

Lords Supper

Luke 22:15-20

Then he said to them, "I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

20 In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Series Slide

Don Timmer was 18 years old in 1945, when he was drafted into the 89th Infantry Division of the US Army under the command of General George Patton.

Though just a private, because he was the only one in his division who spoke fluent German, he was called on as the interpreter as his Division went into Ohrdruf, Germany- to liberate the very first Nazi concentration camp. So no one knew what to expect.

Timmer remained silent about what he saw that day for nearly 60 years, until in 2003, he broke his silence.

He said as they came into the camp, the soldiers shared their rations with the living and looked around, stunned, at the scene before them. At noon the division commanders arrived, and General Patton himself showed up. Within half an hour, fearless "Old Blood and Guts," as Patton was known to his men, was so sickened by what he saw that he "threw up."

General Patton then brought the mayor of Ohrdruf and his wife to the camp to see for themselves what happened right under their noses. The mass grave. The burning bodies. The smell. The horror. Its not that they weren't aware that something nefarious was happening. Its not that the guards didn't come into their town on their days off and brag about the anti-semitic mass murder they were a part of. The citizens of Ohrdruf just chose to pretend it wasn't happening.

General Patton ordered the mayor, his wife and all the other able-bodied townsfolk to come back the next day and dig individual graves for each of the dead prisoners.

The citizens did as they were told, completing 80% of the burials and promising to come back the following day to finish the job. That night, the mayor and his wife hanged themselves.

Don Timmer- that 18 year old soldier- was called to translate their suicide note. It said, "We didn't know! - but we knew."

Title Slide- "We Didn't Know, but We Knew: How Self-Deception is a Gateway Sin"- 1 Samuel 15

We are going to go backwards a chapter here for a little prequel to last week. Last week, Elisha preached chapter 16 on the anointing of David as king, but we're going to back up to look at King Saul's downfall.

The last time I preached from 1 Samuel, we left off in Chapter 8, where- against God's wishes- Israel demanded to have a king like all the other nations, so God, through Samuel the prophet basically told them "Ok. I'll give you what you want, but you are going to regret it."

In chapter 9, we meet Saul- who is an impressive specimen of a man. He is taller than everyone else.

But Saul has this humility. About him. He's from the Tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of all the families of Israel and so he doesn't feel worthy of the honor of Samuel's attention- and certainly doesn't feel worthy to be king.

In fact, when God tells Samuel to anoint Saul as King, Saul is hiding in a closet with some suitcases.

And honestly, his kingship doesn't start off pretty good. Saul's humility drives him to depend on God, and his kingship starts...ok.

But by the time you get to Chapter 13. You start to see some cracks in Saul's character. In fear, he disobeys Samuel's instructions preparing for a battle. and offers a sacrifice he wasn't supposed to offer until Samuel got there.

Just listen to his excuse when Samuel calls him on it.

13:12

I thought, 'The Philistines will now descend on me at Gilgal, and I haven't sought the Lord's favor.' So I forced myself to offer the burnt offering."

"I forced myself to do it."

Listen to the rationalizing- I was in a pickle! I just wanted to serve the Lord! I didn't want to do it, but I had to!

After this moment- its downhill. Saul starts making lazy, self-exalting, and rash decisions. You can tell he's King...and he knows it. A far cry from the early days of hiding in the luggage.

And by Chapter 15, he's won some battles, but God has already told him through Samuel that he will be anointing a new king to take his place. So, we pick up now in Chapter 15 with the final instruction God gives to Saul through Samuel.

1 Samuel 15:1-35

Samuel told Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over his people Israel. Now, listen to the words of the Lord.

2 This is what the Lord of Armies says: 'I witnessed what the Amalekites did to the Israelites when they opposed them along the way as they were coming out of Egypt. 3 Now go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Do not spare them. Kill men and women, infants and nursing babies, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys.' "

4 Then Saul summoned the troops and counted them at Telaim: two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah. 5 Saul came to the city of Amalek and set up an ambush in the wadi. 6 He warned the Kenites, "Since you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, go on and leave! Get away from the Amalekites, or I'll sweep you away with them." So the Kenites withdrew from the Amalekites.

