

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## “Good News for Cave Dwellers”

Based on 1 Samuel 21:10-22:2

*Sometimes you are in a cave and no human action is able to get you out. There is something you can't fix, can't heal, or can't escape, and all you can do is trust God. Finding ultimate refuge in God means you become so immersed in his presence, so convinced of his goodness, so devoted to his lordship that you find even the cave is a perfectly safe place to be because he is there with you*

~John Ortberg

David was on the run. It had been a long standing feud: filled with pride, popularity and jealousy. A king, and the boy who would be king. But there could only be one king. So David ran.

And so it was that the young brave boy of the battlefield who killed the giant Goliath with a smooth stone and a sling, the man who would one day unite the Chosen tribes of the north and the south to become the nation we call today, Israel, the savvy leader who designed the most famous city in the religious world: Jerusalem; the king whose legacy holds the very bloodline of our Saviour, Jesus; yes, that David, found

himself on the run, in search of sanctuary:

*“Pretend[ing] to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.”(v13)*

What was this? Another clever trick? A cunning ruse of deception to conquer an enemy? No. It was a man running from himself.

Have you ever surprised yourself with something you made, or accomplished or achieved, and then, after the fact, became overwhelmed or frightened by what you discovered about yourself? I think this is what happened to David. Turns out, he was a great leader; he was strategic on the battlefield; he was diplomatic in the court; he fought bravely alongside his soldiers; he was approachable to the people. All the markings of a strong king;

- A king who would unite the tribes of Israel;
- A king who could give vision back to the people;
- A king who would leave a legacy in the books of history.

But it frightened him. It scared him to death to think that he might be the one to lead his people.

- The responsibility.
- The weight of the world on his shoulders.
- The public scrutiny.
- The criticism.
- The possibility of failure.

**What** if he made a mess of everything?

**What** if his vision was wrong?

**What** if YHWY was not pleased?

**What** if he made a mistake?

Better to run.

- Run from the little voice inside urging him to lead.
- Run from his destiny.
- Run from all that he witnessed could be changed or different under his leadership.
- Run from the sense of being fulfilled as a man, as a servant of YHWH, and fulfilling his calling in this world.
- Run.

And so he ran. He ran into familiar territory. He ran into enemy territory. He acted like a madman, hiding in plain

sight. Hiding from the people he was to lead. Hiding from YHWH. Hiding from himself.

And when he stopped running, he found himself at a cave:

- A place to rest;
- A place to think;
- A place to be quiet;
- A place to be by himself.

But he was not alone. For this was a place where other tortured souls looking to hide, hid also:

*"All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him..." (22:2).*

Soon, word got out that David was at the Cave of Adullam, and others joined them. About four hundred, we are told. And they all turned to David to lead them. Even in the cave, he could not hide from what YHWH needed him to be.

My friends, our Lenten journey is quickly coming to an end. And perhaps for the first time, we are experiencing a season of withdrawal and discomfort more real than any of our previous journeys. As faithful witnesses, we mark this season each year with our tacit nods and solemn hymns. But this year has given us new perspective on the 'dark night of the soul' and the 'journey to difficult places'.

This virus scare has made each of us more aware of our fragilities, our deepest fears

and our greatest longings. We tensely wait for updated news reports and statistics. We wish we could pull the covers over our head and wake up tomorrow with good news that life can return to normal. We are hiding, waiting for this to be over.

Yet, the surprise is, that even in our fear and in our waiting, our God lingers close as well. And for as much as we would like to hide in our own anxieties these days, our God coaxes us to lead where we find ourselves, perhaps in new or unexpected ways.

Perhaps now, in this strange time, of too much time, perhaps now, is that time, to approach again, those things within yourself that you have shied away from, or didn't want to make an effort to do. Perhaps now is the time to share poetry, cultivate the gift of the gab, to tackle the iPad, to connect or reconnect with family. Perhaps this Lent, your Creator is calling you to lead, from dark places into light, from fear into calm, from uncertainty to sure footedness with Christ.

**Is it possible that God is using us, during this dark time in the cave, for His purposes?**

it possible that we are being nudged to take this time and shore up the foundations of our faith?

**Is it possible that we have been given the gift of**

time, for communities usually too busy to listen to the Word, or unwilling to allow the stories to settle into their hearts?

**Is it possible that we have the opportunity to be witnesses to those who might never have listened to us before?**

**Is it possible, that we as Christians have been called to lead from within the cave?**

We know that David went on to be one of the greatest kings of our Christian story. He had some less than finer moments along the way, but his vision for the Chosen People still lives today. In the cave, or on the throne, God needed David to be the voice and the leader of his day. From our safe living rooms, texting, letter writing, IMessaging, story-telling; God needs each of us in these difficult days, to be the leaders we can be.

From the back of cave, in the shadows and darkness, in the middle of the cave, near the fire and the conversation, or near the mouth of the cave, straining to feel the warmth of the sun,  
Our God says this,

*"Don't fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name;  
You are Mine."*

~Isaiah 43:1