

Everyday Hero

Stories of Surrender

Week One: Sarah - Love and Laughter

The focus for this week was on the two parts of surrender. We entered Sarah's story and saw how joy was only found in surrender to both God's will and God's way.

Scripture Focus

Genesis 12:1-3 | Genesis 15:2-6 | Genesis 16:1-5 | Genesis 18:9-12 | Genesis 21:1-7

Sermon Recap

It was a laughable promise. Abram and Sarai are to be the beginning of a nation with descendants that outnumber the stars in the sky. There was a problem, though. In order for this promise to take root, Sarah needed to have a baby. You can imagine the heartache this couple feels as years go by without a pregnancy. Did they get it wrong? Was there some sort of mistake? No. God told them they would be the beginning of a mighty nation. In her attempt to listen to God's promise, Sarai hatches a plan. Perhaps Abram can have a child with someone else. This will be Abram's blood and will "technically" be a fulfillment of the promise they received.

Isn't that the way it usually goes? The promises of God are set alongside our actual lives. "*Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children.*" On the one hand, God promised an heir (many children, in fact!) On the other hand, Sarai has yet to become pregnant! In the face of the facts, Sarai believes that God has kept her from having children (Genesis 16:2). Her confidence in God's will is shaken by the evidence of the "real world." When this happens to us, *Surrender* to God's will is replaced by *interpreting* God's will. We doubt God's heart toward us. Then, we start helping God along and we come up with alternative ways for God's promises to come true.

Sarai wanted to have God's will but she thought she needed to invent a different way for it to come about. This is a constant temptation of surrender. But, notice what happened when she tried to have God's will her way. She is miserable. This is not complete surrender.

Christian surrender should lead to greater freedom. We don't see this in Sarah...until she receives God's will in God's way. She gets pregnant. Then, joy enters the scene! Sarah names her miracle "Isaac." Guess what Isaac's name means: LAUGHTER. Complete surrender has the listening and the laughter.

Family Discussion

- 1) What is something that stands out to you about this week's message?
- 2) Go around and list three things that are impossible for you. (for example: flying, lifting up a train, getting a perfect score on the SAT,...). What would your response be if God told you that you were going to do one of those things?
- 3) How many years would you wait for that promise to come true before you believed that it would never happen?
- 4) Are there actual promises of God that you read in Scripture that you have a hard time believing? Which ones? Are there promises that require you to wait? Which ones are hard to wait for? What are your favorite promises?
- 5) What are some practical things you can do to help you believe God when it's difficult?

Going Deeper

“We cannot know Jesus without following Jesus.” - Stanley Hauerwas

“Tomorrow's freedom is today's surrender.” Leslie Jordan, All Sons and Daughters

Click [here](#) to listen to the song.

- 1) What do you think is God's will for your life? Are there scriptures that can clarify this for you? (Ephesians 5:15-20, 1 Peter 2:15, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 1 Timothy 2:3-4...etc). Why do people often think God's will is so mysterious?
- 2) When you think of surrender, what comes to mind? Submission, defeat, downcast eyes? Freedom, happiness, fulfillment? Some mixture of the two sets of words?
- 3) What do you think this quote means: “Tomorrow's freedom is today's surrender?”
- 4) Does surrender mean that we stop trying? What is the role of the will (or resolve) in surrender?
- 5) How does surrender draw you closer to Jesus?

Week Two: Hannah

Over the next couple weeks, we are going to focus on the first part of surrender (Surrender to God's will). This week, we looked at Hannah and how she surrendered her identity to God's will.

Scripture Focus

1 Samuel 1:1-20 | 1 Samuel 1:21-28 | Matthew 10:39

Sermon Recap

Hannah wanted to be a mother. Motherhood in Biblical times was not only about giving birth. It was a social identity. It defined who you were in the household, in the village, and in temple worship. Motherhood was an identity. Not much has changed. Motherhood is still not only about giving birth. Motherhood is an identity. A mother must choose the right way of giving birth, the right way to feed, clothe, change, and sleep your baby. If you do it right, your identity is secure. If you do it wrong, it is questioned (if not by other people, then from within).