7 Then Saul struck down the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is next to Egypt. 8 He captured King Agag of Amalek alive, but he completely destroyed all the rest of the people with the sword. 9 Saul and the troops spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and choice animals, as well as the young rams and the best of everything else. They were not willing to destroy them, but they did destroy all the worthless and unwanted things.

10 Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, 11 "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from following me and has not carried out my instructions." So Samuel became angry and cried out to the Lord all night.

12 Early in the morning Samuel got up to confront Saul, but it was reported to Samuel, "Saul went to Carmel where he set up a monument for himself. Then he turned around and went down to Gilgal." 13 When Samuel came to him, Saul said, "May the Lord bless you. I have carried out the Lord's instructions."

14 Samuel replied, "Then what is this sound of sheep, goats, and cattle I hear? "

15 Saul answered, "The troops brought them from the Amalekites and spared the best sheep, goats, and cattle in order to offer a sacrifice to the Lord your God, but the rest we destroyed."

16 “Stop! ” exclaimed Samuel. “Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.”

“Tell me,” he replied.

17 Samuel continued, “Although you once considered yourself unimportant, haven't you become the leader of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel 18 and then sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go and completely destroy the sinful Amalekites. Fight against them until you have annihilated them.’ 19 So why didn't you obey the Lord? Why did you rush on the plunder and do what was evil in the Lord's sight? ”

20 “But I did obey the Lord! ” Saul answered. “I went on the mission the Lord gave me: I brought back King Agag of Amalek, and I completely destroyed the Amalekites. 21 The troops took sheep, goats, and cattle from the plunder — the best of what was set apart for destruction — to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

22 Then Samuel said:

Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord?

Look: to obey is better than sacrifice,
to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
he has rejected you as king.

24 Saul answered Samuel, “I have sinned. I have transgressed the Lord's command and your words. Because I was afraid of the people, I obeyed them. 25 Now therefore, please forgive my sin and return with me so I can worship the Lord.”

26 Samuel replied to Saul, “I will not return with you. Because you rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” 27 When Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed the corner of his robe, and it tore. 28 Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingship of Israel away from you today and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you. 29 Furthermore, the Eternal One of Israel does not lie or change his mind, for he is not man who changes his mind.”

30 Saul said, “I have sinned. Please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel. Come back with me so I can bow in worship to the Lord your God.” 31 Then Samuel went back, following Saul, and Saul bowed down to the Lord.

32 Samuel said, “Bring me King Agag of Amalek.”

Agag came to him trembling, for he thought, “Certainly the bitterness of death has come.”

33 Samuel declared:

As your sword has made women childless,

so your mother will be childless among women.

Then he hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

34 Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Even to the day of his death, Samuel never saw Saul again. Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted he had made Saul king over Israel.

Transition:

The larger points of this passage are about Saul's Self-deception- and I think we can learn a lot about the nature of our own self-deception through that. The things that we justify and make excuses for and cover up- but deep down, if we'd be honest with ourselves- we knew all along we were wrong. The stuff we say we don't know...but we know.

Today, I want to show you how dangerous self-deception is...and how easy it is to slip into it.

But first, I want to briefly address a couple of questions that might be rolling around in your head after hearing that passage. So that we can focus on what the passage is really about.

So let's talk about two things here- The killing of the Amalekites, and passages that talk about God's regret.

15:2-3

First, this is not a genocidal killing or a conquest. The Amalekites are not being killed here because Israel believes they are an inferior race, or because Israel wants their land and they need to kill them to take it.

A little history can help here. When Israel was on their way out of Egypt after being enslaved for 400 years, they were defenseless and vulnerable and the Amalekites attacked them.

And then, for the next 300 years, they continued to mercilessly attack Israel pretty regularly.

So finally- after waiting and waiting for them to repent- under Saul's leadership, God says, "Enough! No more bullying!"

This is an attack of justice to deliver Israel. In fact, when they get the command to not spare any of the animals- but to destroy everything- Its because often wars were not about justice- they were about overtaking a people to make them your slaves or to profit from that nation. By giving a command to not take any animals- he's making it so there is no profit for Israel from this war. Israel is the hand of God's justice here.

That still leaves some troubling stuff here. Namely- why would God tell Israel to kill all the women and children? I mean- nursing babies? That doesn't seem right.

I'm not necessarily going to solve this today, but I do want to offer you some things to consider for perspective.

