**June 20, 2021 1 Samuel 11:1-15**

***Crash Course***

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 11:1-12:25 NRSV

*(1)About a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." (2)But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, namely that I gouge out everyone's right eye, and thus put disgrace upon all Israel." (3)The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you." (4)When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the hearing of the people; and all the people wept aloud. (5)Now Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen; and Saul said, "What is the matter with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the message from the inhabitants of Jabesh. (6)And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. (7)He took a yoke of oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one. (8)When he mustered them at Bezek, those from Israel were three hundred thousand, and those from Judah seventy thousand. (9)They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.'" When the messengers came and told the inhabitants of Jabesh, they rejoiced. (10)So the inhabitants of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." (11)The next day Saul put the people in three companies. At the morning watch they came into the camp and cut down the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. (12)The people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Give them to us so that we may put them to death." (13)But Saul said, "No one shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought deliverance to Israel." (14)Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship." (15)So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the LORD, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.*

**Notes:**

1. God gives us a “crash course” by allowing the ***enemy*** to ***attack***.
   1. When you choose to ***give*** ***up***, you become ***enslaved*** to whatever it is you surrender to.
   2. We can choose to go ***look*** for ***help***.
      1. We are too ***proud*** to ask for help.
      2. Do not let ***pride*** hold you back; be ***bold*** and ask.
   3. When things get tough, ***declare*** ***war*** on the enemy.
      1. God can use our ***anger*** to fulfill His purpose.
      2. When God molds us together as ***one***, the enemy will always be ***defeated***!
2. God gives us a “crash course” by allowing the ***people*** to ***talk***.
   1. When you are given ***advice***, how do you react?
   2. Consider the ***advice*** of others, in prayer
   3. Allow the Lord to guide you when you are given ***advice***.
   4. Be open to what we ***hear***.
3. God gives us a “crash course” allowing the ***Word*** to ***warn*** us.
   1. To avoid the potholes of this world, you must ***fear*** God, ***serve*** God, and ***obey*** God.

**Script:**

Think about a time when you went somewhere for the first time. Now Jan will tell you that I am not very keen on going to new places. I remember when we went to Disney World for the first time, she had to talk me into it. For me I am not keen on going to new places because I am unfamiliar with how things operate, how things are done; I am not sure of what will be expected of me and how I am supposed to do things. I guess I just am uneasy about the learning curve and not wanting to look ignorant or unintelligent.

How about you, have you ever gone someplace for the first time. Maybe you went to a new Church, a new school, a new job; so, in order to fit in or at least make the most of this experience you had to figure things out quickly, you needed a “crash course”. That’s how I felt when I first attended college. I left home by myself, I didn’t know anybody that was there, how things were run; and I was committed to attending there. So on my first day at college, I received a crash course in college life, they called it new student orientation, but in the process I met new people from different cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities; I learned the process of eating in the cafeteria, the rules for the dormitories, and the expectations of my professors.

As we approach the week of our VBS, there may be some of you who are taking a “crash course” in teaching or working with children. What does it mean to take a “crash course”? It means that you don’t have a lot of time to learn something new. It means that you may have to learn as you go.

There are many times that God gives us a “crash course”, and as long as we follow Him, our GPS, we will be okay; however, when we begin to question him and guess what to do next, we will end up on a bumpy path, perhaps hitting potholes. There are many stories in scripture where God has given people a crash course in how to do what they are called to do. Today we will look at one such instance in the life of Saul. Turn with me to 1 Samuel 11:1-15 which is our sermon passage for today. Stand with me as we share in the reading of God’s Word.

1 Samuel 11:1-12:25 NRSV (1)About a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." (2)But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, namely that I gouge out everyone's right eye, and thus put disgrace upon all Israel." (3)The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you." (4)When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the hearing of the people; and all the people wept aloud. (5)Now Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen; and Saul said, "What is the matter with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the message from the inhabitants of Jabesh. (6)And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. (7)He took a yoke of oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one. (8)When he mustered them at Bezek, those from Israel were three hundred thousand, and those from Judah seventy thousand. (9)They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.'" When the messengers came and told the inhabitants of Jabesh, they rejoiced. (10)So the inhabitants of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." (11)The next day Saul put the people in three companies. At the morning watch they came into the camp and cut down the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. (12)The people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Give them to us so that we may put them to death." (13)But Saul said, "No one shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought deliverance to Israel." (14)Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship." (15)So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the LORD, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.