Not everyone is a mother. But, everyone knows what it feels like to be looking at a group of people who belong and LONGING to identify with them. It seems like changing one thing in life will secure an identity and a place of belonging. We think things like, "if I could just work enough..." "if only I was married..." "if I had children..." "If my children were grown..." "I didn't make that mistake..." "If I were in charge..." The list goes on and on. We are constantly looking for that next thing that is going to secure our identities. But, it is ever elusive. It slips through our hands. No matter how much we try, we can't seem to make our own lives.

Hannah prayed that God would make her a mother. But, she didn't want to hold on to that identity. She was willing to give it away (literally give her child away). She was willing to serve God with whatever gifts God gave her (vs. 11). In Hannah, we see someone who held on to her God more than her identity. **Surrendering our identity to God's will means giving up who we want to be for who God wants to make us.** At first this sounds scary. But, what if we really believed that only God knows who we were created to be? The person we *would like to be* isn't necessarily the *best* version of ourselves. It would be like the clay telling the potter what it would like to become. It doesn't work that way.

Jesus says it best. Whoever wants to find their life will lose it. But, whoever loses their life for the sake of Christ will find it.

Family Discussion

- 1) What some stories or ideas that stuck out to you from this week's message? Why do you think those remained with you?
- 2) Share any stories of when you tried to make your own identity (maybe in high school or younger)...For example, I bought a pair of hammer pants in the 8th grade. I couldn't pull it off.
- 3) Why do you think Peninnah's insults hurt Hannah so badly?
- 4) What does it mean to be insecure? How does insecurity manifest itself in your day to day life? Can you give some examples of this? (For example, I am insecure about fixing things. I feel like less of a man because I'm failing at that task. So, if my wife were to make a comment while I am already feeling inadequate, I tend to get overly angry!).
- 5) How does surrendering your identity to God's will impact your insecurity?

Going Deeper

"One aspect of world that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once. We assume that if something can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently." - Eugene Peterson

- 6) Is Surrender something that happens one time at an altar or is it something that happens every day?
- 7) Hannah's surrender was very specific (give God the child He gave her). What are some specific things you are in need of surrendering to God right now?
- 8) Once you surrender your identity to God, is it possible to pick it up again and try to make yourself all over again? Why do we do this? What do we do when we find that we are holding on to something we once surrendered to God?
- 9) Refusing to make our own identity and receiving one from God often means that we have to wait for God. Why is this waiting so difficult?
- 10) Read Psalm 27:14. What does this have to do with Surrender? How does this relate to Hannah's posture in 1 Samuel 1:17-19?

Week Three: Esther

We are still exploring various things that get in the way of being able to surrender to God's will. This week, we turned our attention to safety and comfort. We looked to Esther to show us how to surrender those things to God's will.

Scripture Focus

Esther 4:11-16 | John 10:10

Sermon Recap

Esther's life is marked by comfort. She is living in the palace, has attendants, all the food she wants and all the luxury she could ask for. However, she is a Jew in a time when the king has ordered all Jews to be executed. When she hears this news, she doesn't believe there is anything she can do about it. If she were to go to the king, she may be executed. However, when she explains this to Mordecai, he reminds her that she will not escape the fate of her people. Her comfort (and her life) will end someday. This prompts Esther to go to the king and try to save her people.

I think a lot of people think that God's highest will for their lives is to keep them safe. It's understandable. As parents, we want our children to be safe. So, we buy bike helmets, organic food, outlet covers, rear-facing car seats, and bullet-proof backpacks. We run to our children with bandaids when they skin their knees and ice when they twist their ankles. We work hard to create a world in which our children never get hurt. What parent WANTS their children to get hurt? No one. But, is our safety God's highest goal? Is the safety of your children your HIGHEST goal? I can tell you it isn't because I have never seen any of your children in a giant bubble that protects them from the world. No, we believe that there are some unsafe things our children have to experience in order to grow and become better versions of themselves. What if God's highest goal for you is not your safety but your Sanctity? What if God wants to make you holy *more* than He wants to make you happy?

Esther would risk her life and her comfort for the will of God. She was willing to lay it all on the line to do what she believed God wanted her to do in that moment. Some of you can't even imagine God asking you to risk your comfort or your life for Him. This is something that I believe God wants to challenge today. This shouldn't scare you. This should excite you. God wants you to live a grand adventure. One where you are fully mature and taking on the dark forces of the world. He wants to see you fully grown. This may entail some risk. But, life and life to the full always requires some risk.

