

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"The Narratives Supporting the Imperatives."*

On Wednesday, April 29th, the elders joined me in the sanctuary to share w/ all of you that at this point in time we feel led to submit to the government and appeal through letters, praying, and fasting. There might be a point at which we disobey, but we don't believe we've reached that point yet.

We tend to project ourselves on others, and b/c if I was in your position I would want to know how my elders came to this decision, I felt like you're entitled to an explanation. So I've been explaining how we came to this decision over the last two Sundays, and this morning will be the third and final message.

I could be wrong, but I don't think another sermon on this topic is necessary. I feel like people are pretty settled where they are more teaching won't be beneficial.

One thing I've shared w/ you is that there are godly people on both sides of this issue, and they can quote other godly people.

In the first sermon I told you that I've landed where I have b/c I think we should build our theology w/ imperatives – or commands – supported by narratives – or accounts...versus the other way around.

In other words:

- We should look for imperatives, such as those found in 1 Pet 2, Rom 13, and Titus 2.
- Then see if narratives – or accounts in Scripture – support those imperatives.

When we talked as elders we found many narratives supporting the imperatives...and this helped convince us to go in this direction.

This morning we'll look at some of these narratives, but b/c I want to conclude w/ this sermon, I can't cover all of them that I'd like; therefore, I've simply chosen three.

Let's begin w/ **Exo 1**...

Exo 1:15 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." 17 But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

This is similar to:

- Dan 6 when Daniel disobeyed authority and prayed
- And Acts 5 when the apostles disobeyed authority and preached

I wanted to briefly look at this account, b/c it comes to mind when thinking of disobeying the government, and b/c it gives me the opportunity to repeat a point that I've made at the beginning of each sermon...

LESSON 1: WE DON'T SUBMIT TO SIN.

Understandably when you're talking about submission, you wonder how far it extends. I've said we're submitting now, but that doesn't mean we'll submit forever.

The account w/ the Hebrew midwives is close to what happened in Nazi Germany when Jews were being murdered.

Understandably Nazi Germany keeps coming up, b/c that was a time to disobey the government and not submit to sin.

The idea is this...

"The people who hid Jews were disobeying the government. The people who killed them were obeying."

Nazi Germany – like the king of Egypt – was trying to murder people. But our government – at least so far – hasn't asked us to murder anyone. If they do, we'll disobey.

Look at **Exo 3:18**...the context is God is speaking to Moses from the burning bush...

Exo 3:18 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.'

Pharaoh was the authority over the Israelites in Moses' day, and instead of telling the Jews to rebel, God sent Moses to appeal to Pharaoh...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: MOSES APPEALED TO PHARAOH.

At least four times that I could find in Exodus Moses requested that Pharaoh allow them to worship and serve the Lord...which gives this some similarities to our situation...

We're requesting to open our churches to worship and serve the Lord.

Look at **verse 19**...

Exo 3:19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.

It's worth noticing that from the very beginning God told Moses that Pharaoh would not release the people.

So here's what's interesting...

- God could've wiped out Egypt w/ the plagues
- He could've jumped right to the last plague that did cause Pharaoh to release the people

But instead, He first had Moses repeatedly appeal to Pharaoh.

And our plan is to repeatedly appeal to the governor to allow us to worship:

- We sent one letter, and we plan on sending more
- We called for one day of fasting, and we plan on calling for more

Look at **Exo 5:2** to see what happened after Moses appealed to Pharaoh...

Exo 5:2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

I'm convinced many of our politicians don't know God any better than Pharaoh did, but that didn't change Moses' need to appeal, and it doesn't change our need to appeal.

Now watch something that could be very instructive for us...

Exo 5:4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens." 5 And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!" 6 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, 7 "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.'"

Here's what stuck out to me:

- Moses appealed to Pharaoh
- He was doing God's will
- He didn't have to wonder if this is what God wanted... God told him this is what He wanted
- But Pharaoh still didn't let the people go.

Instead things actually got worse.

I'm mentioning this b/c:

- Even though things weren't going the way Moses wanted, it didn't mean he was doing anything wrong.
- We're appealing, and maybe it won't go the way we want, but it doesn't mean we're doing anything wrong.

I mention this to encourage you, b/c as a pastor any time you invite your people to pray and fast you have this nagging concern that God might not answer the way we want or as quickly as we want...but we can still be in God's will.