As we look back to last week’s passage, we know that Saul went back to his father’s farm and said nothing about being made king. We also know there were those who did not like God’s choice for their king, but Saul kept his peace. In the meanwhile, there was a king of the Ammonites named Nahash, who had been victimizing the Israelites who had lived across the Jordan River. In chapter 10:27, we read that he would actually gouge out the right eye of those he victimized and allow them to live under his rule. Still there were about seven thousand men who had escaped Nahash’s scourge and crossed over the Jordan into the region of Jabesh-gilead. And this is where our passage began today.

For Saul, life went on as usual for about a month, and then the enemy, Nahash, crossed the river and began a siege at Jabesh-gilead. The men who lived there tried to make a treaty with Nahash; but Nahash’s soul intent was to bring disgrace upon the nation of Israel and a disability upon the men; he would make a treaty with these men if they allowed Him to gouge out their right eye. The men of Jabesh-gilead asked for seven days to try to find a deliverer for them, and Nahash agreed to give them seven days before inflicting his will upon them. They sent messengers to Gibeah to share this information with Saul, and when Saul heard this news, the Spirit of God came upon Saul and Saul’s anger burned inside him. The Nation of Israel faced it’s first crisis with Saul as their new king. This was Saul’s time of testing. What would he do, how would he go about it? Remember, Saul is a farmer, he has very little if any military training, he probably is not the type to be very diplomatic. Saul’s “crash course” was beginning.

The first thing Saul did was take a yoke of oxen and cut them in to pieces; then had messengers take them to all of the regions of Israel and deliver the message, “Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!” in other words, if you do not come and follow Saul and Samuel into this conflict this is what will happen to your oxen.

This message was sent to farmers, oxen were a means of farming and planting, they knew they could not plant and harvest without their oxen so they were pressured into following him into battle. So they came out, from Israel came three hundred thousand men and from Judah came seventy thousand men. Understand that there are twelve tribes of Israel and Judah is one of them, but Judah is the largest tribe. Some have said this number from Judah is small in comparison to that from Israel, but I am not certain this is so.

Next Saul sends messengers to Jabesh-gilead and tells them, “'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.” The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead rejoiced at this news. Saul divided those who had come to fight into three companies. At dawn of the next day they entered the Ammonite camp cutting down the ammonite army and those who remained were scattered and alone.

Saul under God’s guidance defeated the Ammonite’s and freed those who were under siege. He had no formal training but he had something the Ammonites did not, Saul had God on his side, leading and guiding him, and Saul listened and obeyed. But Saul was not finished; there were those of his own countrymen who did not think that Saul was able to lead and protect the Israelites. Those who followed Saul willingly wanted to put those who had no faith in Saul to death; but Saul put a stop to that thinking and suggested going back to Gilgal to renew the alliances within the country and his kingship. God was not only Leading Saul in battle and defense of the people but he was also leading him in unifying the people of God, those from Israel and those from Judah.

So What can we learn from this passage and this story? We can learn that God gives us crash courses when we need them to fulfil his purpose. God gives us a “crash course” to teach us to rely on Him. But how does God deliver this crash course?

God gives us a “crash course” by allowing the enemy to attack. When the enemy attacks, how do you react? Do you try to do it all on your own or do you go to the GPS we spoke of last week. Truth be told, we are all lost without God’s Guidance. And in tough situations we can either give up, look for help, or declare war on the enemy.

When you choose to give up, you become enslaved to whatever it is you surrendered to. And that is what these people were going to do until they were told they would have to not just be the enemies’ slave but also be humiliated by them. Let me be clear, Satan does not only want to enslave you to him, but he also wants to humiliate you and take away any dignity you may have. All you have to do is look at those who are enslaved to addiction; addictions to drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, food, and these are the ones that are most obvious. When people are addicted, they are not only enslaved, but they are also humiliated and lose any dignity they may have left.

