HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

The King Who Will Not Grasp

October 11, 2026 · Series: After God's Own Heart · Luke Hughes-Bunger

Main Passage: 1 Samuel 24:1-22 (ESV)

Big Idea: Faith waits for God's promise in God's way and leaves vengeance in God's hands.

Introduction - When the Slipper Fits

In Disney's 2015 Cinderella, Ella finally leaves the home where her stepfamily mistreats her. The prince has found her, and the slipper fits. The woman who controls her life can no longer keep her there. At that moment, Ella tells her stepmother that she forgives her.

The scene raises a familiar question. When someone who hurts us loses their power over us, what will we do with our freedom? We may welcome justice and still discover a desire to make the other person suffer for our satisfaction. Those desires need to be examined honestly.

Wrongdoing can deserve serious consequences. Refusing revenge does not mean that every penalty is wrong. The question is whether we can seek what is right without making another person's pain our goal. Can we enjoy freedom without getting even?

David faces that question in a dangerous setting. Saul has repeatedly tried to kill him. Jonathan has encouraged David to trust God's purpose for his future. Now Saul enters the very cave where David and his men are hiding. The man who threatens David is suddenly vulnerable.

David has trusted God while unable to stop Saul. Now he must decide what trust looks like when Saul is within his reach. His response points us towards Jesus, the faithful King who obeys His Father and saves His enemies.

Point 1 - The Opportunity in the Cave

1 Samuel 24:1-7

Saul brings three thousand chosen men to hunt David. During the search, he enters a cave to relieve himself. He does not know that David and his men are farther inside. David's companions immediately see an opportunity to end the danger.

They interpret the event as the fulfilment of God's word. To them, Saul's vulnerability appears to authorize action. Their advice offers relief for everyone hiding with David, and it sounds deeply convincing.

The narrator reports their words, but Scripture has not previously recorded divine permission for David to become king by killing Saul. Their interpretation must be tested. An event may belong to God's providence, His rule over circumstances, while our understanding of what to do remains mistaken.

Last week's passage shows God preserving David through an unexpected interruption. This week's passage asks how David should respond to another unexpected event. Both stories belong under God's authority. We cannot use a favourable circumstance to set aside His word.

David quietly cuts a corner from Saul's robe. Afterwards his conscience troubles him. Saul remains the Lord's anointed, the king God appointed. David has also been anointed, but that does not give him permission to take the throne by force. He leaves Saul's removal with the Lord.

David also restrains his companions. He will not arrange for someone else to do what he knows he should refuse. Obedience includes accepting responsibility for the influence he has over others.

Listening to Conviction and Counsel

David could dismiss his action by comparing it with Saul's violence. Cutting cloth seems small beside attempted murder. Yet someone else's greater wrong does not excuse everything in our own response. A sensitive conscience helps us turn back before wrongdoing grows.

David also has to disagree with people who support him. Friendship can strengthen faith, as Jonathan's visit shows. It can also encourage a course of action that needs correction. The sermon invites us to consider how Jonathan's earlier encouragement prepares David for this moment of pressure.

When we ask for advice, we need more than agreement. We need people who can listen, seek God, and speak honestly without fear of losing our friendship. A helpful friend may affirm the harm we have suffered while questioning the message we are about to send or the story we want to repeat.

There are times for decisive action and firm boundaries. Wise counsel can help us recognize those times. It can also help us distinguish courage from anger and truthful action from retaliation. Being challenged does not necessarily mean that our friend has failed to understand us.

The same need appears when we pursue good things. Providing for our family does not justify dishonesty. Wanting someone to choose wisely does not authorize manipulation. Wanting a church to grow does not make people valuable only for what they contribute.

When obedience begins to look like an obstacle to our goal, we need to pause. We can invite a trusted Christian to examine our reasoning with us. We can ask whether our chosen means agree with God's word and whether we are willing to hear an answer we dislike.

David really does have a promise of kingship. Even that promise does not authorize this shortcut. We should be especially careful with outcomes we want but God has not promised. Our calling is to trust Him while doing what He has actually commanded.

Point 2 - An Open Hand and an Honest Appeal

1 Samuel 24:8-22

Saul leaves the cave alive. David follows and calls after him. He bows before the king, then challenges the claim that he wants to harm him. The piece of robe provides evidence: David has been close enough to kill Saul and has spared him.

David speaks plainly about the injustice. Saul is hunting his life. David's claim of innocence concerns the accusation of treason; he is not claiming that he has never sinned. He refuses to let a false charge define the encounter.

In verse 12, David asks the Lord to judge between them. He wants God to see the wrong, deliver him, and bring justice. Refusing personal vengeance does not mean that he has stopped caring about what happens.

Sometimes we fear that letting go of revenge means agreeing that the hurt does not matter. David's appeal shows another way. We bring the wrong to God because it matters. We trust that His judgment is more reliable than our desire to settle the account ourselves.