First- in the modern west, we tend to think about justice in an individual manner. Every person should be judged only according to their own actions. Eastern cultures, even today- think more in terms of community. You are never just an individual, you are a part of a group. And the group prospers and suffers together.

Now- its not that one communal justice is right and individual is wrong or vice versa. There is truth in both of those approaches. We are inextricably connected to our community in such a way that what we do affects other members of the community.

From fetal alcohol syndrome to child abuse, there could be things that a child could never control that affect who they grow up to be and how they act as adults.

Additionally, our kids can be blessed from a parents good decisions...even though the kid never did anything to earn that blessing. If a parent puts money in a savings account or if two parents stay committed in their marriage through difficult times so that there is no divorce- the kid wasn't responsible for either of those things, but can greatly benefit from both.

15:6

In fact, the Kenites are an example of this. Their ancestors were kind to Israel when Israel came out of Egypt- so they were spared.

But ultimate justice is always individual. Each of us ultimately, will be judged for our own choices and actions- not the sins of our ancestors.

15:2-3

In a passage like this, we're only seeing part of the justice. Like all of us, each of the Amalekites- including the children- will stand before God to answer for themselves- not their parents and grandparents.

For the children- God holds them innocent. There is some mercy in that. These children will not grow up in the merciless and brutal society that likely would lead to a life bullying other nations, instead, as Tim Keller puts it- God was "collecting them early".

Now, that doesn't mean we can ever justify violence against children and say "Hey, we're just taking them out early to make sure that they don't become bad people." But at this point in the story of that God is telling in Scripture, Israel is his instrument of justice in that world. There is no nation that represents God in that way anymore.

Now- even with that answer- I'm still not real comfortable with this passage (not that God owes me comfort with every passage of Scripture)- but there is another aspect of Hebrew (and other ancient cultures) war literature that is at play here.

Hyperbolic language. It is common for ancient war literature to say "we wiped out every man, woman, child, donkey, goat, and spider- not even the dust mites survived". Its a manner of speaking that means- "We had a decisive military victory". Its like sitting down to a game of Monopoly with your kids and saying "I'm going to totally annihilate you." You and your kids both know you don't literally mean that they will cease to exist at the end of the game (though it can *kind of* feel like that when they land on Boardwalk with a Hotel)

What the LA Angels did to the Colorado Rockies last night, many would say was a blood bath. 25-1 in a baseball game. But everyone knows it was not a literal bloodbath. But if you uncovered an article about that game 1000 years from now, and had no context for 21st century sports writing or what the game of baseball is- you might think one group of men mercilessly beat the other team with sticks. And even that sounds exactly like what happened in 25-1 baseball game to our ears.

1 Samuel 27:8

In fact, what the Scripture does tell us for sure is that the Amalekites are indeed- not completely wiped out. Because they keep showing up in the Bible. In fact, they show up again in the book of 1 Samuel. They are listed among the people that David continues to lead Israel in battle with.

So we know for sure- that they were not completely wiped out. There is a chance that no children were killed in

There are some more nuances with this passage and ancient military language, but I just want to give you a couple of aspects to ponder so we don't just gloss over nursing babies being killed in war.

15:10-11

Now, very briefly, to this phrase about God having regret. This phrase absolutely does not mean that God made a mistake. It doesn't take away at all from God's sovereignty. Very simply- its a manner of speaking that is revealing to us the way God feels about Saul's sin. God gives humans, as a part of the image of God, meta-cognition and agency to make choices. He is ultimately directing all of those choices with his wisdom to bring about a beautiful and certain ultimate end- but that doesn't mean he doesn't feel the reality of the consequences and grieve them along the way as he brings about the redemption of mankind and the renewal of the world.

15:29

In fact, later in the same chapter you see that Samuel says "God is not a man that changes his mind." So we know this is not God looking at what he did and wringing his hands saying "OH NO! I messed up."

Ok, lets move on to what this passage is about.

Just two points today.

1) Self-deception isn't the worst thing we do. Its the gateway to the worst things we do.

Our sin against God- and each other- is almost always based in convincing ourselves that what we are doing is ok...necessary...the lesser of two evils...somebody else's fault... or sometimes we even convince ourselves that it honors God or that he's ok with it.

