

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

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Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:13-17

Sermon: *Carelessly Handling Spiritual Things*

Eli was one of the great priests of Israel. Tragically, he was not able to pass his faith on to his own children. God came to Eli later, in our story that I am going to read this morning and chided him, because Eli seemed to have the kind of philosophy about child raising that we call laissez-faire. What ever you want to do is all right and don't expect any word of counsel from me. The story I am going to read for you today is how these two young men were thrust into places of leadership but without an understanding of God and an understanding of their responsibility. In paints one of the dark pictures in the Bible but out of that dark picture come lessons for us and lessons that we want to learn this morning. I am reading from the book of 1 Samuel 2:12. *"Eli's sons were wicked men. They had no regard for the Lord."* There is going to be some reading about how the priests would live off the offerings the people gave. You are going to notice there is a method in which they would receive the offering and what these two young men were going to do is disregard all of that and rush ahead. It is going to show their lack of understanding of God. This is what the scripture says. *"The practice of the priests for the people was that when anybody brought an offering, when the meat was boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three prong fork in his hand. He would plug it into the pot and the priest would take for himself what ever was brought up."* Here is this piece of meat that was being sacrificed to God and he would stick the fork in. What ever came out, that is what he lived off . Notice what these two young men did. *"Even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificed, give the priest some meat to roast. He won't accept any of this boiled meat from you but only he wants that which is uncooked. If a man would dare say let us boil it first, then he would say no, hand it over to me and if you don't, I am going to take it by force."* So literally what he was doing, is that as the people would come to bring their offerings to God, they were stealing it. Notice what he said. "This sin of the young men was very great in the sight of God. For they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.

A group of American tourists were allowed the privilege of going to an ancient monastery in Greece. They were even provided the privilege of going into their most sacred room. They sat down in the room with the priest and they noticed in the center of the room, there was a fire that was burning. One of the priests said to the tourists, "This fire represents for us the presence of God. It represents our commitment to God. For that reason, there is a priest assigned everyday to come and to provide fuel for that flame and to make sure that flame has been burning. It is burning and we wanted to tell you that that flame has been burning for fifteen hundred years." One of the young American tourists stood up and said "Do I understand that that flame represents to you the presence of God. Do I understand that you men have been sitting in this room keeping that flame burning for fifteen hundred years? For every day one of the priests has made sure that flame would burn to symbolize your commitment to God. Fifteen hundred years! He said "That is right." In a few moments this is what everybody heard. [sigh] The young American said "Well buddy, it is out now."

All of us understand that we live in a generation of people who are blowing out sacred fires. We as a generation rush in where angels fear to tread. We are in the business of blowing out sacred fires. The story I read for you this morning is almost about the same kind of generation. Here were priests who were receiving what people were bringing to God. Instead of receiving it with careful hands, recognizing that this was something that was sacred to God, these men were literally robbing the people as they would come. The Bible says that *“God looked with disfavor because they looked upon the offering of God with contempt.”* God understood that the basic problem all of us have is that we want to bring God down, we don’t want to listen to anybody else, we want to do what ever we want to do, and we don’t like anybody telling us that something belongs to somebody else and they are important. We want to do what ever we want to do.

There is a story in the Bible that illustrates it as well. It is a man by the name of Esau. Esau was the first born, which meant that he had the responsibility of carrying on his father’s name, the family tradition. As such he was given twice the inheritance of all the other children. Esau was the hunter. He went out hunting one day and didn’t get anything. He came back in and he was tired. His brother was sitting at home and what he had done was made for him his favorite pot of stew. His brother came in and talked to him and said he wasn’t successful and his brother brought out this pot of stew. He said, “I’ll tell you what I will do. If you will give me the birth right I will give you this pot of stew” Esau said, “Well, if I am going to starve to death, what good is something in the future going to be for me. Give me the stew and I will give you my birth right.” This is the word the Bible says about Esau. *“Esau was a profane man.”* Let me tell you what profane is. We brought the word over into our English language. When somebody talks about God as though he consigns people to hell all the time or people begin to make fun of motherhood, or people begin to only be able to talk about the excrement’s of the human body, we say that person is using profanity. Profanity is simply that nothing is sacred, nothing is important, that simply a pot of stew is about the same worth as it is a birth right and there are not any mountains in our geography, not anything special for us to hold onto. Everything is flat, everything is the same, that is profanity. That is what it means to be profane. The Bible says that the problem with all of us is that we want to bring God down, we want to profane everything. We run over everything of values, we can’t determine what is important and not important. Literally, what happens to us is that we begin to live also a profane life.

