

The Reluctant Leader

July 8, 2018

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[Music Intro]

[Male voice] The following is a presentation of Artisan Church in Rochester, New York.

[Voice of Carrie Starr]

So this is second Samuel five, starting in verse one if anyone wants to follow along. Second Samuel five verse one. We're going to be talking a little bit about David today. So Second Samuel five verse one says, "That all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'Behold we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, you shall be shepherd of my people Israel and you should be prince over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron. And King David made a covenant at Hebron with them before the Lord and they anointed David King over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign.'"

And then we also are going to read verses nine and ten. This is according to the lectionary reading, "And David lived in the stronghold and called it the City of David. and David built this city all around the Millo and inward. David became greater and greater for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him." Did you notice that they said **you** have been doing the work of the king even when Saul was king? You've already been leading. You've already been meeting the needs of the people. You've already been fighting on our behalf. You've already been successful. You've already proven your king worthiness even though you weren't seeking that. Even though you had actually already been anointed as king, that's not why you did it. King Saul was king and you still- just you took care of us, you led us. We've already been following you. We already identify with you. Now we want you to take the official title of King.

Now it's so interesting because if you go back into first Samuel, and you look at David's story, a lot of us think of David story as beginning with he fought Goliath- right, when he was a kid or a teen or at least a young adult. But it actually, I don't know how many of you know how David kind of started working for Saul. But he has a very specific skill set that has nothing to do with fighting. He is a musician. And he must be pretty good at it because the kid spends most of the time taking care of the sheep out in the field, but when Saul is disturbed by an evil spirit and needs something to calm him down, some of the people in the in the castle say "oh this guy

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David he's pretty good you know we should we should bring him in he's like really talented musician you should call him up and bring him in and he'd be able to calm you down." And that's exactly what they do. They fetch David from the field and bring him in and he you know has like a little part time gig working for the, you know, working for the king playing some music when he's like having a bad day. This is music therapy back in the Old Testament. This is like a very ancient concept and that's what David's job is. He's like a teen, maybe a college student at best, and he's brought in and he does that faithfully and it's very effective. And First Samuel tells us that Saul loves David. He's so effective with his music at calming him down and ministering to him that he loves him.

But this is just a part time thing, OK, he's just like doing this side hustle. It's not his primary job. His primary job is tending the sheep. That's what he does. And he's got a bunch of older brothers and there is a war that breaks out against the Philistines and the brothers are all at the front lines of the war. And that's when this big big guy Goliath comes in and he's just insulting the Israelite people and no one wants to fight him. David is out in the field taking care of the sheep like he is supposed to when his dad sends him on an errand. His dad says, "Hey your brothers they've been off that war, they're probably hungry. We're gonna get some lunchables. We're gonna, you know, put together some snacks for them. And I want you to take these snacks to your brother and I want you to let me know they're OK because I haven't heard from them in a while and I'm getting nervous." Do we have any parents like that? I just sent my kid to camp and it's literally been twenty four hours and I'm like I haven't heard anything. Are you OK? Maybe I could get a note. You could send something in the mail just so I know it's working well. I know one of the leaders and I'm like "don't text him Carrie, just let him be. OK. You don't need to know what's going on.". So this dad is a little bit in that spot. The guys are at war. I want to know. Take them some sandwiches, find out how they're doing come back and tell me.

So we've got a shepherd boy and a musician with some, you know, snacks and he's running an errand for dad. So he goes. He goes and he sees what's going on. By the way, do I have any oldest children in the room? Who are my oldest control freaky people? Sorry, I just insulted you. I am a youngest. I am a spoiled baby. But you oldest, sometimes you think the worst. And David's oldest brother says, "I know why you're here. And you know what? You're just trying to see and get in on the action. And you just want to see what's going on, and get out of here. Just go home. Go home take care of the sheep.". You know you oldest ones sometimes you underestimate us younger children - Just sayin'. Right younger siblings? Do I have any babies in the room? Do you ever feel underestimated by your older siblings? Yes, and that's what happened to David. The older brother's like you know, and he's like "I got your lunch buddy". I'm here to feed you so maybe you could like back off a little bit. Actually I'm going to read what

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he says because it's so interesting. (Child laughs in the background) Thank you little one, you are my new favorite person.

