

“IS THIS YOUR TIME?”

Preached by Steve Kemp on Sunday 10th April 2016

Introduction:-

The Bible is full of details of unlikely heroes – many of them were initially quite reluctant to “stand up and be counted”. Some of these characters are household names to us as Christians and yet their stories could have ended up so differently if they had continued along their pre-selected courses through life! It was only the intervention of God that made the difference! God can melt the coldest of hearts and remould the most intransigent of attitudes; The pages of scripture are full of evidence to support this amazing demonstration of divine power to transform situations, lifestyles, character and mind-sets.

Saul, the zealous opponent of the early church, became the greatest Christian missionary ever known; Moses the Egyptian prince became the leader of the liberated Israelites; Zacchaeus was changed from cheating tax collector to generous host; Gideon from timid nobody to dynamic judge; David from shepherd boy to king.

None of these remarkable heroes were without their faults; each had their own personal moments of failure; each were, at times, hampered by their own weaknesses and restricted ambitions. So many could point back to a key time of personal crisis and confrontation when they might so easily have shrunk from God’s task and missed their moment in history. So often, God places us at a crossroads in life and the route we choose to take so frequently determines our destiny and future.

Our God is the God of the 2nd and 3rd and 4th chance! He never writes us off – he is far more reluctant to do so than we are to do so to our own selves! We may look back upon missed opportunities; we may still be reminiscing over our own stubborn refusals. There may be occasions recent and long past when we have blown it big time.

So .. is that it? Has life passed us by? Has God turned his attentions to others? Has he lost patience with us? Have we been assigned to the file of the “might have beens?”

I invite you to travel with me this morning on a quick tour through the pages of scripture – you might just see something to change your mind as we take a look at ...

1. THE MAN WHO HID BUT CAME OUT OF HIDING

Samuel was sent to anoint Saul as Israel's first king – he hid himself away underneath the luggage! He didn't want to be found and he resisted the call to the task! Today our scripture study focuses on ..

King Saul READ 1 Samuel 10 v 20 – 24

He was a fine figure of a man; physically superior to all around him; a choice the people would surely approve of but he concealed himself; he faltered at God's choice and sought for the challenge to go away by keeping himself out of the way!

“He has hidden himself among the supplies.” (1 Samuel 10 v 22)

He dived for cover; he didn't want to be found: He hid in the shadows. The enormity of the call seemed to completely overwhelm him and he buried himself in “stuff”. His instant decision was “This is not for me”. He questioned God's calling and responded with fear and unbelief. He made a beeline for the obscurity and shelter that came with the baggage of day to day life!

“They ran and brought him out” (1 Samuel 10 v 23)

Did he think God would not know where he was? Did he imagine that God would turn his attentions to someone else, in his prolonged absence? Did he perceive that he could bury himself from God's line of view? God sent folk to fish him out! He had his eyes on Saul and nobody else would do! His citizens in waiting ran to pull him out! He was dragged out from the detritus of daily life that surrounded him. God wanted Saul!

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” (Proverbs 29 v 25)

Peer pressure is a fearful thing! **What will other folk think if I step out and do as God asks?** Public criticism and cynicism is highly debilitating. **Could we ever live up to other's expectations?** The gaze of self- analysis can be paralyzing – **“I am not capable of it! It is beyond me!”** All of this is to presuppose that God has got it wrong in the first place! So .. we attempt to hide amidst the business of everyday life; amidst the painful glare of individual comparisons with others; We occupy ourselves with the baggage of life – family cares; earning a wage; boosting our education; paying the bills; raising the children; maintaining the home” and we rule ourselves out.

“Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house.” (Matthew 5 v 15)

Christ's declaration from his Sermon on The Mount puts things into perspective! Who are we to hide away our talents, gifts, abilities and calling? He gave them to be put to use in his kingdom! Don't play them down or hide them away!

Sometimes, God send us a friendly nudge; he despatches his servants to drag us out of hiding; he strips away the baggage. He shows us what we are capable of if we will only trust him and walk with him.

Are you going to come out of hiding? God knows where you are!

Conclusion:-

It is never too late where God is concerned. The past is the past; it need not hamper our present or frustrate our future. We each have a past. There is probably a skeleton in every one of our cupboards! Every one of us will have blotted our copybook. Each of us can probably look back with regret upon our own foolish mistakes, appalling choices and obstinate intransigence. We may still flinch at the thought of those times when we turned our backs upon God's will to pursue our own interests and desires, abandoning and rejecting his plans for our lives.

Could NOW be your time? Is it time to bury the past and grab the present? Is it now time to say "Yes" to God. Is it not time to come out of hiding; to stop running; to stop choking? If he is calling you, he will walk with you every step of the way!