

# Keynotes from Steven Drivers am Sermon on 29/5/2022

## 1 Samuel 5: Series: "The real King" Part 6"

### "God's Glory Revealed

#### Scripture references from the ESV

**1 Samuel 5:** When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. <sup>2</sup> Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. <sup>3</sup> And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face down on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. <sup>4</sup> But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face down on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. <sup>5</sup> This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

<sup>6</sup> The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumours, both in Ashdod and its territory. <sup>7</sup> And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." <sup>8</sup> So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought round to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. <sup>9</sup> But after they had brought it round, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumours broke out on them. <sup>10</sup> So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought round to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people." <sup>11</sup> They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. <sup>12</sup> The men who did not die were struck with tumours, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

**Please read chapters 6 and 7 in your Bible**

Nowadays, when you ask someone if they believe in God, the answer is likely to be no. A good response to this might be to say 'I probably don't believe in the god you don't

believe in either'. Most people have their own vision of who God is, and, as Christians, we need to distinguish the god they don't believe in from the God of the Bible. It is becoming more and more important to know who the God of the Bible is so we can be confident in our claims about him and his glory.

We have seen how the people of Israel had forgotten, manipulated and even stolen from the glory of God. Then the Philistines attacked them, won the battle and captured the Ark of God. The glory of God had departed.

God's glory, as symbolised in the Ark, has gone into exile, away from the Promised Land.

- God is isolated and is away from his people – a unique moment in the Old Testament.

The Philistines view God as the loser and set the Ark next to their god, Dagon, to demonstrate their superiority over him. With everything apparently taken away from God, there is an opportunity to see what God is really like.

### **Is God's glory as important, as serious, as weighty as claimed?**

What God reveals of himself leaves us in no doubt about the answer.

- 1) **God's glory is mightier than anything we can create.** (vv1-5 above). The Philistines have put the Ark in the house of Dagon, their god, intending to show that they have humiliated God. The next day, the supposedly mighty Dagon is on the ground, face down before the Ark. In a moment of pure comedy, the people had to try to stand him up again! Not something we could ever imagine doing with our God! The next day, Dagon has fallen again, and cannot be put back together. God is demonstrating to everyone that there can be no replacement god. Nothing we can create can come close to the sheer weight of God's glory.

God has no need of anyone to stand him back up. Instead, he can fight for his own glory in the land of the Philistines. We don't carry him – he carries us. Yet we try to replace God with other gods, having rivals to him in our hearts.

- a) **The gods of connection (family and friends).** We may put our family first or be anxious about what people

think. We may suffer from a fear of missing out and so be addicted to social media or be constantly ringing people because we need to know what's going on.

- b) **The gods of money or materialism.** We might be driven by a need to have a good house or car. Perhaps we are regularly updating things in our house, or our wardrobe in a bid to make us happy.
- c) **The gods of power.** We want to feel we have made it in the world or even in church, and that we have a job or a role where we have power over others, or feel they couldn't manage without us.
- d) **The gods of intellect or achievement.** We find our worth in how well we do academically. We want to be the cleverest in our sphere and so are constantly competing.

Everybody worships something, yet the truth is that all of these false gods end up giving you the opposite of what you are seeking. **Making a god of:**

- **connection** will mean you regularly feel isolated and alone, unable to connect enough with others to satisfy.
- **money and materialism** will mean you never feel you have enough
- **power** will mean you always feel weak, because you are endlessly climbing that mountain
- **intellect and achievement** will mean you always feel stupid and worthless. Someone will always be smarter.

Those gods, which we have made up, give you nothing in return, because they carry no real weight or substance.

God's glory, however, is mighty and only he has the substance to stand against all things.

**God is mighty and looking at him makes everything else look foolish.**

- 2) **God's glory is more fearsome than anything we can imagine (5:6-7:2).** The Ark is now on tour! Everywhere it goes, the people are afflicted with tumours and finally the Philistines grasp the seriousness of the glory of God. Their bodies, their land and their god are all being trounced by this all-powerful God. To get themselves out of trouble, they try offering a sacrifice as they send the Ark back whence it

came. To confirm why this was happening, they put the ark on two calving cows, which would naturally just go back to their calves. Instead, they head towards Israel, proving the point that this has all come from the hand of God. (6:7-9 see p4)

This should be a moment of rejoicing yet the Lord strikes down 70 of his own people (6:19 see p4). The people of God were still treating God's glory lightly. That was why they had lost to the Philistines and now with the Ark returned, they carried out the sacrifices flippantly and looked inside the Ark, which was forbidden. God was not going to allow them to continue in that way, and his people were now consumed with fear (6:20 see p4). Today, our concept of God rests largely on him as a God of love. **Yet the God of the Bible is fearsome.** (see C S Lewis quote p4).

