

S&L, Episode IV: The Fugitive

Reconnect – July 17, 2011



Text: I Samuel 24:1-22; Romans 5:3-5; Psalm 63

Key Thought: God still refines and transforms those who remain faithful to him in their wilderness.

And [Saul] said to David, "You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid me good for evil. Yes, you have been amazingly kind to me today, for when the Lord put me in a place where you could have killed me, you didn't do it. Who else would let his enemy get away when he had him in his power? May the Lord reward you well for the kindness you have shown me today. And now I realize that you are surely going to be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will flourish under your rule. (I Samuel 24, NLT)

Pre-Intro: In Plain Sight S03E05 [show video clip]

Intro: the most expensive 7UP ever



- Everyone wants their rights respected in our great nation – and we seem to all go along with that

Meet Canada's biggest whiner

National Post · Jul. 16, 2011 | Last Updated: Jul. 16, 2011 3:03 AM ET

...Meet Michel Thibodeau, the Ottawa resident "language rights" equivalent of the compulsive coupon clipper. Instead of haunting supermarkets, he haunts bus companies and airlines, forever on the lookout for an abrogation of his right to hear the station stop, the weather, the time and the altitude in French, whether he is trundling across town or flying over Quebec City, Toronto or Calgary.

On Wednesday, the Federal Court of Canada ordered Air Canada to pay Mr. Thibodeau \$12,000, in part because in 2009, when he asked an English-speaking flight attendant for a 7Up soda, he got a Sprite instead. That was only one of many other humiliations suffered by Mr. Thibodeau and his wife Lynda in 2009. There were occasions when they were not served in French at airports in Toronto, Ottawa and Atlanta (although they were evidently able to manage in English everywhere else in that town). They also complained about lapses in French-language services aboard Air Canada Jazz flights between Canada and the United States.

The Thibodeaus know their way around language-rights suits. This is not their first win. When he was refused service in French while ordering a 7Up on a 2000 Air Ontario flight from Montreal, he filed suit in Federal Court for \$525,000 in damages (imagine how painful the sound of the English language must be to demand half-a-million dollars for suffering). The court ordered the airline to make a formal apology and pay him \$5,375.95.

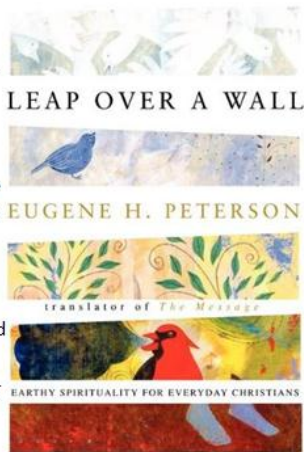
Grievance collectors such as Mr. Thibodeau are the spawn of our rights culture, which supposes that minorities live in a constant state of fear of oppression or discrimination. Our courts are so sensitive to their assumed frailty that they tend to punish even the slightest lapse of vigilance as a way of reassuring them that they are loved...

I know my rights!

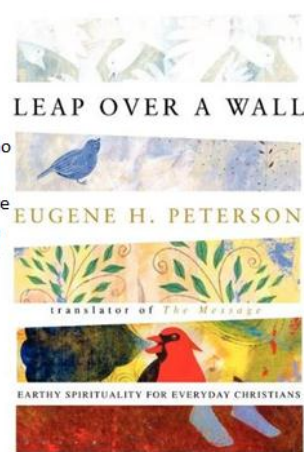
- As the article said, it seems that we live in a rights-based culture – and the more you know your rights, the more you can benefit, whether at work, through demanding accommodation, in the education system, or a hundred smaller way
- It means that we take a lot for granted – a certain level of service, of ability, of treatment
- Like the ability to drive – we covet it as kids, we finally get licensed, we spend all our money on vehicles, and then we feel it’s a right, not a privilege – only to be reminded differently if we get too many tickets
 - Like the time when I had my first (!) interview due to having too many points on my license, when the guy doing the interview asked to see my license – I handed it across the table, and then he said to me, “Now tell me I should give this back to you” – ulp!
- And then we come to our spiritual lives, our lives with God, our search for God – and we think that the rules are the same – know your rights, there are certain principles that never change, and so on
- But we have a problem, because as the Bible says, “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) – God does not show favouritism, and His value system is many times completely opposite than the world in which we live
- There are times in our lives where he takes away all our “rights” - all our entitlements, everything we thought was ours, everything we thought we had earned but that actually had come from God
- We wind up, like many of the people of the Bible who tried to faithfully follow God, in the wilderness

“...there are times, no matter how thoroughly we’re civilized, when we’re plunged into the wilderness – not a geographical wilderness but what I’m going to call a circumstantial wilderness. Everything is going along fine: we’ve learned the language of the country, gotten a job, decorated the house, signed up for car payments, made out a schedule that imposes some order on the chaos of time, accepted responsibilities that define our significance, heard people speak our name and determined that we’re identifiable. And then suddenly we’re beside ourselves: we don’t know what’s going on within us or in another who is important to us; feelings erupt in us that call into question what we’ve never questioned before. There’s a radical change in our bodies, or our emotions, or our thinking, or our friends, or our job. We’re out of control. We’re in the wilderness. (Peterson, Leap, 74)

