**June 27, 2021 1 Samuel 13:1-23**

***No U-turns***

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 13:1-15 NRSV

*(1)Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty two years over Israel. (2)Saul chose three thousand out of Israel; two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; the rest of the people he sent home to their tents. (3)Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" (4)When all Israel heard that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines, the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal. (5)The Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude; they came up and encamped at Michmash, to the east of Bethaven. (6)When the Israelites saw that they were in distress (for the troops were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns. (7)Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. (8)He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people began to slip away from Saul. (9)So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. (10)As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and salute him. (11)Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were mustering at Michmash, (12)I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the LORD'; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." (13)Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, (14)but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and the LORD has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (15)And Samuel left and went on his way from Gilgal.*

**Notes:**

1. Saul’s record had been one of ***obedience*** and ***victory***.
   1. The ***Philistines*** came and Saul had to deal with them.
   2. The king faces a battle that looks ***impossible*** to win.
   3. The ***Philistines*** army and set up their camp at Michmash.
2. Saul selected three thousand men to be the ***military*** force.
   1. They felt their situation was ***critical***, so they ran and hid,
   2. Saul and his army is taking a ***U-turn***.
3. The first sign of making a U-turn is ***unbelief*** or a lack of ***faith***.
   1. Jonathan ***trusted*** God and stepped out on ***faith***.
   2. Saul had the trumpet blown, taking ***credit*** for this victory.
4. A second sign of making a U-turn is ***impatience***.
   1. Saul ***failed*** to follow God’s instruction.
   2. He had no ***consideration*** for the effects of his actions.
   3. Our ***faith*** and ***patience*** go hand in hand.
5. The third sign of making a U-turn is ***dishonesty***.
   1. Saul began to make ***excuses***.
   2. Saul never assumes any of the ***blame*** .
6. We are very much like ***Saul***,
   1. At times we struggle with our ***faith***.
   2. We too become ***impatient***.
   3. we too have difficulty with ***dishonesty***.
7. We must keep the ***faith***, ***wait*** on the Lord, and assume ***responsibility*** for our actions.

**Script:**

This past Monday, I was heading to the church from my home and when I made the turn at the store, I realized that the road was having work done to it. When I reached the flagman, he said that I needed to turn around. I needed to go back the way I had come and choose a different road to get up to the church. Fortunately, I knew the roads well enough and knew a road that I could take to bypass the construction.

Have you ever been going somewhere and the road is so bumpy and full of potholes that you have to stop? What do you do? Do you keep maneuvering your way to your destination or do you make a U-turn and go away from your destination?

Today we take a look at a time in Saul’s career as king, when he moved into the driver’s seat, he stopped following his GPS, and forgot about his crash course on how to be a good leader. We look at 1 Samuel 13:1-23 and the beginning of Saul’s downward spiral where God will remove him from power and replace him with a new king. Turn with me in our Bibles to the scripture for today, 1 Samuel 13:1-23, and stand with me for the reading of God’s word.

*(1)Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty two years over Israel. (2)Saul chose three thousand out of Israel; two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; the rest of the people he sent home to their tents. (3)Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" (4)When all Israel heard that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines, the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal. (5)The Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude; they came up and encamped at Michmash, to the east of Bethaven. (6)When the Israelites saw that they were in distress (for the troops were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns. (7)Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. (8)He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people began to slip away from Saul. (9)So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. (10)As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and salute him. (11)Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were mustering at Michmash, (12)I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the LORD'; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." (13)Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, (14)but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and the LORD has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (15)And Samuel left and went on his way from Gilgal. The rest of the people followed Saul to join the army; they went up from Gilgal toward Gibeah of Benjamin. Saul counted the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. (16)Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin; but the Philistines encamped at Michmash. (17)And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies; one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, (18)another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the mountain that looks down upon the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. (19)Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, "The Hebrews must not make swords or spears for themselves"; (20)so all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, or sickles; (21)The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. (22)So on the day of the battle neither sword nor spear was to be found in the possession of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and his son Jonathan had them. (23)Now a garrison of the Philistines had gone out to the pass of Michmash. (1 Samuel 13:1-23 NRSV )*

Up to, this point Saul’s record had been one of obedience and victory. He defeated Nahash and the Ammonites; and had established himself as Israel’s hero and king. The nation went to Gilgal, had a celebration of their new King, and heard a great sermon from Samuel about being faithful to God. But, understand that one victory doesn’t make you a conqueror. In 1 Samuel 13 the Philistines came on the scene and Saul had to deal with them. Unfortunately, at this point Saul stopped moving towards God and started moving away from Him.

In chapter 13, we find ourselves about 1 year after the defeat of the Ammonites. The 31 year old king is faced with a battle that looks impossible to win. The Philistines are infuriated after Jonathan, without the permission of King Saul, attacks and destroys a Philistine outpost. Saul not wanting to look like he has lost control of his military, orders the horn of victory to be blown, taking credit for this enemy’s defeat. This provokes the Philistines to assemble an army of 3000 chariots carrying two riders in each, six thousand horsemen, and an army as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They set up their camp at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven.

Now our passage tells us that Saul after his defeat of the Ammonites selected three thousand men to be the countries military force. Two thousand would go with him to Michmash and one thousand would go with Jonathan into Gibeah. This army was hardly a match for the Philistines; especially with a number of men double the size of his whole army, mounted in chariots. Is it any wonder that they felt their situation was critical, maybe even hopeless; so they ran and hid, some in caves, some in pits, some among the thickets, and some even in the cisterns (the sewers of the day). Others crossed over the Jordan and took up hiding in a foreign country. Those who stayed and remained with Saul were shaking in their sandals. Saul’s army is taking a U-turn, and perhaps Saul is as well.