We can choose to go look for help. Sometimes we need someone to help us through. Sometimes we need to go to our leadership and say hey, I have a problem and I need your help. These people went to Saul and told them their struggle and not only did he not turn them away, but he called in others to stand next to him as he went to their defense. Our biggest drawback is that many times we are to proud to ask for help. Even when we need to go to God for help, we are sometimes to proud to ask the Lord to help us out of the situation. Maybe it is because we do not want to be indebted to the Lord; perhaps we know we are not worthy of His mercy and grace, perhaps we do not want to be seen as a weakling, or perhaps we are afraid our request will be turned down. Do not let your pride hold you back; if you need help, whether it is from God or from a friend in the church, be bold and ask.

Our third choice when things get tough is to declare war on the enemy. When Saul heard what happened, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power and Saul got angry. It’s o.k. to get angry- Jesus did. The Bible says not to sin in our anger. But God can use our emotions, including anger to fulfill His purpose.

When Saul got angry and reacted by cutting up a yoke of oxen and sending out to the different tribes, “Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they turned out as one man.” They were united, partly out of fear but also out of the knowledge that Saul was not just being dramatic. He meant what he said and would do it. When God molds us together as one, when we are united, all for the same purpose, the enemy will always be defeated!

God gives us a “crash course” by allowing the people to talk. After the victory, all of a sudden Saul has friends and followers. Sauls actions convinced some that he was the right man for the job, that God had made the right choice. But then there were some that wanted to remind Saul about those who doubted Saul’s abilities. They had some advice for Saul, “Maybe we should go round them up and kill them.” There are always those who want to stir up conflict, some just want to have the leader’s ear, but how we act can make all the difference.

When you are given advice, how do you react? You can either follow it, ignore it, or you can correct it. We need to consider the advice of others, but don’t start doing things until you have bathed it in prayer and considered the consequences of your decision. Allow the Lord to guide you when you are given advise as to whether it is good advice or not. You can ignore the advice, and at first glance this sounds like the right thing in this situation; but we need to be open to what we hear, open to what others have to say. Ignoring it and acting like it never happened will not solve the problem; in fact, it may even turn others against you. But in this case Saul corrected it. Saul simply shut it down. He corrected them and reminded them that God had saved them from the enemy.

In 1 Samuel 11:14, we read that Saul’s kingship was reaffirmed, they sacrificed fellowship offerings to God, and then they held a great celebration. In chapter 12, Samuel begins to preach a very important sermon to them. In this sermon, you can find 3 distinct testimonies:

#1: The testimony of Samuel. “Did I steal, or cheat, or bribe, etc…”? Samuel reminded the people of what he had told them and that he was blameless for the things that occurred. Samuel reminded them that he had followed the Lord’s leading in all of this

#2: The testimony of God. Samuel reminded them of how God saved them, how God saved them over and over, time and again. Samuel reminded them of what would happen when they turn from God. And God has proved himself over and over.

#3: The testimony of the Word. God spoke by sending thunder and rain. He spoke to them by sending his word through the power of his hand, demonstrated in His ability to make the skies thunder and pour down rain. God speaks to us through showing us His power. We need to keep our eyes open as we listen for his voice.

Finally, God gives us a “crash course” by allowing the Word to warn us. The Word of God will show us our choices and the consequences for our choices. Samuel reminded the people that they had some responsibilities to fulfill. Just because Saul had led them to a victory it does not mean that everything was completed, this is not the end of this story; in fact this trip is just beginning.

In order to avoid the potholes of this world, you must fear God, serve God, and obey God. Know that when we follow the Lord that He will supply our needs, but when we defy Him, he will allow us to be tempted and tested in ways that are far beyond what we may be able to stand. We must know that as we serve the Lord His will is being completed and His mercy and grace are all around us. Finally know that as we obey the Lord, he will lead us into places where we are able to have an impact upon our world, those in it, and that impact may even spread far beyond where we are.

To this point, Saul has done well; he has been fearful, in service to, and obedient to the leading of the Lord. But we will see Saul begin to change, he will take his eyes off the Lord, and soon his road will get bumpy and Saul will begin hitting potholes. Why, because he stopped following God. He forgot what he learned when he took the crash course.

How are you doing learning from the “crash course”?