wants to kill you. He's going to do whatever it takes to get rid of you. You have to get out of here!"

It's at this point David stops trusting God ... and begins to take things into his own hands ... and *he runs*. Did you see the shift in circumstances here? (Plan B apparently = David in control.) 'Ever been there? How have you responded to circumstantial shifts (Plan Bs) in your life? Personally ... I WISH LIFE WAS MORE LIKE *THIS*...

My wife, Jane, loves to watch mysteries with a lot of suspense and action. Me? Not so much ... because my life seems to be full of that already. But, I go watch those movies with Jane and the rest of our family, especially at Christmas. One Christmas, we all went to see a new Sherlock Holmes movie. It's one of those movies that, at times, you're right on the edge of your seat ... just waiting to see what's going to happen next. I have to say this about this type of movie: *At least they give you fair warning that something sinister is about to happen*. The camera angle shifts, the music grows louder, a shadow looms. Something tells you, 'Watch out!'

BUT ... real life isn't like that, is it? Our dreams seem to shatter when we least expect it. There's no warning. You can't explain it. It's just ... *boom!* Suddenly, life turns a corner. You move from Plan A ... to Plan B ... in an instant!

That's what King David found out in today's Bible story. As people of God, *we so often assume that what we want for our lives—and more importantly how we want it—is what God wants for us as well.* But, that's not always the case is it?

Folks, the truth is ... if we were to ask Jesus' disciples about that first Holy Week, I've got a feeling they learned the same lesson. Jesus on the cross? There's no way God's Messiah would end up on a cross! He was going to be their savior; he was going to put those stinkin' Romans in their place—at least according to *their* plan. But as you're already aware, they ended up moving from (their) Plan A ... to a Plan B (perhaps God's Plan A from the beginning)...

And, all too often it's the same with us. Plan A—our perfect plan for our lives—comes to an abrupt stop. And the realization of Plan B hits us hard:

- A horrible diagnosis...
- An illness or a death...
- A loss of a job ... and/or a tough financial situation...
- Or a 'happy' relationship that we discover ... isn't really all that 'happy' at all...

Folks, sooner or later, everyone experiences these shifts in life—even the disciples. But, how are *we* going to *react*? That's the question. Well, first, we need to know that...

**EVERYONE NEEDS HEALING!** Why? Because Plan Bs happen to everyone! Again, what we assumed would happen in our lives—what we assumed God *wanted* for us—is not necessarily what's happened ... and we get hurt ... and we need healing. Folks, nobody grew up thinking...

- I'm going to get cancer at 41 ... or fired at 53...
- I'm going to be divorced twice by 45 ... or alone and depressed at age 35...

*No one ever thought...*

- They'd be physically unable to have children...
- They'd get stuck in a dead-end job they absolutely hate... OR...
- The word used to describe their marriage would be 'mediocre'...

...but, it happens ... and then we're frustrated, hurt, and angry. *If this doesn't sound familiar to you, you're not very old...* Because life is a series of moving from Plan As ... to Plan Bs. But, the question remains: *How will we react?* How will we handle the Plan B situations that come our way?

Woody Allen once said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans!" That's what the disciples found out that first Holy Week; and that's what David was finding out. He was on his way to be king! Things were really looking up. His hope had been built ... *but then...* (*Don't you love those two words that change everything ... including our lives?*) David's life seemed to come crashing down around him! How was he going to handle this situation? One thing I know is this:

**RUNNING IS NOT THE ANSWER ... IN PLAN B SITUATIONS!** When we choose to run ... it always leads to trouble! If you haven't figured it out by now, there are two kinds of Plan Bs:

- There's *the kind that just happen* in life, because we live in an imperfect world (i.e. God gives us free will; God cannot be the Puppet Master that makes everything O.K. in every situation)...
- Then, there's *the kind that's our fault*—the kind of Plan B situation we encounter because of bad decisions we've made—like running, when we should be turning to God...

In a matter of minutes, David feels his dream of becoming king is slipping away. Fearing for his life, he does what so many of us have done when we felt our dreams slipping away. He runs. Before Saul knows it, he's gone!

I think of Jesus ... and the fact he knew what was going to happen to him on Good Friday. Why in the world didn't he run? I'm thinking many of us would have ... if we knew a week like that were before us. But he didn't... Instead *Jesus ran toward God!*

The Spirit of God began to work in David's life the moment he was anointed by Samuel. Up to this point, he was confident God was with him; he believed God would make him king. *But now, when things seemed to be shifting, David lost faith that God would come through ... and takes matters into his own hands—a huge mistake!*

And it's the same mistake so many of us have made throughout our lives. *David assumes he understands God and his ways; he thinks he knows what God should be doing.* And when God doesn't handle things the way David expects, David just gives up. ***Folks, we get ourselves into all kinds of trouble when we assume God must think and feel the way we do!*** Desperation takes over. However, please know this about desperate situations: When desperation gets the better of you & you feel like running, *know that God may just be right around the corner!*

*Did you know that lying is just another form of running?* That's what David did: He lied to Ahimelech, the priest!

- He lies about what he's doing in Nob...
- He lies about being on the run...
- He lies about the state of his spiritual life...

All that lying ... *and then David tells another lie.* And it's in the midst of this new lie that *God provides a moment David totally misses*, because he's too busy lying/running...

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Do you see what's happening here? *Though David's given up on God, God has not given up on David! He places a reminder of his faithfulness right before David's eyes, but David missed it...*

Goliath's sword should have been a wake-up call for David! It was Goliath's—the giant David slain, with God's help, when it looked impossible to everyone else! He should have thought, at this point: *What am I doing? Why am I running? Why am I lying and deceiving and taking matters into my own hands ... instead of trusting God?* But, he didn't. He grabbed the sword and he kept on running!

Running, by this time, had become an addiction for David. It's what David did ... so he didn't have to face what was really going on—his Plan B situation. And because of that, the pain in David's life continued with *no healing*. Instead of trusting God for his life at this point, *David took control—his way of running* away from the Plan B situation ... and that's a big part of the problem (which we'll continue talking about next week)...

When we're in the midst of our Plan Bs, we sometimes feel at our lowest—spiritually, emotionally, and physically. But, know this: *God does his best work in our lives when we finally become broken bread and poured out wine!* That's what Jesus did for us. He became broken on the cross, but trusted God for his life's direction. What Jesus found out, even when he felt abandoned on the cross, was that God was still there—right around the corner. And God came through, reminding Jesus of his faithfulness. That's what Easter morning is really all about! It's about a new life ... that came through a Plan B. It's about God's faithfulness—following through on a promise of resurrection! When the rest of the world was looking at Jesus saying, "He's a goner," God was saying, "Oh, yeah ... just you wait!" and today we celebrate that empty tomb!

Folks, if you're in the middle of a Plan B situation in your life (or know someone who is), whatever you do, know this: God hasn't given up on you either! When the world is saying, "Oh, look, they're not going to make it," God is there saying, "Oh, yeah ... you just wait!" Jesus knew the story of David, but chose a better way. And we can too. Are we going to run? Or are we going to stick with the God of the resurrection? Where do you find God, folks? In the middle of your Plan Bs; that's where! And we're not going to stop here; we'll continue this talk more next week...