Do you remember the first story in the Bible? There is a garden, there is man and a woman. God comes to them and says I will tell you what I am going to do. I have made this garden and it has everything in it that you can want. Here is everything that you need. Here is one truth that you need to learn. In the middle of the garden, there is a tree. That tree is mine. You are not to touch it. If you touch it, you are going to die. What the man and the woman said was this. *Who is he, to tell us what to do. We will fairly well do what we want to do.* They just literally took a spiritual eraser and erased the line and they went running over to the tree. They grabbed it and they said now we will eat and do whatever we want. The first lesson God tried to teach us is the lesson that when God speaks, you listen. When God says don’t cross the line, you don’t cross the line. What you need to do is come to respect who He is and what He has said.

There are some things in life so important that you treat them with care. I have been told all of my life what the world’s oldest profession is. The answer is not what you think. The world’s oldest profession is the making of idols. What we want to do more than anything is diminish God and bring Him down to our level where we can do what ever we want to do. You understand that when you begin to read all the way through the Bible that God just keeps coming back. He says unless you learn this, you are going to miss everything else. You remember He said one day I want you to build a tabernacle. These are the rules. This is the place of worship. It is such a sacred place, such a holy place that nobody but the priests can go in. You are to bring

an offering and the priests are to come in and offer it to me. At the very back of the tabernacle there is a little room and I call that the Holy of Holies. This is the most holy spot of all. Not even priests can go in there. Only one priest once a year can go in and he brings his gift to the people to God. When they would bring it, God would reach down with His finger and burn the gift up. They learned that they were to keep their distance. They learned a period of respect and they learned that there are some things you just don't touch. Listen to when He started giving the commandments. You will have no other God's before me. Don't even misuse my name. Set aside a day to worship Me. When you learn that, then you will learn how to honor your father and your mother. You will learn how to honor life, you will learn how to honor respect of marriage, and you will learn how to honor people's reputation. It all starts when you learn to exalt me. He even tried to tell us that, by how we divide things that we deal with everyday. Let me tell you how to divide time. He said, *six days you can work and do what ever you want to. But listen. There is one day that you are not to touch. One day is holy unto me. You divide your time by six and one and that one day is sacred unto Me. Understand it by your money. Nine tenths of your money you can do with as you will but one tenth of your money is not yours. You are to bring it back to me. As you bring it back to Me, this is your offering of thanksgiving and thanks unto me. But understand this belongs unto me.* So much so that the Bible tried to tell us that when Solomon wrote his search for wisdom, listen to what he said. "This is the beginning of wisdom, this is number one. This is uno. This is the first lesson you need to learn. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God and the knowledge of the holy one." So if you don't know that, you can't go to number two.

Number one is to learn who He is and to exalt Him. Tragically, we think this world is a democracy. Everybody has a vote to do what ever you want to do. Please understand that while you may live politically under democracy, this world is not a democracy. There is one who sits on the throne and says this is the way life will be. This is what I say, we come to bow before Him who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. C.S. Lewis spoke one day about what we have become. He said when God made us, He made us with a brain and that is how we reason. He made us with a stomach and that is how we feel. He made us with a chest and in our chest there is our heart and in our heart is what we value things with. What we understand is important, what we understand is eternal, what something is sacred to us. He said unfortunately what has happened is that we have become a generation of chestless people. We blow out holy things.