What does this mean? They are turning away from what they were called to and looking out for their own fears and desires. Some would ask what is wrong with that, but they had made a commitment to the people, to Samuel, and most importantly, to God. When we commit to performing a task for the Lord, we must see it through until we are released from that commitment or until the task is completed.

How do we know they are taking a U-turn? The signs are all there. The first sign of making a U-turn is unbelief or a lack of faith. Saul began his journey obediently and while not confident in his abilities to lead, a trust that the Lord would provide for his weaknesses and inexperience. But now Saul started to walk by sight and not by faith. The Philistine numbers were a little overwhelming; according to my calculations just the chariots and horsemen have them outnumbered four to one. The Philistines had been become a serious threat for some time, controlling the weapons the Israelites were able to make and accumulate. Saul most likely knew this but did nothing about it. The philistines were amassing weapons and military personnel while the Israelites were sitting on their butts doing nothing.

When the time came, it wasn’t Saul that did something about it, it was Jonathan. Jonathan trusted God and stepped out on faith. So, Jonathan and his men went into a Philistine outpost in Geba and started the battle that his father should have. What did Saul do? When all was said and done, he had the trumpet blown throughout the land, taking credit for this victory. Saul’s hand is forced, he has no choice; he must prepare for battle.

This mighty leader was no longer so mighty. The army was “shaking in their boots”, most likely because they had lost their faith in their king, Saul, and even more so lost their faith in God. It is a proven fact that most groups take on the characteristics of their leader and that is what it looks like happened here. They too had become complacent, they had perhaps gotten lazy, they may have even got a little arrogant. Saul had quickly forgotten what Samuel had said in his sermon. If the people and the king followed God, God would take care of them; but if they didn’t, they would be defeated.

Saul was supposed to wait on Samuel to come and offer the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, something that God commanded them to do and required Samuel to be the one to do it. But Saul sees the number of enemy and gets nervous and Saul soon takes matters into his own hands and after seven days, the amount of time required to wait, Saul offers the sacrifices and offerings on his own, defying Samuel who gave him the instructions and defying God.

A second sign of making a U-turn is impatience. Saul had become impatient and felt he couldn’t wait any longer for Samuel to arrive. He knew they needed God, but failed to follow God’s instruction given through Samuel and in his impatience did things on his own terms. He had no consideration for the effects of his decision, nor his actions. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Our faith and patience go hand in hand. It says in Isaiah 40:31 *“… but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (NRSV)”*

James 1:2-7 also holds true in this story, *“(2)My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, (3)because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; (4)and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. (5)If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. (6)But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; (7)for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord. (NRSV)”* The third sign of making a U-turn is dishonesty. Saul rushed ahead and offered the burnt offering; then when Samuel arrived, he could tell something was wrong. Immediately Saul began to make excuses. In chapter 13 he blames Samuel for being late. Moving ahead into chapter 14, Saul blames his son Jonathan, and then in chapter15; Saul goes on to blame the people, the very people he was called to lead. Saul never blames himself, and it seems as if he never assumes any of the blame falls at his feet, he seems totally oblivious to his own participation in the folly. But he is rather good at finding people to point the blame at and making excuses.

When Samuel does arrive, Saul is just finishing up; Samuel can see it in Sauls eyes and face. Samuel says, “*You acted foolishly, you have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command*.” Samuel then leaves Saul and the remnants of his army, and Saul counts those who remained with him. Only 600 men remained with him after the events of this story, a mere portion of what Saul started with.

We are very much like Saul, we at times struggle with our faith, many times we are so overcome by the size of the battle we see ahead that we forget the size of our God; we forget that the God who has created this entire world and all of the creatures in it is capable of things that we cannot even imagine. Many times our insecurities cause us to do things that we would not have done under normal circumstances. We take credit for things that other people have done, and do our best to keep our own inadequacies hidden from view.

We also have difficulty waiting on the Lord to work, We too become impatient. How many times have you seen things that others are to do but you go ahead and do them on your own? How many times do we circumvent the Lord and just handle situations on your own? How often do we fail to take into considerations the impact our rash actions will have on ourselves, our families, or other believers. Wait on the Lord and you will see His hand at work. Many times we miss the glory of the Lord because we do not wait for him to work.

Finally we to have difficulty with dishonesty. We allow people to make assumptions about situations and allow them to share these misconceptions with others. You do not lie straight out, but by allowing others to believe misconceptions we allow them to be deceived, and in turn deceive others. Then there are the times we shift the blame to other people. Saul blamed everybody but himself. When we assume responsibility for our actions we help to remedy the difficult situations we find ourself in.

In our lives we must keep the faith, wait on the Lord, and assume the responsibility for our actions. There are consequences to going away from God. God can remove your influence, resources, and your strength. Whether you’re going in God’s direction or not; you will have to fight the enemy at times. As soon as you fight in your own power, you will experience fear; and defeat is probably close behind.

This morning, there may be some of us who need to decide if we are going to continue to move forward, following the Lord although the road is bumpy; or if we are going to make a U-turn and follow our own way. We can all reach the life promised for eternity, but only if we have faith, if we are patient to wait on the Lord, if we are are honest in all of our words and actions; and if we Only Trust him.