We try to avoid this idea as we don't want to put people (or ourselves!) off but we should delight in this side of his character because it shows us that he takes his glory and holiness seriously. He does this to make it abundantly clear to his people and all the world that we should all take him seriously.

We need to contemplate the magnitude of God, his awesome power and holiness. At every moment, he is controlling the air that we breathe, the movement of the earth, and the position of the stars in the universe. He knows all our ways and what we are thinking.

That is a God who is to be feared, and we lose out on this vision of him when we fail to contemplate this truth. God weighs us by the measure of his glory (2: 3 see p4).

**No one can stand before him. No one is worthy of being in his presence. No one can take the weight of his glory.**

**3) God is more merciful than anyone deserves.** No one can stand in the presence of God but his great mercy means that, in fact, we can. God treats even the Philistines with undeserved mercy. He could have wiped them out, after what they had done, but he doesn't. It is only by God's common grace that the world is not much worse than it is. Yet his mercy is even greater.

The house of Israel finally lament their broken relationship with God and 20 years pass until God's man (Samuel) comes to lead them back to the word of God, so that they

can be restored (7:3 see p4). Samuel shows them that they need to be truly and fully repentant. The Israelites need to serve God with all their heart, put away the foreign gods in their life and serve only him. Repentance is not just about saying sorry. It also means

- taking action and fleeing from the temptation to sin again as we take God seriously.
- Pointing ourselves fully towards God in worship of him (7:5-6 see p4)

By being God-focussed, worshipping him with our whole life, we stop being self-focussed and avoid slipping back into sinful habits. We need to ask ourselves what sins we just can't seem to shake and need to flee from.

- What other gods do we have in our lives?
- What action do we need to take to replace them with worship?

When the Philistines next attack (7: 7-10 see p4), the Israelites realise that it is God's glory at stake, and the only way to respond is to sacrifice to him. All have sinned and fallen short but the difference between God's people and everyone else is that the former are those who know that their sin has been judged through sacrifice to him. God's people put their trust in the sacrifice, knowing that a substitute has taken away the judgement on them. That judgement is exile from God, yet in this part of their history, it wasn't the Israelites who went into exile, it was God himself. He bore the punishment they deserved for not taking him seriously.

**God was made to look the loser, but instead he won the victory for himself.**

He brings full restoration to his people, displaying his great mercy to them, as he leads them to victory over the Philistines, with Samuel, God's man, bringing God's word to them. They look to the Ebenezer stone as a reminder of this great victory. All the way through this narrative, we have been pointed to someone else, through the symbols of the Ark, God's man and the sacrifice.

- Jesus is God, and this narrative shows his nature. He is mightier than anything we can create, he is more fearsome than we can imagine and he is more merciful than we deserve.

- He takes his glory so seriously that he went into exile on our behalf, being cut off from the Father on the cross.
- His dead body was Satan's trophy, but just as Dagon was smashed, so Christ smashed Satan.
- Christ walked out of the tomb in victory. He is now seated on the throne of glory, leading his people as the Word.

When we make claims about God, we are making claims about Jesus. We can rejoice in this, because we are restored to God at the cross, answering the question (7:6 see p4) - who can stand in the presence of a holy God? **Romans 5:1-2** (see p4) spells this out for us.

The worship of our God is not like the worship of these false gods, which only take and leave us empty and broken. **Jesus gave himself for us, and restores and redeems us for all eternity.**

**We are not being emptied. We are being filled with his glory.**

**Our God is like nothing we can create or even imagine. He is worthy of all praise and glory.**

**Let us fix our eyes on the cross and find our daily delight in God.**

**6:7-9** Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. <sup>8</sup> And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way <sup>9</sup> and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence."

**6:19** And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them,<sup>[a]</sup> and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow.

**6:20<sup>20</sup>** Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?"

### C. S. Lewis – The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe

Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he- quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

**2: 3** Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge,  
and by his actions are weighed.

**7:3** And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashteroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

**7:5-6** Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." <sup>6</sup> So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.

**7: 7- 10** Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. <sup>8</sup> And the people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." <sup>9</sup> So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. <sup>10</sup> As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel.

**Romans 5:1-2** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, (leaning on the cross) we<sup>[a]</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith<sup>[b]</sup> into this grace in which we stand, and we<sup>[c]</sup> rejoice<sup>[d]</sup> in hope of the glory of God.