Oh let's find this juicy bit. This is in First Samuel chapter seventeen so chapter sixteen is where we see David picking up the side hustle being the musician and now we've got David going out to meet his brothers. And Eliab, I'm probably saying his name wrong but I don't care because he's mean. So let's see. Yeah so everyone's talking about Goliath and saying you know what's going to happen for this person, who can take him down. And Eliab the eldest brother heard. This is verse twenty eight, "Eliab's anger was kindled against David and he said, 'Why have you come down and with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart and you have come down to see the battle you're bored in the field and you want to be entertained by war.'" Sorry this is really not my point but I found that interesting. So you know David comes to bring the sandwiches and is chewed out by his older brother for not being where he belongs even though he's there to feed him, whatever!

Meanwhile David is like, "Is anybody going to actually fight this big dude or are we all just going to look like a bunch of you know like pansies out here? Are we all just going to like every day just let him insult our people and our God? Why isn't anyone going to do anything?" And he starts going up to all the different you know bigger, stronger, tougher guys and asking them, "Are you going to do it? Are you going to do it? Maybe that's what happened. Maybe he went up to his big brother and he was like, "Yo, are you going to take down the Goliath or what? You can take down this giant because you know you're the oldest and you're big and strong. You could do it." and maybe that's why he's like, "Don't you belong in the field? How about you take care of the sheep and let me be the soldier. Why don't you go you know like practice your chords or something. Do something else." But no one is doing it. And so David sees a need. And he says fine, if none of you are going to do it I'll fight him. Because someone needs to do something.

David is a reluctant leader. He's not saying, "Oh, oh, me, me who me put me in charge! Make me the hero. I want everyone to admire me!" No, he says "I'm here being faithful to my dad delivering sandwiches, checking to make sure my elder brothers are OK. But while I'm here I notice that this guy is trash talking our people and our God and no one is doing anything about it! And someone needs to! I can't find anyone who will, I guess it will be me." David is a reluctant leader but he sees a need and he's willing to meet it. I defined leadership, remember, not as you're in charge with the title but that you see a need, you take that -you meet that need. You have influence and it influences other people. And they want to do what you've been doing. So when David goes and he fights Goliath -using the skills that he has as a shepherd, because he's not a trained soldier. Remember, his job over here is, you know, to play music.

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He's not on the battlefield. Saul, in fact, tries to equip him with his armor and give him a sword. And it's like ridiculous because it doesn't fit. And he doesn't know how to use it. He doesn't have experience with it. He's like, "No thank you, keep that. I'm used to being in the field. Listen, I've fought bears, I've fought lions. I'm going to use my sling shot. I'm going to use what I know. I'm going to stick with the training that I have and I'm going to make God look good." Which is exactly what he does. And he becomes famous for it. But it's not why he did it. He's a reluctant leader. He's not looking for the glory. It's really easy for you and I to be like the older brother, or any of the other soldiers that were in that army. Surely someone else will take care of it.

There's an author I really enjoy. His name is Jeff Goins. I don't know if any of you have read his stuff, but he's a writer who writes for writers. A writer who writes about writing. And I like to write. And I like to read about writing, so I like to read what he writes about writing. Right? Yes? OK. So Jeff tells the story, he lives in Nashville. And he and his wife every year go to this big festival. Now there's probably festivals, it's a little like Rochester where we have festivals every week every week, and it's wonderful... And so there's this one festival that they love to go to, and the City does this commemorative poster every year for the festival. And it's pretty cool. And he and his wife have gone every year. They started going when they were dating. And then engaged, and then married. And now they're celebrating their anniversary and they have every year's poster. But they only give the poster to the first one hundred people to come into the festival. And for whatever reason this year they are not in line early. They can't get there early to get the hundred. We know they're not one of the first hundred people to get the poster and they're pretty bummed. And Jeff's wife is like, "A hundred people have the poster. Surely someone will, you know, if we share our story that we have all of these posters, and that it's our anniversary today, someone is going to give us the poster." This is very, she must be youngest child, because this is totally what I go through life thinking too. I'm like, ah surely someone -nice person will take care of us. So they, uh, start working their way through the line of people. Like, they're there, they just know they're there too far back. So you know they just start working through the line and going up and, "Saying hey, like you and know any chance and we tell the story and and chance we can have your poster? You know we'll pay you for it and they like start offering things to them. And the first person says, "I would love to give you my poster but, and they share their story too of why they have to keep it and they say this surely someone else will share theirs." Surely someone else will share theirs. Surely someone else...And so Jeff and his wife go keep working up the line through people. They ask another person, they ask another person. Every person ends with the same thing, "I would love to help you. I totally get that this is really important you have these framed in your living room and it

