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SERMON TITLE: A Friend Who Made a Difference
SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 20 various
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It was thought to be Jonathan. However . . .

Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

How many of you have a friend who made a difference? Think back to a circumstance where someone stepped up to help you.

- Maybe it was someone who defended you when you were mistreated;
- Or called you when you were alone;
- Or brought food when you were sick;
- Or invited you to a party;
- Or prayed with you;
- Or gave you money when you were short;
- Or asked your opinion when they had a problem;
- Or gave advice when you had a problem;
- Or invited you on a vacation—or sent you on a vacation;
- Or stepped into your disaster just to be there;
- Or called you for no reason at all.

How many of you have a friend who meets any of those criteria? If you do, *you are blessed*. How many of us **are** that kind of friend to someone? The wisest man on the earth wrote this about friends:

- “The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense” (27:9).
- “A friend is always loyal” (17:17).
- “There are “friends” who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother” (18:24).
- “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend” (27:17).
- “Never abandon a friend-- either yours or your father’s” (27:10).

And if you have a bond in Christ, you really have a friend.

As we look into the Word today, we enter a story about friendship. Now this story is about the friendship between the son of Israel's king, his name was Jonathan; and David, a young man who would eventually replace Jonathan's father.

Jonathan was the oldest son of King Saul and he was heir to the throne. He was a commander in the Israeli army. But he was not the best warrior. During a campaign against the Philistines he attacked prematurely and caused Saul significant some problems.

During this time Saul disobeyed a divine command which had been given by Samuel the prophet. So Samuel declared that Saul had been rejected by God because of his disobedience and another king would be raised up, “a man after God's own heart” (1 Sam 13:14).

Like father, like son. Jonathan inadvertently also breaks a divine command. While it was not his fault he deserves death. However, the people forgive him. But afterwards Samuel begins hearing from God again, who directs him to a family in Bethlehem, a family with many sons, and he is led to select the youngest, most insignificant son. His name was David. (1 Sam 16)

These may seem like unusual circumstances, but I assure you that governmental figures fall into and out of favor quite often. So now we have a king who is supposedly in power and another future king selected by God—and of course we know of the overriding outcome of establishing a line through which Jesus Christ will come.

How is God going to make these changes happen? How does God work in the world to accomplish God's purposes in the midst of human activity, human power grabbing, and the forces of government?

So again, Saul's army goes out on a campaign against the Philistines, the most threatening nation at the time. And the Philistine's leader at the time was a giant named Goliath. You know this story. David was not even a warrior—just a brother who brought food and drink to his older brothers when they were on the battlefield. His brothers were not even nice to him.

But David heard the words of Goliath and was offended on behalf of God.

When you hear others insult God, do you go to God's defense? Do you stand up and say, *what you are saying is not true. I believe in the God of heaven and earth and God is good!*

Well, David did this, AND WON! And when he slew Goliath, Jonathan took note. Jonathan was also a believer in God. He realized that this was an act of God.

Do you look for signs from God in the actions of people and circumstances in your life? This is to be spiritual aware. This is to open your heart to that kingdom that is present here, and that you are a part of, if you believe.

When you see those small signs from God, it can give you great comfort, when you might otherwise be in anxiety. This can give you courage when loss seems to be all around you.

It might simply come as a testimony of someone's faith. Suppose you see nothing but loss. But then in the midst of the loss is the great testimony of someone who had a similar

occurrence. Maybe it is even a friend's testimony about you or your family. They see faith in you when you see loss.

This is living in the Spirit; residing in the Kingdom of God.

So Jonathan saw this great act of God through David and realized God made the WIN happen. So Jonathan took off his royal robe, as the king's heir; took off his girdle which held his weapons; removed his armor, sword, and bow and gave them to David, this non-descript, ruddy but handsome young man with beautiful eyes.

Jonathan realized that day that David was "the man after God's own heart." It was a prophetic act.