That appeal also searches our hearts. God sees where we tell the story selectively, exaggerate, or conceal our own wrongdoing. We can ask Him to defend what is true while accepting His correction of our response. His concern does not depend on our making the accusation sound worse.

Truth, Safety, and Mercy

Seeking protection, reporting harm, and pursuing proper accountability can all be faithful responses. We do not have to remain silent or within reach of someone dangerous to prove that we trust God. Stopping harm and enjoying revenge are different aims.

David's respect for the Lord's anointed does not make Saul's conduct acceptable. Nor can a modern leader use that language to claim immunity from correction. Pastors, family members, and other people with authority remain accountable for how they treat others.

As a church, we must be willing to listen to people who report harm and help them find trustworthy support. A call to forgiveness must never become a way of preserving someone's power to hurt another person. Mercy and truth belong together.

Saul weeps and admits that David has treated him better than he has treated David. He acknowledges David's future kingship and asks him not to destroy his descendants or family name. David gives his oath. His future power will not become permission to target Saul's family for revenge.

Yet the encounter does not end with David returning to the palace. Saul goes home, while David and his men return to the stronghold. Later Saul pursues him again. His tears do not establish a lasting change of heart or make immediate trust wise.

If we have harmed someone, an apology does not entitle us to renewed access. We can accept boundaries, seek accountability, and allow changed conduct to become evident over time. If we

have been harmed, mercy can coexist with wise distance.

David finishes this encounter without a crown or a guarantee of an easy week ahead. He has told the truth, spared Saul, and placed his future before God. Faithfulness may look like that before circumstances become easier.

Point 3 - The King We Can Trust

1 Samuel 25:21-35; Matthew 4:8-10; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:23-24

David's restraint is real, but it is not permanent moral mastery. In the next chapter, Nabal insults him, and David prepares to shed blood. God sends Abigail to interrupt him. David thanks the Lord for preventing him from taking vengeance himself.

We also need continuing grace. Yesterday's obedience does not remove today's temptations. Receiving correction is part of depending on God. The people who stop us from harming others may be among His most valuable gifts to us.

David therefore points beyond himself. God's people need a King whose obedience does not fail. Jesus, the Son of David, is that King. When the devil offers Him the world's kingdoms in exchange for worship, Jesus refuses. He will serve His Father alone.

Jesus remains obedient when His path leads to the cross. Philippians 2 describes His willing humility and service. He truly shares God's nature, yet He accepts the suffering through which He saves His people. He never needs the correction that David needs.

First Peter 2:23 describes Jesus entrusting Himself to the One who judges justly. He does not answer abuse with threats. At the cross, He also bears the judgment our sins deserve. His obedience gives us both an example to follow and the salvation we cannot provide for ourselves.

We may recognize our own retaliation in this passage. We may have shared a damaging story, manipulated a decision, or used someone's weakness against them. Jesus invites guilty people to seek His mercy. We can confess our sin without inventing another excuse for it.

Putting things right grows from receiving His forgiveness. We can correct a lie, stop a harmful action, and seek help to change. These actions do not purchase salvation. They express repentance and trust in the Saviour who gives Himself for sinners.

The Father raises Jesus from the dead. The risen King reigns and will judge with perfect justice. We can release vengeance because evil will not escape His notice. We can also ask for the Spirit's help before we speak or act. Christ gives His people strength for daily obedience.

Application and Conclusion

This Thanksgiving weekend, we remember that salvation is received as a gift. We cannot earn it by winning every conflict or controlling every outcome. Gratitude can begin with Christ's grace while other prayers remain unanswered.

Bring one situation before God this week: an outcome you want to force or a person you want to punish. Ask someone trustworthy to help you identify the next faithful step. That may involve a firm boundary, a truthful conversation, or an apology of your own.

Consider a good action you can take without denying the wrong. Give accurate credit, refuse to spread humiliation, or pray for genuine repentance. Our future belongs to the faithful King. His care gives us reason to obey even before we can see how the situation will end.

Discussion Guide Questions

1. What is challenging about Ella choosing forgiveness when her stepmother loses control over her?
2. Read 1 Samuel 24:1-7. Why does the opportunity seem so convincing to David's men?
3. How can we test our interpretation of an apparent opportunity by God's word?
4. What do David's troubled conscience and restraint of his men reveal about his response?
5. How does Jonathan's encouragement differ from the advice in the cave? What helps us welcome honest counsel?
6. When can a good goal tempt us to justify a wrong method? What could help us pause?
7. Read verses 8-15. How does David seek justice while refusing revenge?
8. What distinguishes seeking protection or accountability from trying to make someone suffer for our satisfaction?
9. Read verses 16-22. What does David's return to the stronghold teach us about mercy and trust?
10. Why is the account of Abigail's intervention in chapter 25 important for our understanding of David?
11. Read 1 Peter 2:23-24. How does Jesus give us both an example and the forgiveness we need?
12. What situation can you bring to God this week, and what specific faithful step could you take? Share only what is appropriate for the group.