

Travelling with Resilience

St Andrews and Dunblane Jan 2013

'We only really learn from our failures. Our successes confirm us in our habits.' Clive James

'It is the tragedy of political lives that they are lived in reverse. The moment of greatest expectation comes with the least experience.' Anon

'There is usually a direct correlation between one's need and reliance on external authority and one's lack of inner authority.' Richard Rohr

Could it have worked for Saul?

'I hope you will be kind to Saul' - a friend on hearing I was writing about him.

1. Have you a good word for Saul?

2. Context of the choice of Saul – leadership in a non-resilient age

a. Leader as the people dream

'You have grown old – set us a king to rule over us'. 1Sam 8

'Like they have' – who are 'they' in our context? Envy? Insecurity? Competition? Desire for 'Leader' emerges out of deeply conflicting interests.

b. Not a rational request – haven't you seen how their kings behave?

c. Not a theological request *'like they have got'.* No record of prayer, discernment, working party. Don't be surprised if this struggles to have a theological outcome.

Samuel warns. They insist. Yahweh agrees Samuel smoulders.

3. 'There was a man He had a son' 1Sam 9.2

'a fine and goodly young fellow, and no man of the Israelites was goodlier than he, head and shoulders taller than all the people' (1Sam 9.1-2 Alter).

Health warning - beware of good looks!

The missing donkeys - and what else has gone missing in this story? Faith, theology, common sense?

Saul's first words - *'Let us turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and worry about us' (1Sam 9.5).*

Saul the secret King. 1Sam10

Saul the public king (- if they can find him that is) 1Sam 10.20-24.

What is the message between the lines? Samuel's leadership criteria? (even for David)? Very strange and ambivalent. Has this been an attempt at 'solving' or 'managing' an issue?

Saul's kingship renewed. First military victory. 1Sam 11.14

Two moments easily missed

a. Storytelling contradictions. *'All the people shouted "Long live the King!"' (1Sam 10.24-27). But they didn't. Yahweh touches hearts vs 'worthless fellows'*

In the midst of much human hesitation the possibility of Saul the King is being affirmed here by the narrator. This is a possibility Yahweh shares.

b. *'Another heart' Samuel and Saul -1Sam 10.1-9*

'and it happened as he [Saul] turned his back to go off from Samuel, that God gave him another heart ...' (1Sam10.9Alter).

The differentiated leader

Differentiation is the ability to establish and sustain a personal identity apart from the social system I (or anyone) am part of. I can only flourish and fulfill my vocational task if I am able to separate myself from, *as well as be connected to*, my immediate world. Differentiation therefore requires the capacity to take responsibility for my own emotional wellbeing and destiny.

'I am *not*' Jn 1

Vital task in anxious contexts. The root of the most destructive experiences of leadership and ministry is found here.

The mark of the differentiated leader is ability to tell their story *without blaming anyone else*.

The gift of differentiated people to a family, community or work place, is that they 'function as the immune system of their world' (2007:17).

Differentiation and the church. 'Detachment' (desert trad), 'active indifference' (Ignatius)

Ministry and loss of self - the degree to which we lose sight of ourselves in the role and demands of the job. It takes us over.

'If you don't know who the hell you are, why would anybody else? This means defining yourself as more than just a pale reflection of what everybody wants from you. If you start to disappear into the context, your boat has sunk and it won't be going anywhere.' + Alan Richardson

Yahweh – calling, faithfulness, compassion and anguish

'I regret that I made Saul king,' (1Sam 15.10).

regret = 'I repent of'? 'I am sorry'? Yahweh changes his mind. How are we to understand this? cf 'Yahweh was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart' (Gen 6.6). same word. Grieves and harrows ... expresses acute mental and physical pain. It describes the hard labour of Adam in the stoney soil of a world outside of Eden. It also describes the pains of childbirth. (Davis 2003: 290f).

Our freedom costs God. It wounds him.

So how could Saul have made it?

* Beloved?/Divine pleasure – Yahweh's call and hope.

* Obedience/Metanoia cf 1Chron 10.13 Saul 'disobeyed'.

* Being responsible – default settings. Never treated as a victim.

* Fear of the Lord - little sign of nurturing faith in God. Faith too needs differentiation.

* The corporate context - toxic *and* transformative

* The narrators epitaph - 'How are the mighty fallen'

and if this was me?

Source: E Friedman *A failure of nerve – leadership in an age of quick fix*. Seabury.

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