

Sunday 1 May 2016

Otumoetai Baptist Church

Prayer and Self Denial

Week Two: "To Shine"- Jonathan and David

(BLACK)

Welcome to the second week of Prayer and Self Denial. You might be wondering what Prayer and Self Denial is all about? Well, quite simply it has two purposes:

First, it's about celebrating God's heart for mission. It's about contemplating our incredible God who seeks out and saves the lost. It's a time to consider the roles each one of us can play to bring Good News to the world, and a time to pray intentionally for those who are serving, and for those whom we serve.

Second, it's about raising support for the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society. They need our prayers and our giving so that they can continue their work of offering hope, freedom and aid to individuals, families and communities. So, on behalf of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, thank you for your prayers and financial gifts towards these amazing and inspiring endeavours.

Earlier in the service we saw the video of Pip who shone God's love into Monika's life as a direct result of her own life being blessed by her youth leaders Stephen and Kristine, and many other people too.

(SLIDE 1)

God's call to all of us is "to shine". Psalm 34:5 is on the back of your handout of the paua shell and it reads: "Keep your eyes on the Lord! You will shine like the sun."

The paua shell is interesting, because it possesses a very special quality; it is iridescent or shimmery. Sunlight on a paua causes the shell to shine with bright, changing colours. Basically it's in the nature of a paua shell to "shine" when it's turned towards the sun. It just can't help itself! Keep that image in your mind.

Just as paua can shine from the sun, today we're looking at how can we shine God's love and light into other people's lives. And hear this – You don't have to have everything all together and be the "perfect" Christian to shine into someone's life.

You might have heard of a man by the name of Steve Apirana.

(SLIDE 2)

Steve is a New Zealander, and well-known Christian musician. Before becoming a Christian, Steve spent time in prison. He was homeless for a while, living on the streets of Christchurch.

But Steve always loved music, and he and some mates were given permission by a local church to use their facilities for band practice. It was through these practices that Steve met Andrew Thompson.

This is what Steve says about him:

“Andrew Thompson wasn’t exactly what I would have called the best Christian I had ever seen up to that point. He smoked cigarettes, he often complained about things, he showed signs of laziness and he was quite scruffy. I was guilty of these things but I wasn’t calling myself a Christian, was I?”

Andrew seemed to be too human to be a Christian.

When I confronted him on this, he simply said ‘Steve, I know I have many faults and I don’t try to hide them but I have a relationship with Jesus Christ that is more important to me than anything else in the world. God is still dealing with my faults and in the meantime I love Him very much and have chosen to serve Him for the rest of my life.’

Steve continues, “Then he started sharing with me from the Scriptures and from his experience, about the love of God and suddenly I was aware that I didn’t have to clean up my act or give up this or that before I came to God. For the first time in my life,

God didn’t seem that far off..”

Surely, this is what it means to “Keep your eyes on the Lord. You will shine like the sun!” Here we have Andrew: a smoker, a complainer, scruffy, and a little lazy. In other words, he wasn’t “perfect.” None of us are!

But here’s the point:

(SLIDE 3)

He was keeping his eyes on the Lord. His confession was: “I have a relationship with Jesus Christ that is more important to me than anything else in the world.”

Andrew lived this out and God was able to use him to “shine” His love into Steve’s life.

We’re going to look at another person today who God also used to shine His love.

So to set the scene briefly, we have two people:

David: A Well-known person from the story of ‘David vs Goliath;’ a shepherd boy who would one day become King of Israel.

And we have:

(SLIDE 4)

Jonathan: A Prince of Israel, a brave and mighty soldier; the son of the Saul, who David would replace as King.

Chances are like me, you have not heard many sermons about Jonathan, but plenty about David. Well, today we're going to flip that on its head and we're going to focus on Jonathan and what we can learn about friendship, and "shining" God's love into the life of another by looking at his friendship with David.

1) JONATHAN GENUINELY CARED FOR DAVID

(SLIDE 5)

David and Jonathan form their friendship immediately after David has killed Goliath.

1 Samuel 18:1-4 says this:

(SLIDE 6)

By the time David had finished reporting to Saul (about Goliath), Jonathan was deeply impressed with David—an immediate bond was forged between them. He became totally committed to David. From that point on he would be David's number-one advocate and friend. Saul received David into his own household that day, no more to return to the home of his father. Jonathan, out of his deep love for David, made a covenant with him. He formalized it with solemn gifts: his own royal robe and weapons—armour, sword, bow, and belt.

It's interesting that after someone does something incredible and amazing, people naturally want to get in the "in crowd" with

them.

Think about our celebrity culture and idol worship of the rich and famous, and it's natural to see here that people would want to get close to David. He had just slain a giant and the enemies of Israel had fled in terror. David had gone from zero to hero! He was an overnight sensation.

If ancient Israel was anything like our own celebrity-obsessed society, then people would have been flocking to David, trying to get "in" with the "it" kid!

