

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-26 & Matthew 19:14

Sermon: *Things that Go Bump in the Dark: The Frankenstein Monster*

When I was young, I slept with a nightlight in my room. I was scared of the dark. Too many unknowns. If I heard the cat meow, I would think, what is it meowing at? If I heard footsteps, I would wonder if they were steps of a family member or a monster (could be both!). In the dark, my imagination went wild and I was scared, thus the handy dandy night light. But the dark can do that. In her article: *Darkness Can Do All Kinds of Things to Your Body and Brain* by journalist Maya Kroth, she writes that “Science suggests that darkness can do all kinds of things to the human body and brain: It can make us more likely to [lie and cheat](#), [make mistakes at work](#), and even [see things we don’t normally see](#).¹” She cites articles to prove this. When we are in the dark, things change. Including when we are in a dark experience, meaning when we choose to do something that we know we shouldn’t do, it’s wrong, that’s dark.

In Mary Shelly’s 1818 book, *Frankenstein*, she writes of a doctor who decides that he can bring death back to life. Here’s a clip from the 1932 *Frankenstein* movie starring Colin Clive as Dr. Frankenstein, and Boris Karloff as the Frankenstein monster. <https://youtu.be/1qNeGSJaQ9Q> The doctor says, “Now I know what it is to be God” – whoa, that’s dark, isn’t it? Especially if he is laughing like a madman when he says it.

For the next few weeks we are going to look at a Biblical character named Saul, who gets caught up in some dark thinking, including, discerning that he knows what’s best, beyond God.

Here’s the background, when God formed the nation of Israel, God appointed judges to oversee the people. This lasted for a while, but eventually the Israelites wanted to be like the nations around them, they wanted a king, not God, but a physical king that they could look to as their leader. While God was not the happiest with that line of thinking, because let’s face it, kings are not always good people, God gave in, and told the prophet Samuel to appoint a shepherd by the name of Saul, to be Israel’s first king. Saul was 30 years old and of the tribe of Benjamin. This happens in chapter 10 of 1 Samuel.

In chapter 11, Saul fights the Ammonites, and leads Israel to victory. In chapter 13 Saul leads a battle against the Philistines, however Saul was told to wait for Samuel who would come and give an offering to God to pray for the troops prior to battle. Samuel ran late and Saul gave the offering himself. At the end of chapter 13 Samuel says to Saul, ¹³“You have done a foolish thing,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.”

Now we jump to today’s lesson in chapter 15, and we read Saul does the same thing again, he takes matters into his own hands. While God told Saul what to do regarding the Amalekites, an enemy of Israel, Saul decides to face this battle his own way, a way that leads to the Israelites plundering their enemy. That is, taking what they want.

Here’s the problem. Saul was appointed king over Israel, and in so doing vowed to listen to God’s commands. But in leading the people in battle, he chooses to follow what he deems is best for him and his people. It’s like Dr. Frankenstein when he yells, “*Now I know what it is to be God*”. And the more Saul does this, the darker his life becomes.

Friends, this is a common darkness we can find ourselves in. When we read the Word and study Scripture, and he we hear it, *but we think to ourselves*, “But that’s not what’s best for me and my situation.” Here are some examples: You can’t forgive because you think “God wouldn’t expect me to forgive that”. The cross says differently, right? You can’t love your enemy because you think “God wouldn’t expect me to, if God knew this enemy and what they have done” God does know your enemy, declares “Vengeance is mine” and teaches you this to help improve your emotional and spiritual life. Or you don’t keep a sabbath because you think “God would want me to enjoy life”. God does, and wants you to rejuvenate yourself to do so. How about

¹ <https://elemental.medium.com/darkness-can-do-all-kinds-of-things-to-your-body-and-brain-beb3d0da2fb4>

this. You worry and stress over something, someone, as if God doesn't hear your prayers, as if God can't handle your worry or stress. But God can handle it, and more, we've come this far, haven't we? Do you see what I am getting at? When we make excuses for ourselves, to justify our thoughts, actions, and feelings, we are basically saying, "I know more than God"

That's Saul in this story. The same with Dr. Frankenstein. Both men think they know better than God. For Saul, it's about war and plundering, for Dr. Frankenstein it's about creating life, but God does know best. For Saul, the reason why God ordered Saul to destroy the Amalekites is because it was judgement against them as the first people to attack Israel when they came to the new land. We read about it in Exodus 17 where God states, *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."* The command given to Saul was God's judgement on a people. And Saul was to obey God, as the king of Israel. He didn't. *This is what worried God, a leader who didn't obey God's word.*

For Dr. Frankenstein, if you continue to follow the story, you meet Elizabeth, Frankenstein's finance. It is through her that the doctor has the opportunity to create life, within the bounds of holy matrimony. . But sadly the doctor's creation destroys that chance for him. He never should have tried to create life from death, because such creation brought darkness and horror.

Friends, this week when you get caught up in those dark moments where you think you know what it is like to be God, stop. Just stop, and picture the Frankenstein monster, he ain't pretty, and it's not pretty when we take matters into our own hands, denying the will and way of God.

It won't be pretty for Saul, as we will discover in the weeks to come, and when we honestly reflect on the pain and suffering in this world, it's the same, people trying to play God, but in no way are following the will of God. For if they did, no child would be suffering in this world. Rather they would be held as they should be when Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." That's the life we can create and form, through our children, who bring out all the best of who we are, and bring about God's hope in the next generations for the kingdom of heaven, here on earth.

Let us pray:

It's a scary world out there, Lord. Darkness consumes so many in various ways. So on this Sabbath day we pray for them and ourselves.

We pray for those stuck in the darkness of war, may your light guide them and protect them.

We pray for those in the darkness of pain and suffering, may your light heal them.

We pray for those in the darkness of envy and jealousy, may you enlighten them to mercy and compassion.

We pray for those in the darkness of anger and neglect, may your grace give them the light of forgiveness.

God, we pray that your Light, in Jesus Christ can break into any and all darkness to bring healing and hope to a world filled with scary things, so that our fear does not have the last word, but rather our trust in you and your way, your goodness, your blessings are always evident and lead us to live a life of serving and praising you.

We ask all this as we affirm our trust and faith in you through Jesus Christ. Amen

Offering Invitation: Part of your gifts go to our missions budget that helps to support Romania without Orphans, which focuses on training and supporting adoptive families and others to help children who have experienced trauma. We thank you for your faithfulness to the children of God.