Jonathan made a political treaty with David that he would replace Jonathan as military commander. They became friends that day. There's no war to protect his natural position of heir to the throne. Jonathan does this because he sees God at work making this selection. Jonathan submits himself to God's will.

Sometimes it is really hard to submit to God's will—it seems like defeat. But here it is a strategy of faith that sees the big picture. You will see that as we get to the rest of the story. Let's hear it. READ 1 Sam 20 (excerpts) *Now Saul had given David military rank because he defeated Goliath but then become jealous of David's military successes.*

David said to Jonathan, "How have I offended your father that he is so determined to kill me?" "That's not true!" Jonathan protested. "You're not going to die. He always tells me everything he's going to do. . . . It just isn't so." . . . "But I swear to you that I am only a step away from death! I swear it by the LORD and by your own soul!" David replied. "*Tell me what I can do to help you,*" Jonathan exclaimed. David set up a plan. The plan included being absent from the king's festival meal. Would he be missed or not? Only Jonathan would know. . . . David said, "If he says, 'Fine!' you will know all is well. But if he is angry and loses his temper, you will know he is determined to kill me." *Show me this loyalty as my sworn friend-- for we made a solemn pact before the LORD-- or kill me yourself if I have sinned against your father. But please don't betray me to him!"* "Never!" Jonathan exclaimed.

David continued. "*And may you treat me with the faithful love of the LORD as long as I live. But if I die, treat my family with this faithful love.*" So Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, saying, "May the LORD destroy all your enemies!" And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as he loved himself.

The next two days David hid himself in the field with a code to be conveyed to him so that he would know whether Saul intended to kill him.

When David did not show up for the meal for two days, . . . Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. "As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!" . . . Then Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan, intending to kill him. So at last Jonathan realized that his father was really determined to kill David. . . .

The next morning, as agreed, Jonathan went out into the field and took a young boy with him to gather his arrows. . . . He, of course, suspected nothing; only Jonathan and David understood the signal. . . . As soon as the boy was gone, David

came out from where he had been hiding near the stone pile. Then David bowed three times to Jonathan. . . . *Both of them were in tears as they embraced each other and said good-bye, especially David. At last Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn loyalty to each other in the LORD's name. The LORD is the witness of a bond between us and our children forever."* Then David left, and Jonathan returned to the town.

There are some things we need to notice here.

Lesson 1:

A good friend can make a difference when his or her first thought when a friend comes to them with a problem is to say: "*Tell me what I can do to help you.*"

Jesus said, "I give you a new command that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." Laying down your life is not necessarily giving up your life, but to give up your own priorities to help someone. Having support—whether it is emotional support, or financial support, or someone to help you discern next steps—can change someone's entire circumstances.

Lesson 2:

A good friend can make a difference when they are loyal. Friends need to be able to count on each other, as David said, "*Please be loyal as my sworn friend.*" Great comfort comes when the response is "*absolutely.*"

Let's take this to a scenario of a kid in high school. If that kid has a problem, he or she needs an advocate to have his or her back when others turn against them. This is true on the job, in a marriage or student/teacher relationship—loyalty matters. The Psalmist says to God, "O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me." God answers in that Psalm, "The LORD is a friend to those who fear him."

Lesson 3:

A good friend remembers commitments made. Commitments among Christians are a witness to a culture that has a hard time being faithful. We are teaching the next generation to commit to lifelong values which are driven by faith.

David had to flee for his life. How special to know that Jonathan would protect his family and vice versa. In those days, it was customary that the incoming king would kill all the family members of the old regime. This idea of protection and peace would be a witness of a new way of thinking, one of love; one which we grow into as the New Testament reveals Jesus' love.

The Apostle John writes, "Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather *it is an old one you have had from the very beginning.* This old commandment-- to love one another-- is the same message you heard before."

Do you have a friend who comes alongside you in good times and bad? Are you a friend who makes a difference in someone's life? A friend can make all the difference. This is the lifestyle of the Christian. Everyone can **be** a friend to someone. Those who have a friend are blessed by God. AMEN