
~ *A Spacious Place* ~

1 Samuel 1:1-2; 8-10 & 2 Samuel 22:1-3; 20

OPC Women's 2021 Virtual Retreat ~ June 12th ~ Tricia Mathys

You may have heard me reference the “spacious place” the Bible talks about. Last month I encouraged the younger women amongst us to live from and flourish in this place. It’s one of my favorite descriptions of life in the kingdom of God, and I use the NIV translation because it’s where I first encountered it and how it wrote itself on my heart. The ESV translates the same word as “a broad place.” The King James as “a large place.” You can see they’re all trying to communicate the same thing: a place that’s wide, open, safe, and free. Just note that I’ll be using the word **spacious** this morning, regardless of which translation I’m reading from because like I said that’s how it’s written on my heart.

We find this description in the Psalms, in Job, and in Hosea. But I’ll be focusing on the mention of it at the end of 2nd Samuel. So to begin, I want to read the bookend prayers of 1 and 2 Samuel. At the beginning of 1 Samuel, Hannah is praying and giving thanks. At the end of 2 Samuel, David is singing a prayer of thanks. These two prayers begin and end the glorious stories of who God displays Himself to be throughout this portion of redemptive history. I won’t read the prayers in their entirety, but I would encourage you to check them out for yourselves to see all the beautiful parallels.

The first prayer is Hannah’s:

If you’re looking at the text, I would quickly draw your attention to the descriptions Hannah uses for God’s work and His nature. Then, do the same as I read from 2 Samuel 22.

Samuel 2:1-2; 8-10 *And Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. (2) "There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God..... (8) He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. (9) "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. (10) The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed."*

Then we read David’s psalm at the end of 2nd Samuel:

2 Samuel 22:1-3; 20 *And David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. (2) He said, "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, (3) my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield,*

and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.... **He brought me out into a [spacious] place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.**

1) *The Wilderness...*

- A. It may seem strange, but before we can talk about the spacious place, we need to talk about the wilderness.
- B. We're accustomed to hearing about the 40 years of wilderness wanderings for Israel and how it finds its corrective/redemptive counterpart in Jesus – who is the true Israel – in His 40 days of testing in the wilderness.
- C. These really help to set the stage, because:
- After the Fall, the wilderness becomes a place of wandering...and grumbling.
 - It's a place where the *fullness* of the Lord's redemption has not yet come.
 - The simplest way to put it is that the wilderness is an unpleasant and unsafe place.
- D. What happens there:
- i) It's a place of waiting and hiding. David – before he's anointed king – often found himself in the wilderness, in trouble and fear for his life. And he often sought safety among the rocky terrain of the desert, or – famously – you may remember, among the rocky caves.
- (a) It's not uncommon to read something like this in David's story:
1 Samuel 23:15 *David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.*
1 Samuel 23:25 *And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told, so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness...*
- (b) In fact, until he becomes King in 2 Samuel 5, the wilderness is really the only residence that David has.
- ii) It's a place of testing **Hebrews 3:7-9** *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, (9) where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.*
- iii) It's a place of temptation **Matthew 4:1** *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*
- iv) It's also a place where the message of repentance must come. **Matthew 3:1-2** *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, (2) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It's where the fullness of God's redemption is dawning as the Gospel is preached.*
- E. The wilderness is an open space, but one filled with impediments that bind, oppress, and squeeze us. In other words, it's a tight spot where it's hard to breathe or find safety because it's a place of waiting, testing, temptation, limitation, even dark shadows.
- F. Now, maybe you're thinking to yourself, hmmm, that sounds like life this side of eternity.

- G. And in many ways, it is. Because I'm not saying there's a wilderness where God is NOT with us and a spacious place where He IS. Not at all. But, what I hope to discover with you are what the key differences are between the two, and how they overlap.
- H. You see, it's the goodness of God's grace that turns the wilderness into a spacious place.
- i) **1 Samuel 23:14** *And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.*
 - ii) And in **Mark 1:12-13**, reading about Jesus – the true King: *“And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.*
- I. God protecting and ministering **in the wilderness** creates a spacious place.