But that's not the impression we get of Jonathan. He wasn't some star-struck fan-boy looking for a hand out; Jonathan was a respected soldier in his own right, and, what's more, he was the Prince of Israel.

So why did Jonathan respond like this to David?

Well, perhaps Jonathan admired David's courage and bravery in fighting Goliath. Perhaps he had heard David's challenge to Goliath—"I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel"—and was impressed with David's devotion to God. We don't know exactly what it was that drew Jonathan and David together, but what we do know is that "Jonathan thought as much of David as he did of himself."

He genuinely cared for David. This was a genuine friendship. No strings attached. No hidden motives or secret agendas.

In fact, when Jonathan gave David his royal robe and military weapons, he was pledging his allegiance to him. Jonathan recognized that David would one day be king of Israel and rather than being jealous, Jonathan submitted to God's will and sacrificed his own right to the throne.

That sure is something! The marking of a true friend. And it begs the following questions:

(SLIDE 7)

What kinds of friendships do we have?

What kind of friends do we want to be?

Do we genuinely care for our friends and put ourselves out in order to shine God's love into their lives?

Back when I was in my University days in Waikato I wasn't a fully committed Christian. I had lots of questions about the meaning of life and the existence of God. I was searching.

Well someone befriended me. A guy by the name of Scott Kelso. Scott lives in Auckland now with his wife, two sons and a daughter. But back in our uni days we were both single and studying to be film-makers.

Scott and I would share rides from Tauranga to Hamilton and we'd often talk about God, religion and life.

Scott was never pushy, but he didn't compromise on what he believed either. See, Scott was a fully committed Christian and you could tell by the way he acted, by the way he spoke, and by the way he cared for you. Like Jonathan, he genuinely cared for others. For me.

Through Scott, God shone his love into my life. And my friendship with Scott was a huge motivating factor in me becoming a fully committed Christian. In Scott, I saw someone who was genuine. Someone who believed wholeheartedly in Jesus. Someone who lived out their faith and shone the light of God into other's lives.

Jonathan shone into David's life. So firstly we see that Jonathan genuinely cared for him, and secondly we see that:

(SLIDE 8)

2) JONATHAN WAS A FRIEND IN BOTH GOOD TIMES AND BAD TIMES

David's popularity and his continued military success made him a threat to King Saul, Israel's ruler. King Saul feared losing his throne to David, and so determined to have David killed.

David is forced to flee for his life; Israel's "saviour" is now a wanted man.

Let's pick up the story in 1 Samuel 23:14-15:

(SLIDE 9)

David continued to live in desert hideouts and the backcountry wilderness hills of Ziph. Saul was out looking for him day after day, but God never turned David over to him. David kept out of the way in the wilderness of Ziph, secluded at Horesh, since it was plain that Saul was determined to hunt him down.

David is at a low point in his life here. If you don't believe me let's check out Psalm 142, which gives us some insight into how he is feeling. Hiding in a cave, his world turned upside down, on the run, David pours out his heart to God:

(SLIDE 10)

I call to the Lord for help;

I plead with him.

I bring him all my complaints;

I tell him all my troubles.

When I am ready to give up,

he knows what I should do.

In the path where I walk,

my enemies have hidden a trap for me.

When I look beside me,

*I see that there is no one to help me,
no one to protect me. No one cares for me*

Maybe there have been times when you've felt like David.

Despite being surrounded by people—we read before this that David was accompanied by some 400 men—David feels abandoned. He feels that no one really cares. Regardless of the many acquaintances, followers, and devotees around him, what David really needs is a genuine friend.

It's at this point that Jonathan proves that he is a friend in both good times and bad.

Going back to 1 Samuel 23, we pick up the story again in verse 16:

(SLIDE 11)

Jonathan, Saul's son, visited David at Horesh and encouraged him in God.

While David is still in hiding, Jonathan seeks his friend out. Jonathan goes to him and, with God's help, encourages David.

Consider the significance of what Jonathan does for his friend:

It's Jonathan's father who wants David dead. Jonathan is defying his own father—the King of Israel—to help his friend.

In the chapter before we read that Saul executed 85 priests because they had aided David. There were terrible consequences for those who were seen to be friends with David. Despite the risk, Jonathan still went to encourage his friend.

David had hundreds of men on his side who were enemies of Saul. As Saul's son, Jonathan might have had enemies within David's ranks. Jonathan was walking into a volatile situation by seeking David out.

So we see here that it is in the dark times that the light of friendship shines brightest.

How do you think David reacted when, in the midst of his despair, his friend Jonathan arrives to encourage him? Given how much Jonathan was risking to come and see him, how comforted do you think David was by the commitment of his friend?

That's the mark of a true friend. One who is there for you in the good times and in the bad times. Times when life seems overwhelming and we are hiding in our caves.

It's during times like this that we really need a Jonathan in our

lives and we need to be a Jonathan to others.

I haven't talked about this here before, but in my past I have battled with depression. Depressed to the point that I couldn't get out of bed, couldn't walk to the letter box, and couldn't even manage a simple conversation.