Let's look at the second example by turning to **1 Sam 24**...

Here's the background...

David and his men are on the run from Saul who's trying to kill them. Saul unknowingly entered the cave David and his men were hiding in. Look at **verse 4**...

1 Sam 24:4 And the men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.'" Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

When David's men saw him rise with his sword and move toward Saul, they must've thought, "*This is it. Our exile is finally over. We can return home. We don't need to be afraid for our lives anymore. David can become king and we can serve at his right hand...b/c God has delivered Saul into his hand.*"

And here's the thing...

It looked that way! This sounds exactly like something we might expect God to say to David.

Instead David cut off a corner of his robe.

Look at **verse 5**...

1 Sam 24:5 And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

David was convicted just for this small act against The Lord's anointed.

David did some things in his life that could cause us to wonder why he's the Man After God's Own Heart. I'm guessing this is one of the reasons: at least at this moment, he had such sensitivity to conviction.

1 Sam 24:6 He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, The Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is The Lord's anointed." **7** So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way.

Now look at this appeal...

1 Sam 24:8 Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. **9** And David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Behold, David seeks your harm’? **10** Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, ‘I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is The Lord’s anointed.’”

David calls him, “My lord the king.” He bowed to the ground. He paid him homage. This is a gracious and humble appeal that’s made even more impressive, b/c it’s being made to such an ungodly man...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: DAVID APPEALED TO SAUL.

Skip to **chapter 26** to see the second appeal.

Here’s the context...

David and Abishai snuck into Saul’s camp when he was sleeping. While they’re standing next to Saul look at **verse 8**...

1 Sam 26:8 Then Abishai said to David, “God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.”

Once again, someone tells David it’s God’s will for him to kill Saul...and once again it really looked that way!

1 Sam 26:9 But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against THE LORD’S ANOINTED and be guiltless?” **10** And David said, “As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish.”

David’s words encourage me, and here’s why...

While we’re submitting to and appealing to the authority over us, we can say what David said...and I’m not joking...

“As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish.”

In other words, God can deal w/ any man who’s in authority. It’s not beyond His ability.

If God wants to remove any politician, such as Governor Inslee and replace him with Joshua Freed, or someone else, He can do that...but until then, unless we’re commanded to sin, God expects us to be like David and recognize the authority of the office.

We talk about walking by faith and trusting God, and this is what it looks like to do so.

Look at **verse 11...**

1 Sam 26:11 The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against **THE LORD'S ANOINTED**. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go." **12** So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them. **13** Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. **14** And David called to the army, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

Abner is Saul's general, right-hand man, and the guy most responsible w/ making sure people don't sneak into the camp at night, right next to Saul's head, and steal his spear and jar.

Needless to say, he's about to be embarrassed.

1 Sam 26:15 And David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord (referring to Abishai). **16** This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, **THE LORD'S ANOINTED**. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head." **17** Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

Now look at this appeal...

1 Sam 26:18 And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands? **19** Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the Lord who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' **20** Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the Lord, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

Another gracious and humble appeal from David to an ungodly man.

Now here's the question...

Why didn't David kill Saul when he had the opportunity...twice?

The answer is contained in the:

- Nine times in these two chapters David calls Saul **my lord** and **my king**
- And the seven times David called him **The Lord's anointed**

David recognized Saul's authority...and he recognized it came from God.

And many things make this more impressive than it initially looked...

- David kept calling Saul The Lord's anointed...but who else was The Lord's anointed? David!
- David recognized Saul was king...but he knew God wanted him to be king
- David knew God rejected Saul as king...but he still kept respecting his authority as long as he was king
- David knew he couldn't become king as long as Saul was king...but he wouldn't remove Saul from being king.

Instead, he appealed to Saul and trusted God w/ the outcome.

Saul would've been a hard man to respect. If David didn't respect him – and I wouldn't fault him – he still respected the office Saul occupied.

When I was in Army ROTC – so before I was an officer – we would regularly go to the field for training exercises. After each exercise we'd have an AAR, or "After Action Review." We'd talk about how the exercise went: whether it went well, or poorly, and what we could learn.

During one exercise the cadet who was in charge did a terrible job. During the AAR I shared my many observations about his performance. I half-expected one of the commanding officers to acknowledge what I said, and perhaps even compliment my great insights and deep understanding of military tactics.