But the truth is, just like the Mayor and citizens of that of Ohrdurg, Germany- "We didn't know...but we knew."

Ever been driving car and hear a noise, but instead of taking your car to get checked out because you don't want to pay to get it fixed- you just turn the music up?

Then your car is smoking on the side of the road.

"You didn't know...but you knew." That's self-deception.

And Saul is full of it.

15:8-9

Samuel told Saul on behalf of God that he was to kill the King of the Amalekites- kind of like executing Hitler. But he kept him alive. He told Saul not to keep any of the spoils of war...because he didn't want Israel to profit from this war.

But notice- Saul keeps the king alive...and he keeps all the best animals alive...but he destroys all the worthless and unwanted things.

Essentially- he gets rid of everything he doesn't want and keeps the things that benefit his bank account and his reputation.

Keeping a King alive after a battle is a way that kings of this day would show off their power. You could parade the King around so people would say, "Look at Saul. He is the King of kings!"

And all of those animals? That's like having money at this time. The more animals you had- the richer you were both in dollars and in reputation.

15:12

In fact, you really get a peek here into Saul's pride and self-exaltation when Samuel goes looking for him after the battle, and he can't find him.

So somebody tells Samuel- "Oh he went to Carmel, to set up a monument for himself". I mean SAUL IS REALLY FEELING HIMSELF.

I'm sure he set up this monument then said "Feeling Cute, might delete later".

So Saul is looking here to be lauded. His disobedience is grounded in his own self-exaltation. And that is all grounded in his own self-deception.

In order to exalt himself and disobey God- he needs to convince himself- and then others- that all along he's doing the right thing. He needs to justify his actions.

15:13-14

When Samuel gets to Saul, Saul is absolutely set on believing that he has heard and obeyed God.

He says as much. Then Samuel says "Wait a second- if you destroyed all the animals- why do I hear animal noises coming from over there?"

15:15

Now watch the justification kick in. Notice- he slowly slides his part of the disobedience out- "the troops did this. Silly troops. But you know what, I thought, 'Aw we'll keep these animals alive...UNTIL we sacrifice them to the Lord. Yep. That's what we'll do! Then it's a win-win. We still obey God AND God gets a nice worship service.'"

Its like that time years ago we gave away money here for you to go bless your neighbors with...and I will never forget the EPIC story of two of our young single guys that lived together buying themselves a coffee table with the money because then they could "be more hospitable to their neighbors". I won't say who did that, but his name rhymes with Macob Jichael. And he is now our Lorship Weader.

Thats like buying yourself a steak dinner with the money saying "this will give me energy to love my neighbor better."

Oh they didn't know...but they knew.

I wonder where that coffee table is now and if it ever makes sheep noises?

Its like the tell tale heart!

And look at Saul keep it going here. "All the rest we destroyed!"

In that phrase he minimizes his role in the sin- slowly shifting it on to his troops...and makes himself out to be a hero..while he also acts if the whole thing is obedience by talking about his partial obedience.

15:20

Then when Samuel calls him on it, he doubles down. I DID OBEY THE LORD! Saul has deceived himself. Like the people of the Ohrdurg, Germany- he has so lied to himself about what is really going on...he says with confidence..."No I'm obeying!"

15:24-25

In fact, even when it seems like Saul may have come to a moment of repentance...he's only there because he's been caught red-handed...and he still minimizes his role in the sin and passes the blame to someone else- the people he's supposed to lead.

"I was afraid. I would have done the right thing- but I didn't want to let the people down." Then he tries to quickly just move on from his sin and get things back to the status quo.

"Those terrible people bullied me into disobeying. I didn't want to do it, really. boo hoo, I'm so sad. Alright...is that good Samuel. Come on, lets go to church and forget this whole thing ever happened."

I can't tell you how common this is in self-deception. There is a fear of owning your own sin...you are always putting it off on someone else at least in part. Sure, you may have done it..but you never would have done it if other people hadn't basically made you do it because of their actions that were much more sinful than yours.

And in self-deception- there is always a desire to just sweep things under the rug and return to “normal” as soon as possible.

15:30

Saul, in fact, keeps it up all the way to the end. “Yeah yeah yeah- i sinned. But don’t embarrass me. Don’t let people know. Please help me save face.”

