**Week Eight – October 11/12 – I Samuel 11-13**

**Introduction** - “The Old Testament is full of justice and the New Testament is full of mercy.” This opinion is often thought, sometimes stated, and always misses the mark. Tonight’s passage is full of reminders of both justice and mercy, and quite often justice that points to mercy. God does not have a split personality; He does not play good cop/bad cop. He is consistently just and willing to bring correction and punishment. He is extravagantly merciful. Long before the cross His mercy and grace was already on display.

**Read I Samuel 11:1-11** - The big takeaway here is that God is perfectly just. What looks like vengeance and wrath are often overflowing components of compassion and justice. There is a consistency throughout Scripture that whenever it says “the Spirit of God came upon him”, we are about to learn something about how God works and moves. This is so because when God’s Spirit leads someone to act, a reflection of the heart of God will be expressed in the situation.

One of the hardest Scriptural concepts to communicate well is “the fear of the Lord.” Many of us unfortunately have a familiarity of a person using fear to gain control of a situation, whether that is fear of a person or fear of an outcome. That is not the core of fear of the Lord - the fear of the Lord is more about awe, wonder, and being moved to fall on your face in worship. This passage illustrates that well. **In v. 7, how do the people respond when faced with the “terror of the Lord”? How does or should an awe for God unite His people?**

**Read I Samuel 11:12-15.** “Terror of the Lord” here is not “I must bow down just to save my own skin”, but is expressed in the fact that they “came out together as one.” This fear does not lead to “everyone for themselves” mentality, but a “we pull together to follow this mighty God - He is our hope!”

**In verse 13, Saul shows mercy after the people call for justice against those who showed disdain for the king. What reason does Saul give for his lean toward mercy?**

**I Samuel 12** - Samuel’s farewell speech is built around two main questions for the people. 1. Did I do right by you? 2. Have you dealt with the repentance from your decision to follow your own way (and demand a king) instead of God’s way?

**Read I Samuel 12:1-5 - *The first question*** - *Did I do right by you?* We all long for a “Ya done good” and a recognition that we got it right. The good news is that as they considered the five questions that Samuel asked them in verse 3, he probably would have gotten excellent “grades.” But blind spots are called blind spots for a reason. In 12:2 he says, “and my sons are here with you.” The bad news is that he was oblivious to the fact that his sons were not the godly leaders that were needed and all the people knew it. (see 8:3 and 8:5) **What are the “make my own plan” blind spots that prevent me from fully trusting God? What can we do to put ourselves in a place where we can be most honest with ourselves and be less likely to be a victim of our own blind spots?**

**Read I Samuel 12:6-19 - *The second question*** - *Have you dealt with the repentance from your decision to follow your own way (and demand a king) instead of God’s way?*

**Verses 8-11 are an example from their ancestors - what was Samuel’s point in recounting that point in their history?**

**Verses 12-15 are a reminder of a more recent example, one that they all had experienced - what was Samuel’s point in recounting this to the people?**

**Verses 16-19 are a reminder by providing a fresh sign of God’s power - what was Samuel’s point in calling for this sign before the people?**

**Read I Samuel 12:20-25** - These last six verses are full of gold in understanding God’s relationship with man. Read each verse again individually, and after each one ask the same question each time, **“What does this verse teach us about the nature and character of God, the response God desires from us, and/or what the call for us to obey God looks like?”**

Before we go to chapter 13, let’s wrestle with the question they were given - **have you dealt with the repentance from current or past decisions to follow your own way instead of God’s way?**

**Read I Samuel 13:1-15** - The foolishness of Israel’s sin in demanding a king is made evident here. I Samuel 12:14 indicated that their rebellion has added another variable - now they are also accountable for the heart response of the king they wanted, and here we have our first major example of Saul departing from the heart of God to follow his own way.

Let’s look back again at verses from last week to better understand the context of this chapter. **Read I Samuel 10:8. What are the specifics of Samuel’s directions to Saul? In chapter 13, how do Saul’s actions compare to what Samuel had asked of him?**

Saul decided here to take matters into his own hands. At first glance, it might seem as if Saul is doing a noble thing and taking initiative. However, it is revealing his lack of trust in God. **Why do we (like Saul) have this tendency to take things into our own hands? If we believe God is good and that He has the ability to deliver us, why do we still have such a hard time waiting on God?**

Samuel immediately sees that something is wrong and confronts Saul with, “What have you done?” Saul’s response to Samuel is dripping with distractions, rationalizations, and excuses. Consider Saul’s thought progression in verses 11-12, “When I saw… I thought… so I felt compelled…” **Have you ever like Saul been tempted to rationalize and defend your actions by pointing to external factors instead of admitting that you went contrary to what you knew was the right choice? Why do we so easily fall into that trap of excusing away and rationalizing?**

Verse 14 brings a sweeping word of judgment against Saul’s reign, but it also gives us the first hint of God providing a better plan and the coming of king David.

**Conclusion** - Let’s review some of the places in these chapters where justice was displayed and mercy was displayed: (*Leaders, if time allows instead of sharing this list, ask your family group to walk back through the chapters and together create their justice/mercy list)*

* 11:6 - Saul being filled with the Spirit is a gift of grace and mercy from God.
* 11:11 - God enacts justice against the Ammonites while extending mercy to Israel, giving them victory.
* 11:12-15 - The people want judgment, but Saul (who has again and again witnessed God’s mercy) shows mercy.
* 12:1-5 - God’s has shown his mercy over an extended time to Israel by providing them a faithful priest.
* 12:6-11 - Samuel “confronting them before the Lord” is an act of God’s grace, as the fear of the Lord pushes them towards an attitude of being poor in spirit. Also God recounts all of the merciful, righteous deeds shown to their forefathers and brings attention to the righteous deeds shown to them.
* 12:15 - If the people do not obey the voice of the Lord judgment will be upon them.
* 12:19-25 God’s mercy is shown here again in Samuel pleading to the Israelites.
* 13:14 - Judgment is shown in that Saul’s kingship is declared to have a set endpoint. Mercy is shown in that God will raise up a faithful king.

**What is our response when faced with God of mercy and judgment?**