Instead, LTC Brewer spoke up and ripped me apart in front of everyone. I don't remember him saying one single thing about the cadet who was in charge, but he said plenty of things about me. It was humiliating...but I completely deserved it.

I still remember him saying, *"Even if your commanding officer is terrible, you respect his office."*

You could listen to this story and say, *"You're talking about your military experience, but this isn't the military."*

That's true, but the Greek word for **submit** or **be subject** is *hypotasso* and it is a military term meaning, *"to arrange troops under a commander."*

I don't mention this story b/c LTC Brewer said something and I think we should do it.

I mention it b/c it illustrates what the NT commands, and what the OT supports through accounts – such as this one w/ David – that we should respect the authority of individuals in positions over us.

Now I want to show you something interesting. Look at **verse 21**...

1 Sam 26:21 Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake.”

Saul looks repentant. The problem is, he’s looked repentant before, so...

1 Sam 26:22 And David answered and said, “Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. 23 The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against THE LORD’S ANOINTED. 24 Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.” 25 Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.” So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Saul asked David to **return** – or come back to Jerusalem or come home as it’s translated in many Bibles. But the end of the verse says **David went his way**. He didn’t go w/ Saul, and he didn’t go back to Jerusalem.

Why not?

Last week we talked about combining faith and wisdom:

- David had faith that God would protect him
- But he combined that faith w/ wisdom

So he would NOT walk Saul’s spear back to him...probably the same spear Saul threw at David numerous times...or have any of his own men bring it back to him. Instead, he asked for one of Saul’s men to come get it.

I’m not going to say David disobeyed Saul – b/c I’m not sure that it was really an order – but I will say this...

- David didn’t trust Saul, and he didn’t do everything Saul wanted.
- He didn’t blindly or unconditionally submit to Saul.

Similarly, we shouldn’t blindly or unconditionally submit to authority.

I’ll use a hypothetical situation that has come up a few times – b/c sadly – I could see it happening...

“What if the government expected people to be vaccinated to go to church?”

There’s no way we would submit to this. We would disobey.

And if we need to disobey the government – let’s imagine another hypothetical situation – that I have to go jail for taking this stand – which I would be willing to do – and let’s say I go before a judge or anyone else in authority, here’s what I would like to be able to say...

“Up to this point, I have tried hard to obey laws even when I disagreed and questioned their constitutionality. We are not rebellious people. We are not trouble-makers. God commands us to live quiet, peaceful lives and that’s what we’ve been trying to do. We have worked to respect and honor the people in office as God’s Word commands. If you listen to my sermons – which are available online – you will see that I repeatedly told my church to submit to government, and I have told them that you have been working for our good, b/c that’s what Scripture says is the case. But this has gone too far, and now we must disobey.”

In other words, if we disobey – which we’re willing to do – we want the authority over us to recognize the lengths we went to obey, and that disobedience was a last – versus first – resort.

Let’s look at the third example by turning to **Est 3**...the last historical book. The easiest way to find it is by turning to the left of Job and Psalms.

The context is the Persians are going to slaughter the Jews.

Est 3:13 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

The decree goes out to **destroy, kill, and annihilate all Jews.**

Skip to **Est 4:14** to see what happened next...Mordecai is speaking to Esther and he says...

Est 4:14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

As I’ve said many times up to this point, there’s a lot of disagreement among godly people on both sides of the current situation, but one thing we can all agree on is that we must do something, so:

- Just as Mordecai told Esther, *“Hey, you’re a Jew; you need to get involved!”*
- The application for us is we’re Christians, and we need to be involved.

We’ve gotten involved by appealing w/ letters, and praying and fasting.

Let’s think about something for a moment...

The major disagreement is about when to obey and when to disobey:

- Everyone agrees we should obey authority sometimes
- And everyone agrees we should disobey authority sometimes
- I haven’t heard of anyone who thinks we should blindly and unconditionally obey all the time under any circumstances

- And I haven't heard of anyone who thinks we should disobey all the time under any circumstances as though we're anarchists

So really it's been a question of when to obey and when to disobey.

And I think everyone on both sides can agree that if the government was going to **destroy, kill, and annihilate**, that would be a time to disobey, right?

But here's what's interesting...

In Esther's day it was a time to appeal.