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David was no exception:

- David was no exception to God’s methods of education
- He’s been a shepherd, then a palace attendant, then a military hero and commander – but now he’s on the run from his father-in-law, the King, King Saul, who sees him as a threat to his throne
- He’s found his way to a literal wilderness – the unsettled, arid parts of Palestine – where a group of other dissatisfied have gradually found him – he now has a “force”, if you can call it that, of about 600 men with him, as he’s hunted by the King – and that brings us to today’s section of his life

After Saul returned from fighting the Philistines, he was told that David had gone into the wilderness of En-gedi. So Saul chose 3,000 elite troops from all Israel and went to search for David and his men near the rocks of the wild goats.

- David’s group is about 600 – Saul has David outnumbered 5 to 1 – plus, this is diverting valuable resources from the front in the fight against the Philistines – weakening the nation as divided
- En-gedi is a wilderness around a rare spring of water – a natural hideout for a group like this

At the place where the road passes some sheepfolds, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. But as it happened, David and his men were hiding farther back in that very cave! “Now’s your opportunity!” David’s men whispered to him. “Today the Lord is telling you, ‘I will certainly put your enemy into your power, to do with as you wish.’” So David crept forward and cut off a piece of the hem of Saul’s robe.

- Saul picks David’s cave to use as a Porta-potty – a number 2 – and while he’s reading the paper, David cuts off a piece of his robe (put to the side / hung on the door handle)
- David’s men see God’s provision in this – this is what they’ve been waiting for! Like the rescue in Gilligan’s Island – like the plane in Lost – like the planet Earth in Voyager – but David looks beyond the short term and knows that this would never honour God – to dishonour Saul in this way, who is still the king – to assassinate him in cold blood, to ambush him – that might be Saul’s way to play, but it’s not David’s and it’s not God’s - so instead of killing Saul, he takes just a piece of his royal robe instead

But then David’s conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul’s robe. “The Lord knows I shouldn’t have done that to my lord the king,” he said to his men. “The Lord forbid that I should do this to my lord the king and attack the Lord’s anointed one, for the Lord himself has chosen him.” So David restrained his men and did not let them kill Saul.

- David knows that he has dishonoured Saul – not just in a potty way, but the robe was the symbol of Saul’s kingship – his mantle – and to cut it was a picture of a divided kingdom – so the robe, so the kingdom – David is staking his claim to at least part of Saul’s rulings and rending a kingdom, not a robe, saying that Saul’s not worthy to wear the robe, and doesn’t even have a good robe to wear anymore
- That’s what David’s heart wants, but his will wins out – he knows it was wrong

After Saul had left the cave and gone on his way, David came out and shouted after him, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked around, David bowed low before him. Then he shouted to Saul, “Why do you listen to the people who say I am trying to harm you? This very day you can see with your own eyes it isn’t true. For the Lord placed you at my mercy back there in the cave. Some of my men told me to kill you, but I spared you. For I said, ‘I will never harm the king—he is the Lord’s anointed one.’ Look, my father, at what I have in my hand. It is a piece of the hem of your robe! I cut it off, but I didn’t kill you. This proves that I am not trying to harm you and that I have not sinned against you, even though you have been hunting for me to kill me.

- David is risking the safety of himself and everyone with him by engaging the king this way – shouting across a valley out of the mouth of the cave
- He appeals to their previous relationship – when things were normal, when he was a highly esteemed commander and member of the court, when Saul was his father-in-law and mentor

“May the Lord judge between us. Perhaps the Lord will punish you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you. As that old proverb says, ‘From evil people come evil deeds.’ So you can be sure I will never harm you. Who is the king of Israel trying to catch anyway? Should he spend his time chasing one who is as worthless as a dead dog or a single flea? May the Lord therefore judge which of us is right and punish the guilty one. He is my advocate, and he will rescue me from your power!”

- David appeals to God and His rightness in the situation – he humbles himself and puts God first – and he reminds Saul of just how misguided this whole adventure really is

When David had finished speaking, Saul called back, “Is that really you, my son David?” Then he began to cry. And he said to David, “You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid me good for evil. Yes, you have been amazingly kind to me today, for when the Lord put me in a place where you could have killed me, you didn’t do it. Who else would let his enemy get away when he had him in his power? May the Lord reward you well for the kindness you have shown me today. And now I realize that you are surely going to be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will flourish under your rule. Now swear to me by the Lord that when that happens you will not kill my family and destroy my line of descendants!” So David promised this to Saul with an oath. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went back to their stronghold. I Samuel 24:1-22, NLT

- David gets through to Saul – his emotion, always boiling under the surface, comes out in another unexpected way, in tears – and in spite of himself, he blesses David and recognizes his future claim on the throne
- Mind you, he doesn’t hand the throne over – and David doesn’t come any closer for a group hug, either – there are still 3000 hostile troops around Saul, likely Benjamites (Saul’s tribe) and very loyal to him and his rule
- Just like in the Fugitive, the pursuit is only put on hold, to be continued another day

The “wilderness effect”:



Q: Why does God bring us into the wilderness?