2) *The spacious place...*

- A. Let's also look at what Job has to say about this place:
- B. **Job 36:16** *“But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction. He is wooing you from the jaws of distress **to a spacious place**, free from restriction, to the comfort of a table laden with choice food.”*
- i) For starters, the spacious place is where God delivers us IN suffering and affliction – maybe not from it.
 - ii) It's a place where God's voice comes to us.
 - iii) It's a place where the heart of God woos us out of distress
 - iv) It's a place of abundance and honor – as Hannah declared, *“...He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor” (1 Sam 2:8)*
 - v) It's a place of safety – as David declared, *“He rescued me...”*
 - vi) It's a place where our eyes are opened (I once was blind but now I see)
- C. **It's a place where you can breathe.** I'm going to geek out for a second now because there's a scene from the Lord of the Rings movies that lives in me...
- In this scene, Gandalf comes to King Theoden – who is meant to be ruling the kingdom of Rohan but has been brought under the spell and power of Saruman - the dark and evil one. And this king has been turned stony and decrepit from Saruman's influence.
 - That influence had been cultivated by Wormtongue (Saruman's underling)
 - Well, when Gandalf enters Theoden's chamber, He says to Wormtongue, “Be silent! I have not passed through fire and death to bandy crude words with a witless worm.”
 - Gandalf then turns to Theoden and holds up his staff. The crowd goes wild!
 - He says to the evil Saruman – through Theoden... “You did not kill me, you will not kill him”

- To King Theoden, “Too long have you sat in the shadows...harken to me...be gone [Saruman].”
 - A battle for Theoden’s soul ensues, but Gandalf the White is triumphant and King Theoden returns to himself and to his humanity. What was once a cold and stony face, becomes flesh and alive.
 - Gandalf says in triumph, “Breathe the free air again my friend.”
- D. Promise not to freak out if I say that, to me, this is a picture of the spacious place.
- E. Where the supernatural power, purpose and blessings of God work together to set us free...to be who we’re meant to be.
- F. Verse 2 and 3 of David’s prayer describe this God in our midst:
- i) **He** is your rock for security and a hiding place in the wilderness
 - ii) He is your fortress, a refuge for rest
 - iii) He is your shield of protection from every fiery arrow of the enemy (Eph 6)
 - iv) He is your horn of salvation, which is the symbol of power and strength to exalt the righteous and cut off the wicked
 - v) He is your stronghold – a place of security and survival
 - vi) He is the thunder – referring to His voice of power and majesty
 - vii) He is your ultimate deliverer – **Ex 14:13** (*I love the NASB here*)
...Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will perform for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again, ever.
- G. We have been freed from the enemies of our soul and set in a spacious place.
- H. We know, right, that with the exception of glorification, we have all the blessings of the Ordo Salutis NOW... If you know them, sing along with me...
- i) Election, Effectual Calling, Regeneration, Faith, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Perseverance...and our coming Glorification.
 - ii) Do we underestimate the magnitude of what’s already ours? The “already” of the already not yet?
- I. The spacious place is:
- i) Resurrection ground – filled with ALL the realities of our salvation **Ephesians 2:4-6** *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*
 - ii) Redemption ground – it’s the invasion of the King and His Kingdom in our midst – **Colossians 1:13-14** *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, (14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*
- J. The “ALREADY” ...that’s what makes the place spacious:

The blessings off the Ordo...we've been chosen, called, made alive, made to believe, declared free of guilt, we're beloved children, we are dead to sin and alive to righteousness, and we will not fail to enter our Father's reign AND realm.

- K. Calvin says, "Thou hast set my feet in a large place, which denotes a sudden and unexpected change." This unexpected change transpires as we're in the wilderness, but brought in to a spacious place.

3) *Christ – our spacious place*

- A. As we read those words David penned in **2 Samuel 22**, "*He delivered me, because he delighted in me.*" We're wise to consider what it means for God to be delighted in him.
- B. When God's delighted, it means He is well-pleased, His sovereign good pleasure is made known and He bestows favor on His anointed one. You know what that sounds like to me:
- **Matthew 3:16-17** *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; (17) and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*
 - Words spoken also at the transfiguration (**Matt 17:5**)
- C. "**He rescued me because he delighted in me.**"
- John Gill writes: "And so he did the Messiah, when he raised him from the dead, received him to heaven, where he sits at the right [hand] of God in human nature: this is a large place indeed, large enough for the innumerable company of angels, and for all the saints, for whom everlasting habitations and mansions of bliss are [being prepared]; and which is the [glorious] liberty of the children of God... Large indeed is the possession and place of the believer in Jesus, there need be no limit to his peace, for there is no bound to his privilege."