I was in my mid-twenties and life was pretty bleak at this point.

Like David, I could have and did cry out to God "Why is this happening? I come to you for help. *When I look beside me, I see that there is no one to help me, no one to protect me. No one cares for me.*

But even in my lowest of lows, God knew what He was doing and He had a plan to take care of me.

See, there was someone who was there for me in the bad times. Someone who gave of themselves for me even though they didn't really know me at the time. Someone who took me out of the darkness of my circumstances and shone God's light in the form of her friendship and love for me.

Someone who cared for me. A true friend. And this someone is now my wife. The light of my life. Someone who was there for

me in the dark times, the bad times.

Jonathan put himself out for David. He was there when David needed a true friend.

Let's pause here and ask a few questions:

(SLIDE 12)

Are we willing to step out of our comfort zone, to put ourselves out, for the sake of our friends?

Will we prove ourselves to be true friends—brothers and sisters born for a time of adversity—when those around us really need us?

Do we place ourselves in people's lives in such a way that God can work through us?

Through Jonathan's friendship with David we see that he genuinely cared for David; we see that he was there in both good times and bad times; and finally we see that:

(SLIDE 13)

3) JONATHAN WANTED GOD'S BEST FOR HIS FRIEND

Continuing the story in 1 Samuel 23, verse 17 we read:

(SLIDE 14)

He (Jonathan) said, "Don't despair. My father, Saul, can't lay a hand on you. You will be Israel's king and I'll be right at your side

to help. And my father knows it." Then the two of them made a covenant before God.

What an incredible statement for Jonathan to make!

It was Jonathan's birth right to be the next King of Israel. He was a Prince; the next in-line to the throne. Yet, in this statement, Jonathan is saying something remarkable; 'I don't want what's best for me—I want God's best for you!'

(SLIDE 15)

This is what "mission" is. It's wanting God's best for others.

When David was still a shepherd boy, unimportant and insignificant, God chose him to be the next King of Israel. He had a call on his life; a divine purpose to fulfil.

Jonathan could have resisted this. He could have made life as difficult as possible for David, or offered David absolutely no help or support. Jonathan could have chosen to fight to be King.

But, instead, Jonathan invested himself in his friend's life. He encouraged David and became his protector.

In John 15:13 Jesus says that there is no greater love than to lay down our lives for our friends. The Message translation puts it this way:

(SLIDE 16)

This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends.

In effect, this is what Jonathan does for David. He lays down his claim to Israel's throne—he gives up a life as a King—so that his friend can have God's best.

And as incredible and selfless as this act of true friendship is, and it truly is, the ultimate act of true friendship came from Jesus himself.

Jesus gave of himself completely when he came to this world. He left the security of heaven for the perils of earth.

(SLIDE 17)

The Bible says this: He (Jesus) always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death — his death on the cross. (Philippians 2:6-8)

And he did it for all of us. So that we could be made right with our heavenly Father. When He died the curtain of God's temple

was ripped in two from top to bottom, symbolising that we as believers could now enjoy an open and free relationship with God, because of the price that Jesus paid for us.

As those administering communion today come forward, let's pause and think of Jesus.

Jesus, like Jonathan, is a true friend who genuinely cares for us; who is there for us in good times and in bad times; and who always wants the best for us.

We see this in his life. And we see this in his death.

So as we celebrate Jesus this morning with communion, let's remember what He has done for us and how he is our true friend who has made us right before our heavenly Father.

COMMUNION

(Sermon carries over page)

CONCLUSION

Many of our heroes in the Bible performed great and awesome miracles: Moses parted the Red Sea; Daniel survived a night in a pit of hungry lions; Joshua commanded the sun to stand still; and ultimately Jesus conquered sin and death.

As far as we know, Jonathan didn't do anything that would be considered miraculous or supernatural. Yet, what he did in the ordinary, simply by being a true friend, was hugely significant. Jonathan helped shape the life of one of Israel's greatest Kings, and blessed the man who would be a forefather of Jesus.

SO in conclusion:

(SLIDE 18)

Keep your eyes on the Lord! Jonathan kept his eyes on the Lord. He lived a life devoted to God. Jonathan sought God's best—God's will to be done—above everything else, and this shaped how he conducted himself, and how he cared for his friend.

(SLIDE 19)

Keep your eyes on Jesus and you will shine like the sun.

Jonathan shone like the sun into David's life. He encouraged David, he strengthened David, and he reassured David of God's purposes when David's world had been turned upside down. He was a true friend, one who genuinely cared for David, one who

was there in both good times and bad times, and one who wanted God's best for David, even at his own expense.

Let's be this type of friend!

**So let's encourage each other to keep our "eyes on the Lord!"
And let's consider how we can "shine like the sun" into the lives of others.**

Let's pray before having our final song, 'Mighty To Save'.

"SHINE YOUR LIGHT AND LET THE WHOLE WORLD SEE" (lyric)

Amen.