Now I'm not saying that if the government ever said to **destroy, kill, and annihilate** that we would appeal versus defend ourselves.

But I am making the point that we're considering examples of appealing versus rebelling, and this is a very dramatic one.

Because, what could Mordecai have told Esther to do, or tried to do himself?

- Lead a rebellion
- Start a revolution
- Tell everyone to pick up arms and fight back.

They will do that later – and just hold on to that for a moment – but at this point he told her to appeal...and this brings us to Lesson 4...

LESSON 4: ESTHER APPEALED TO THE KING.

Look at Esther's response...

Est 4:15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

This is the account that came up the most in our elder meeting.

Esther called for her people to fast while she appealed to the king, and so we called for our people – the church – to fast while we appealed w/ letters to our authorities.

Something making this even more fitting is fasting is associated w/ prayer and mourning, and:

- We're praying for this situation
- We're mourning that we can't meet

Look at **Est 5:1**...

Est 5:1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. 2 And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

The Book of Esther is interesting in that there's no mention of any of the typical important spiritual stuff, such as the Law, sacrifices, worship, and prayer. It doesn't even say that Esther called for the people to pray. It just says she called for them to fast. We assume they prayed, but it doesn't say that.

Most surprisingly, God Himself is never mentioned...but in a beautiful way, Esther is a book that doesn't mention God, but instead shows God working behind the scenes in extraordinary ways...such as in **verse 2** when it says **[Esther] won favor in [the king's] sight**.

I'd say God gave Esther this favor, and we're praying God gives us favor w/ Governor Inslee.

Pro 21:1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

We have full confidence that God can bend the hearts of anyone in authority – whether President Trump or Governor Inslee – to His will.

Just to tell you what happened after this...

Esther went back to the king and asked if they could defend themselves and he granted it. Look at **Est 9:5...**

Est 9:5 The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them.

The Jews were able to defend themselves against their enemies, but – interestingly – they received permission to do so by appealing.

Now there's one more place I'd like to show you. Please look at **Dan 9:13...**the fourth prophet after Isa, Jer, and Eze.

Dan 9:13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.

Daniel's discussing the calamity that came upon the Jews – referring to their exile – and he's afraid they haven't done certain things they should've done as a result of this calamity.

Let me be clear about why this ministered to me...

We all want our lives to go back to normal – and I do too – but I know there are things God wants to accomplish through the calamity we’re experiencing...and this brings us to Lesson 5...

LESSON 5: LET’S NOT WASTE THIS TRIAL.

The Coronavirus and accompanying quarantine is a global calamity that has caused problems physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually.

The situation is bad enough, but one thing that would make it even more unfortunate is if we went through it and failed to learn what God wants us to learn.

And this seemed to be Daniel’s concern w/ his people regarding the calamity they experienced.

If we look at what Daniel wanted for the Jews, it reveals what God wants for us too.

The reason they’re the same is there are some foundational things God wants to accomplish in His people in every calamity.

Look back w/ me at **verse 13**:

Dan 9:13 As it is written in the Law of Moses:

- **all this calamity has come upon us** – or we could say the Coronavirus and quarantine and accompanying problems have come upon us
- **yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God** – Daniel was concerned that his people had not sought the Lord like they should. I read this and suspect we haven’t prayed like we should. For my part, I know I haven’t.
- **turning from our iniquities** – this is a concise definition of repentance. Daniel knew that his people had not repented like they should, and I wonder: have we repented like we should?
- **and gaining insight by your truth.** – Daniel knew his people should be gaining spiritual insight from God’s truth, which is to say the Word of God. How are we gaining insight? Where are we gaining it from? Are we clinging to the next Coronavirus update or are we clinging to God’s Word?
- **14 Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.** – Daniel says God brought all this on his people b/c they hadn’t done these things. In Scripture, God typically brought plagues as a result of sin. Nobody should object if God brought this calamity on us b/c of our sin.

This is our final sermon explaining the elders’ decision, and I want to close by saying this...

Many people have said, “We’re being tested,” and I agree.

My hope is that:

- We don't waste this test by failing to learn what God wants us to learn.
- Instead, let's try to pass this test by:
 - Humbling ourselves
 - Praying
 - Repenting
 - And seeking insight and truth from God's Word.

So we can learn everything He wants us to learn from this.

Let's pray.