4) *A cosmic demonstration of God's favor (RC Sproul)*

- A. In preparing for this devotion, I came across an article by RC Sproul where he stated, "**You are brought in to a spacious place as a cosmic demonstration of God's favor.**"
- B. That's the present reality we've entered in to – a cosmic demonstration of God's favor – because we've been united with Jesus, *the Anointed and Holy One*; and are now *ourselves* anointed ones chosen for divine life and service. **1 John 2:20** *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*
- C. It's all coming together...the fullness of our life in the spacious place:
- i) a new life in communion with Jesus
 - ii) participation in His body and Kingdom on earth
 - iii) exercising Christian gifts, imagination, and intellect

- iv) victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil
 - v) walking out a LIVING HOPE
- 1 Peter 1:3-5** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (5) who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
- D. Add to this that in the spacious place of here and now – God Himself is **guarding** us. Did you catch that? “by God’s power [we] are being guarded.”
 - E. Paul Tripp explains this in his book, *Forever: Why You Can’t Live Without It*.
 - i) “To be guarded doesn’t mean that God will protect me from every trouble, but rather that God will protect me *in the middle of trouble* until my troubles are no more.”
 - ii) “Guarded means that in my moment of suffering, God provides me with protective grace and because He does, we have a living hope.”
 - F. What a place we’ve been brought in to!
 - G. I mean, ultimately, it’s no less than the very kingdom of God. Right?
 - i) Jesus himself declared the kingdom of God at hand. (Matt 4:17)
 - ii) He taught us that with His arrival the kingdom of God was **both** a present (imminent) **and** future (eschatological) reality.
 - iii) The kingdom of God is both a reign (now) and a realm (to come).
 - iv) It’s true communion between God and man.

5) *The Church as the spacious place*

- A. Accordingly, and extraordinarily, this kingdom is – in large part – made visible by the church.
- B. Geerhardus Vos has written extensively on this particularly in “The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church.” I initially had pages full of his insights, and the biblical references to support them, but I’ve distilled it down to two conclusions:
 - i) Vos identifies the church as the externally organized kingdom, saying, “The invisible forces of the kingdom that exist in the invisible sphere find expression in the kingdom-organism of the visible church.”
 - ii) “The kingdom, therefore, as truly as the invisible church is constituted by the regenerate; the regenerate alone experience in themselves its power, cultivate its righteousness, enjoy its blessings.”
 - iii) For a great review of Vos’s work: https://opc.org/os.html?article_id=620
- C. Can we just sit with that for a second... “The invisible forces of the kingdom...find expression in the ... visible church.”
- D. This is where my study has led me. And I am as pleasantly surprised as I hope you are:

- i) As new testament Christians, the church is where the spacious place finds its central and animating power.
- ii) Where it finds truth, beauty, and goodness
- iii) Where it finds its expansiveness
- iv) Where it finds safety and protection
- v) Where it finds its expression in Word and Deed, in the Sacraments and Elements, in the hands and feet of flawed and ordinary people like you and me.
 - A friend visited church with me last weekend and after the service she said, “I’m so glad that the elements of worship in our churches make church familiar, comforting; and somehow...safe.”
 - What she was saying was that the church – as the visible expression of the kingdom – makes church a place where we can rest, breathe, and receive the Lord’s manifest grace... because it’s a spacious place.
 - Of course, church on Sunday isn’t the ONLY expression, but it is a central one.

E. I’ll close with a quote, a reflection, and a verse.

God brought Jesus out of his narrow and confined condition into a place of liberty where he could walk at large, free from obstruction and oppression. Many of us can join with the Psalmist in the declarations of this verse' deep was our distress on account of sin, and we were shut up as in a prison under the law... [but] we obtained the liberty of full justification wherewith Christ makes men free, and we are free indeed....we were brought out of bondage, and we were made to delight ourselves in the length and breadth of a boundless inheritance. What a large place it is in which [our] great God has placed us! All things are ours, all times are ours, all places are ours, for God himself is ours; we have earth to lodge in and heaven to dwell in, - what larger place can be imagined? – Charles Spurgeon

F. What an encouragement this study has been to be personally.

- i) One of my favorite descriptors in the Bible, brought me full circle to Christ, the kingdom, the church.
- ii) And to infinite grace in the wilderness.

Ephesians 3:20-21 *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, (21) to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*