Q: What’s God trying to teach us?

- There’s actually a documented phenomenon called “the wilderness effect” – according to enviro website www.thegreenfuse.org, it is “the psychological effects of being in wilderness for a period of a week or more. There are several aspects to the effect, but fundamentally it involves “feelings of expansion or reconnection” which many researchers describe as spiritual”
- God is working against our own fundamental natures – the “who we are” as opposed to who we can be
- In the wilderness you have a chance to change, or a chance to become even more the same, and bitter too – the desert is God’s chance for you to hit the reset button, if you will take it (In Plain Sight clip)
- David spends years in the wilderness, but the wilderness doesn’t spend years inside him – the difference is a huge one

- Many people are only changed for the worse by the wilderness – because they spend all their time there complaining and plotting how they will get even when they get out – they refuse to see it as God’s school, a place where he wants to change them and refine them
- But when God takes you into the wilderness, He has a purpose for it – a purpose in your life being overturned, of something that you thought was fundamental to your life being taken away or ruined
- Many of us here, if we think about it, can think about a time in our life like that – and for some, it’s the reason why we find ourselves here today

Q: What is your wilderness? Or was? When have you been there? What was it like, how did you get out, how do you see things differently now? Are you a different person than when you went in?

- The desert is God’s way of giving us a frontal lobotomy – or rebooting our systems and taking us back to his own “saved settings” – cleaning us up of a lot of the stuff that we have downloaded over time from everything around us – ways of acting, perspectives, viewpoints, how we treat the people close to us, even friendships, career path
- He takes us back to basics, strips us down to the wood grain way underneath – and yes, it’s super painful, but it works, if we will stick with it and look for Him in the wilderness

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

God still refines and transforms those who remain faithful to him in their wilderness.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.



Romans 5:3-5, NLT

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Romans 5:3-5, NLT

Conclusion: the heart wants what the heart wants...?

You know, sometimes I forget,
people aren't words and wishes –
people are what they are...
thanks for the reminder.

– Inspector Mary Shannon

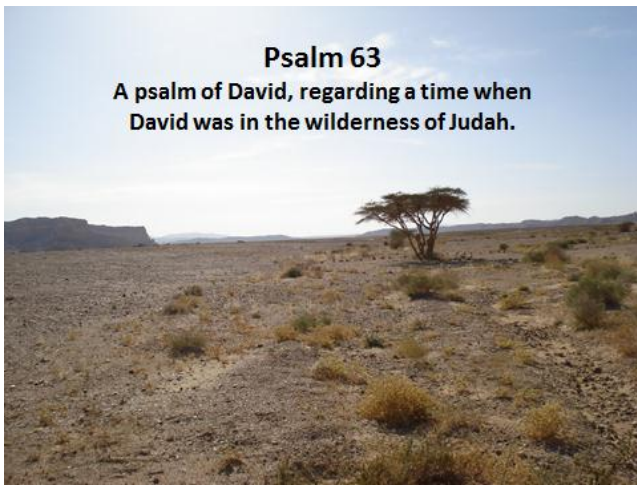


- In the “In Plain Sight” clip, Mary McCormack’s character says this as they arrest the mobster who couldn’t change:

“You know, sometimes I forget, people aren’t words and wishes – people are what they are... thanks for the reminder” – Inspector Mary Shannon (In Plain Sight)

- There’s another phrase that’s popular today, especially when people are commenting on the poor choices that they make: “The heart wants what the heart wants”
- It paints a pretty hopeless picture, doesn’t it? That people can’t really change? That whether you try to reboot your life, or win the lottery, or go through some terrible circumstance, that at the end of it, you will just be plain old flawed... you?
- Those who follow God believe differently – we see the evidence of changed lives all around us, we see the records in the Bible of those who were changed – not only David, but Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Hannah and a whole host of others – people of faith, who held onto God, knowing He was holding on to them
- Are you holding on to God today in your wilderness? Are you taking notes? Trying to learn the lesson he’s teaching you? Stick with it – because every wilderness has a point of entry and an exit too – as well as oases and rest stops in the middle – and Christ will bring you out at the right time so much better than when you went in

Response: Psalm 63 [me to read, have people close their eyes]



A psalm of David, regarding a time when David was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, you are my God;

I earnestly search for you.

My soul thirsts for you;

**my whole body longs for you
in this parched and weary land
where there is no water.**

I have seen you in your sanctuary

and gazed upon your power and glory.

Your unfailing love is better than life itself;

how I praise you!

I will praise you as long as I live,

lifting up my hands to you in prayer.

You satisfy me more than the richest feast.

I will praise you with songs of joy.

I lie awake thinking of you,

meditating on you through the night.

Because you are my helper,

I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings.

I cling to you;

your strong right hand holds me securely.

But those plotting to destroy me will come to ruin.

They will go down into the depths of the earth.

**They will die by the sword
and become the food of jackals.**

But the king will rejoice in God.

**All who trust in him will praise him,
while liars will be silenced.**