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would be so lovely and it's your anniversary. I'd love to help you but I can't. Surely someone else will. Isn't that who we are?

We see needs around us. There's something we're equipped for. There's something that we can do to meet that need. But we think surely someone else, surely someone else could do that. That's probably someone else's job, right? I mean David shows up, surely one of these strong men, maybe his you know brother, can take care of it. But they all say surely someone else. And David says, " Uh no, someone actually needs to do it." He's reluctant. I think it's good to be reluctant. I think it's good to count the cost of the decisions we're going to make. But surely it needs to get done. Right? Surely that something needs to happen. We can't just wait for surely someone else. What is it that we have? What's the skill that we have that we could actually do something? We don't need the title. David didn't have the title. David didn't have the responsibility. In fact no one was expecting him to do it. His expectation was deliver lunch, bring back the message to dad that the brothers are OK. That was the only expectation on him. But he sees a need and instead of saying surely someone else, he acts on it. That's the kind of leader I love. And I think that's the kind of leader that God loves. That's why by the time we get to Second Samuel, we see that the people are the ones coming to David and saying, please be our king. Take on the title. You're already doing the work. We -already follow you. We are already have faith and trust in you. Now sometimes we say surely someone else because we're afraid.

One of the other passages for today is out of Psalms. And Psalms is one of my favorite books in the whole Bible because it's so stinkin' honest. I'm an emotional girl. I'll just tell you right now I cry, I laugh, and sometimes I do both at the same time and I don't know why. But I feel things strongly and I feel things deeply and whatever I'm feeling here are going to know because it's just it's out there, you know. I'm just, you're going to know it. And the psalmist, the Psalms, are emotional. They're vulnerable. They're really honest. They're raw. They're like no holds barred God, this is how I'm feeling. So today's psalm is psalm one twenty three if you want to look at this. By the way, it's four verses. So, you know, if you're like I'm going to read a chapter a day and you're in a hurry go to psalm one twenty three and be done really quick. OK? So psalm one twenty three says, " To you I lift up my eyes. Oh you who enthroned in the heavens behold, as the eyes of your servant look to the hand of their master as the eyes of a maid servant to the hand of her mistress. So our eyes look to the Lord our God till he has mercy upon us. Have mercy on us oh Lord, have mercy on us for we have more than enough contempt." Are you hearing this? I'm taken all I can Lord but how about some mercy right now because I'm at the end of my rope. Can anyone relate to that? OK. Have mercy on me because I've had more than enough contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease of the contempt of the proud. This is someone who is fed up with things not working out. They're

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fed up with trying to do things and struggling. They're fed up with other people not appreciating them, of people resenting them. Isn't that also something that very much makes us say surely someone else. Maybe you've been faithful doing your job. Maybe you put yourself out there to help in a situation and you've been met with contempt. Or you've met with frustration. Or maybe you've met with failure and you're like surely someone else can take a turn. They can be the ones to meet these needs because I'm done, I've had enough. That's what the Psalmist is saying. But they still surrender to the Lord. To you I lift up my eyes.

When, you know, David's confidence to slay Goliath, David's confidence to lead the people of Israel came from his faith in the Lord. He was convinced to put himself out there to lead. He's reluctant, he's a reluctant leader but his confidence is not in himself. And his ability to charm people and become popular, like my students who want to become president and go around kind of trying to convince other people they'd be perfect for the job. No, David sees needs. And although he doubts, and you know I mean his own brother just insulted him and said how about you go back to the field where you belong. Yet his faith is in the Lord. His faith is in the Lord to show up and make a difference and help him be successful. It's not about the power. It's not about the recognition. It's not about the title for him. It's about a need. A need that he sees needs to be met. And instead of saying surely someone else, he puts his faith in the Lord and he moves forward.