Back to 1)

Listen,

2) Self-deception starts where humility & intimacy with God stop.

15:17

Samuel continued, “Although you once considered yourself unimportant...

Humility- Saul started with it...but lost it as he believed his own press. and that’s where the self-deception kicked in.

15:22

Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord?

**Look: to obey is better than sacrifice,
to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.**

HEAR...no word for obey.- intimacy

If you HEAR God- why am I HEARing sheep.

You have traded out your intimacy- you are listening to the call of dollar signs and self-exaltation you hear from those sheep...instead of listening to God who exalted you to be a king.

15:23

**For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
he has rejected you as king**

The most popular substitute for intimacy with God- for hearing him- is religion.

There is something you want to worship more than God. There is something you believe you have to have to be happy- but you know that its not what God wants. So you justify it...with your religious practices. You rebel- like a good little Christian.

You are sitting in church w/ areas of your life that you know are not surrendered to God.

- Some of you are very active Christians... and you're sitting in here with your boyfriend or girlfriend and you're sleeping together; you know the Bible says it's wrong, but you're like, "Yeah, but we love each other and we're not hurting anybody."
- Or maybe you've got some area where you are compromising your integrity--you are cheating on your schoolwork (ChatGPT), or your taxes, or you are lying on a resume because you're desperate and it's hard to get work. You're not a bad person, you just can't follow Jesus there- but look at you come to church and lead a bible study!
- Maybe you refuse to give your money to the church--everything else in your life you do God's way, but you just won't give God the first and the best of your resources. That's too hard- but you give your time and talent...so don't worry about it.
- Or maybe your rebellion is in the area of beliefs. You want to be a Christian, but you refuse to believe what Jesus taught about things like marriage or gender or sexuality. So you just want to opt out of that part...instead of being fully surrendered.

Listen- I'm not saying that Christians won't sin. I'm saying that an ongoing spirit that, even after hearing God on something- You absolutely refuse to really HEAR him...so you self-deceive to make what you know is sin ok.

That's very different from an ongoing wrestling and struggle against your sin. Idolatry and self-deception is based on you justifying yourself- making wrong things right. Calling what is evil- good. But Wrestling with your sin is based on Jesus justification. Knowing that his death and resurrection

2 Corinthians 5:21 & 6:2

He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Working together with him, we also appeal to you, "Don't receive the grace of God in vain."

2 For he says:

At an acceptable time I listened to you,

and in the day of salvation I helped you.

See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!

He listened to us. When your idols fail- and you have your mirror moment- and you cry out to him...he's listen. Will you listen to him.

Jesus- died for our sin, though he was the innocent son of God.

What all of us try to do in our self-deception...pin the blame on someone else...Jesus actually let happen to him. ON the cross- he became our sin- so we would be a monument of his righteousness.

He took our individual justice- so we could benefit as his people- his community- from his righteousness.

Exactly none of that is fair. But its wonderful.

Look to the cross of Jesus to melt your self-deception.

The cross says- its ok to come clean...because his blood makes you clean. As a Christian, safe in Jesus- you don't have to fear the judgment of God for your sin... because you know its all been paid for on the cross. Which means you can tell yourself the truth about your sin when you do it. Its there. Its real. And you can admit it...and turn from it, knowing that in Jesus you are forgiven.

Since you know you are not your sin...you belong to Christ. You have been bought with a price- your identity is secure. And you don't have to fear being shamed- because on the Cross Jesus was shamed for you.

He was hacked to pieces like King Agag, but then was raised to life to reign as the King of Kings.

And he did that for you...and is now inviting you in to a life of intimacy, knowing him and being known deeply. In fact, the cross and the resurrection show you that Jesus knows you at your worst- thats why he died...and still loves you- he was glad to do it. And he wants you close- thats why after his resurrection he comes back and doesn't say "Look what you put me through." as if he died to guilt you. Instead he says, look what I went through for you...will you stop deceiving yourself and come with me, be a part of my family, my kingdom...where you will finally know what it is to be known and to truly know yourself. No more self-deception."

That humbles you to the floor...and exalts you to the sky. No more need to build your own monuments. Being with Jesus is enough for 1,000 lifetimes. Hearing him say "I love" out does any thing you could ever do to bring yourself honor or beauty or security.