Family Discussion

- 1) What stuck out to you this week? Why?
- 2) Share a story from your life about when you had to take a risk and it was worth it.
- 3) Do you think God would ever ask you to do something unsafe? Why/Why not?
- 4) Comfort and Safety are close cousins. Are you too comfortable in your life right now? Why/Why not?
- 5) Do you believe God wants you to be comfortable? Why/Why not?

Going Deeper

“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.”

- C.S. Lewis

“Comfort, the enemy of progress.” - P.T. Barnum

- 6) Esther was moved by a specific crisis. Is there something happening (close to you or around the world) that calls for your intervention? What is it? What kind of situation might call you out of your comfort zone?
- 7) What is the role of risk in living life and life to the full?
- 8) Not all situations call for us to risk our lives (or our comfort). How can you tell the difference between prudence and faithful surrender to God?
- 9) What was Mordecai's role in Esther choosing surrender? Can other people spur us on towards surrender? How so?
- 10) What do you think is God's highest goal for you? What might it cost to achieve that?

Week Three: Rahab

This is the last week that we will focus on surrendering to God's will. So far, we've seen that our identity and our comfort/safety are things that can get in the way of our surrender. This week, we turn our attention to Rahab and see that our allegiances can be a problem as well.

Scripture Focus

Joshua 2:1-22

Sermon Recap

Rahab was from Jericho. She grew up there and had a family there. She had roots. But, those roots were challenged as Israelite spies showed up at her house. The king of Jericho asked her to give them up. She is brought into a battle of allegiances. She can either maintain her allegiance to Jericho or she can switch to Israel. Rahab chooses to switch.

It's not hard to see why. She was a prostitute. It seems as though the Jericho road wasn't getting her very far. She spent night after night being used by the people in her hometown. With the visit from the spies, Rahab sees a way out. This is a possibility for a new life. Surrender is, in fact, the only way into a new life.

Often, we get stuck in patterns of life. Nothing new happens. No new possibility presents itself. Around and Around we go. Jesus invites us into new creation. But, in order to accept the new creation, our allegiances to the old creation have to be cut off. The cross is the only way forward into something genuinely new. While the Jewish leaders were securing their allegiance with shouts of "we have no king but Caesar" before Pilate. Jesus was choosing surrender to God's will by accepting the cross. Sure, he could have called 10,000 angels and brought his new world by force. But, this would not have been new. By His surrender, he opened up the door to a new world. It is through surrender that we walk through that door.

Rahab had to cut ties with everything in Jericho. She had to become a citizen of Israel even while she was living in Jericho. This is uncomfortable. She had to wait until the Kingdom of Israel fully took over. Do you know how long Israel camped at the Jordan river before crossing over to take Jericho? Three days (Joshua 3:2). Does that remind you of any other time of waiting between the surrender of Jesus and the fulfillment of the Kingdom?

Our surrender invites us into the three days. We break our allegiance to the world and wait for the full coming of the Kingdom. We know it will come. So, we operate as citizens of heaven even while we live in the world.

Family Discussion

- 1) What is something that stuck out to you this week?
- 2) Describe what might have gone through Rahab's mind when she was contacted by the king to hand over the spies.
- 3) Why do you think she chose Israel over Jericho (try to list all the reasons you can imagine)?
- 4) How did her surrender to Israel open up a new life for Rahab? How does our surrender to God open up a new life for us?
- 5) What was the cost of Rahab's surrender to Israel? What is the cost of our surrender to God?

Going Deeper

“A person has to get fed up with the ways of the world before he, before she, acquires an appetite for the world of grace.” - Eugene Peterson

- 6) List some allegiances that come with living in the world (ie...consumerism, identity formation, passions, power games, politics, culture, habits...).
- 7) Does pledging allegiance to God *necessitate* breaking allegiance to the world? Why?
- 8) Read Matthew 6:24. What is Jesus saying here?
- 9) What are some allegiances in your own life that need to be broken if you are going to surrender to God?
- 10) What would have to change in your current perception of reality to break those allegiances and choose God?