Now sometimes we can be more like the student I meet every spring who is sure that they would make a great president. And we see one of those in the New Testament in the person of Paul. One of our other scriptures is for today is in second Corinthians chapter twelve. This is rich folks, it start out, "I must go on boasting though there is nothing to be gained by it." OK why don't we just stop talking right here. But no. "I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ." OK he starts talking in third person so that's how we know that we're maybe a little like, I know a man who did this great thing so. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether in the body, or out of the body, I don't know. God knows. And I know that this man was caught up in Paradise. Whether in the body, or out of the body, I do not know. God knows. OK we get that he said that twice by the way then just reread that. That's what it says. And he heard that, he heard things that cannot be told. Which man cannot utter. On behalf of this man, I will boast- super strange. Sorry, I just get entertained by myself. I'm telling you I'm an emotional girl. So on behalf of this man, I will boast. But on my own behalf, I will not boast except of my weaknesses. Though if I should wish to boast, I feel like I'm reading Shakespeare. If I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it so that no one may think of me more than he sees or hears from me. So to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh. OK, so he's recognizing you know I've

experienced success, the Lord himself has revealed great amazing things to me. And if you read the story of Paul formally known as Saul, it's pretty incredible. Like if God had an encounter with you personally where you met him face to face, I would think that would, you know, give you some confidence. I mean is there anyone in the room that's facing a decision or a challenge that if God could like show up on the road on your way home today and tell you what to do, that would give you more confidence. Please everyone raise your hand because I would imagine that that would be the truth, right ? Like if God could just speak to you personally, and when we read the account of Saul becoming Paul I mean God speaks to him personally. He gives him very clear commands. He makes himself so evidently known in a way that gosh I would absolutely love to experience, and I'm sure you would too. So he's got every reason to boast and be confident. I might be making fun of them just like I did David's older brother but really I mean he's got reasons to be confident. The Lord has spoken to him personally. It's amazing. But he says actually, there's nothing to be gained by me boasting in that. So to keep me from being too elated let me just read that part again. By the surpassing greatness of these revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh. A messenger of satan to harass me to keep me from being too elated. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me, but he said to me My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect and weakness. This is like one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture. I don't know how many of you are like me where you're maybe more aware of your weaknesses than your strength. This I can really relate to and this gives me courage because this says that where we are weak the Lord is strong. My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Do I have any fellow confessing perfectionists in the room? My husband tells me on a very regular basis that perfection is a terrible goal because all I can do so fail at it because no one can be perfect but I keep trying anyway. But my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness so the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities for where I am weak there I am strong. When David fought Goliath, he had skill. He had experience taking out wild animals with a sling. But he still knew that he needed confidence in the Lord to be victorious. I mean, he's seeing a whole army of strong experienced soldiers shaking in their boots at the thought of fighting this giant. He sees the need that needs to be met. He has some skill, but ultimately his confidence is in the Lord to give him victory. He realizes his weakness. He recognizes his weakness. He even recognizes that his victory over Goliath is going to bring God glory. That's what he says. This is going to bring the Lord glory. And that's what Paul says. I'd rather brag about the areas where I'm weak because if I brag about the areas where I'm weak then when the Lord works through me, people will see that he's the one that makes me strong.

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This is why I love a reluctant leader because a reluctant leader doesn't think they have it all figured out. They don't think that they're the savior of the Anactus team at Roberts Wesleyan College. And I don't think the Lord is looking for us to say I am the hero you've been waiting for Lord. Now that I have arrived please to show me what to do. I think the Lord is looking for someone who has a heart that's not just sitting back saying surely someone else when they see needs. When they have an opportunity to influence. Each of us has someone that we have influence over. We do not need a title or a position to be influential. We do not need a position of power to be in leadership. Leadership is Influence. Who do you have influence over? Who is following you? When they look at you do they see someone that says surely someone else? (A little child says, Me. Then there is laughter)

I actually was watching, one of my favorite things about coming here is the Tiny Dancers, you know, like I just adore it. And, I'm trying to see where she is. I don't want to totally embarrass her but there's like a little curly haired girl with like in her curls who were just bouncing down and she's like running. She's just like so free and I'm like gosh Lord, I just want to be more like that every single day. You know where like she's just not self-conscious like that the room might as well be empty she's just completely unaware of what other people think. No one's, you know, she's not worried about people judging her or evaluating her. She's not worried about failing. You know for her the need is, you know like, I'm going to dance to the music. Like, I want us to be that free with Lord, I trust you. I see a need. I have a skill. I'm going to put myself out there. I'm going to challenge myself beyond what I think I can do and I'm going to try to meet that need. I'm going to expect that you're going to show up just like you did for David. And I don't care if I don't have the title, I'm going to do the work. I don't care if sometimes of my efforts have met with failure or contempt like the Psalmist. I'm going to look to you. I'm going to trust you. I'm going to be honest with you about how I feel about it. And I'm going to get back to the work.

The last passage I'm going to read is in Mark chapter six, verses one to thirteen for those of you reading along. This is talking about Jesus. He went away from there and came to his hometown and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were astonished saying, where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty words done, works done by his hand? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? They took offense at him. I just want to pause right there because at the beginning it was they were astonished and I usually think of astonished as like a good word. Like a positive thing, if someone's astonished at you usually they're like some degree of impressed or amazed. They were astonished at what he had to say recognising that he had these amazing words, this wisdom they couldn't understand. But then they start realizing, wait

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a minute, we know this guy. We know his family. We know parents. We know his siblings. He's just a carpenter's son. Surely something's up here and they discredit him because they know him. It's kind of like the older brother saying- get back to the field little shepherd boy. You don't have a place here. This is not what you do. This is not your calling. This is my area. You get back in your own lane please, thank you very much. And that's what they're saying to Jesus. They took offense at him. Verse four, and Jesus said to them a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown among his relatives and in his own household. And he could do no mighty work there except, that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. By the way, kind of seems like a big deal but the Bible says not so big so OK. And he marveled because of their unbelief. Wow OK, Jesus is saying OK fine and he went about the other villages teaching. Then and he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for the journey except the staff, no bread, no bag, no money travel light folks. I'm a fan. But to wear sandals and not put two next to. This is a packing list. It's very short but I'm still getting it wrong. But to wear sandals and not put on two tunics, OK so don't layer. This is what you got. Keep it simple, keep it simple. We do live in, you know, like a warm climate and he said to them, whenever you enter a house stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you when you leave shake the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. Seems a little salty but that's OK. And so they went out and proclaimed that the people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

This is amazing to me. Jesus comes to this town, he preaches in a way that they find astonishing. They realize it's Jesus. They are offended that someone they know would try to exert authority and leadership beyond his lane. So he is limited in his ability to be effective and what does he do goes in has a pity party. No, what does he do? He shares his power with the disciples and sends them out to do ministry. Folks that is you and me. That is what Jesus has done with you and I. As he said My work here on earth is done. I now give you the authority that I have to go and do the work that I've been doing. I appoint you as the president of an Anactus. You don't have the title, but you have the work to do. There's a job to be done. There's a need to be met. I am equipping you to meet that need. Go do the work. Don't be someone who says surely someone else. Remain humble as a reluctant leader. But be faithful to use the gifts that I've given you to use. I want to pray for us. Father thank you for sharing your authority and your abilities with us. Thank you that through us, you meet needs. What a privilege, Lord, it is incredible. Father I ask that we would be faithful. When we see needs around us, like a Goliath being insulting, yelling at our people, that we would stand up. Lord that we wouldn't say surely someone else, but that we would be open to being faithful to

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respond to the call that you have. Give us courage, Lord, the courage that David had. Help us to not seek the title but to faithfully do the work. In Jesus name, Amen.

The table is a symbol. A reminder of our weakness. And I would like to invite you. This is the table not of the church, but of the Lord. It is to be made ready for those who love him and who want to love him more. So come you who have much faith, and you who have little. You who have been here often, and you who have not been here in a long time. You who have tried to follow, and you who have failed. Come not because it is I who invite you, but the Lord. It is His will that those who want him should meet him here. You are invited to come partake.

[end of sermon]

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