One of the great reasons that this church is here as well as others is to remind us of what the first lesson in life is. Because we get so caught up in wanting to bring God down and do our own thing that we forget what lesson number one is. What happens is that even at this place, someone has called the society for perseverance of all. Even at this place you and I carelessly handle sacred things. We take responsibilities lightly, we misuse what God has given, we come to recognize and feel that we can do what ever we will. Let me show you how it works in the passage of scripture in the book of 1 Corinthians 12. He is talking about the Lord's supper. In the early church, what they did, was that they all had what they call a feast of love together. Which meant that this is where a covered dish luncheon started. They brought their covered dish luncheons to the church and they all sat around and ate. At the end of the meal, what they would do, is that they would then observe the supper of the Lord. What began to happen was this, nobody would ever do that these days. They would come in early and search out the best recipes. They would actually turn their chairs up to make sure that they were close to Aunt Sally's meat pie. They would sit around in what was meant to be a time of fellowship, of talking to each other, they were only interested in eating. People in this day drank wine and instead of a little sip to go with their meal, most of them got about half drunk. Here they were, bloated and almost

blown out of their mind and can you see a preacher getting up and saying, “Now is the time we can observe the Lord’s supper.” Now listen to what the scripture said. “Therefore who so ever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of Christ. A man ought to examine himself before he eats the bread and drinks the cup. For anybody who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment to himself.” Even come to church and be thinking only of myself instead of who He is.

I have been in church all my life. As you know my father was a preacher, so I went to church all my life. When I was a teenager I used to sit on the back row. We used to have a little game we played. You can take titles of hymns and play games with them. You can say turn to page so and so and then that goes in with the next hymn. I used to sit and play games the whole time. I would catch up on the latest news with my friends. I would wink at the girls and I would leave. Never can I remember being overwhelmed with a sense of the majesty of God. I could have gone and gotten as much out of a theater, a ball game or a fishing trip. Because what I never did was get outside of myself and sense Him. Simply I never learned lesson number one. It was not until I was nearly in the twelfth grade, until God brought me low to make me look up.

We are going to end our service today in a different way. I have asked Gregg to come and read for you two passages of scripture. They are a lot more powerful than what I can say. I want you to listen to the scripture and then I am going to come back and tell you the last story. I would like to begin by sharing with you from 1 Chronicles 16:25-30. Hear now the word of God.

“For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols but the Lord made the heavens, splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and joy in His dwelling place. Ascribe to the Lord oh families of the nations. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. Bring an offering and come before Him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness. Tremble before Him all the earth. The world is firmly established. It can not be moved.” Hebrews 12:22-29. *“You have come to Mount Zion to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly. To the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men. To the spirits of righteous men made perfect. To Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven. At that time His voice shook the earth but now He has promised. Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. The words once more indicate the removing of what can be shaken. That is created things so what can not be shaken may remain. Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that can not be shaken, lets us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.”*

Let me paint the picture again. You have come to Mount Zion, ten thousand angels, thousands and thousands of angels. There is all the church, there is your mom and dad, there are people from every country of the world bowing down before God. There is God and there is Jesus with His blood. Therefore when you come before Him, you come in reverence and in awe. How dare we carelessly handle sacred things. Some of us, like the young boy from America in the monastery, have gone cold, but it is out now buddy. Surely at this time and at this place we need to bow before Him again. You see, you don’t listen to who you don’t respect. If you don’t respect God, you don’t listen to Him. The reason maybe you haven’t heard Him lately, is that you are not listening and the reason you are not listening is you do not respect Him.

I went with a pastor friend one day to visit a lady. I tried to help her to understand what it meant to give her life to Christ. After awhile she turned to me and she said "I am not interested." I left and turned to the pastor and I said "She was very close to giving her life to Christ." He said, "Yes". I said, If you don't mind, let me go back, she is still on the front porch and let me go back just a moment. I went back and I said, "Let me ask you a question. Weren't you very close to giving your life to Christ?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Have you ever been close like that before?" She said "Yes, I was when I was eighteen. They put up a little tent down here at the crossroads and a preacher preached and I thought about it then. I really got close." I said, "Well, when you were eighteen, if you won't mind me asking, how old are you now?" She said, "Forty-six." "Eighteen, forty-six." I said, "What is it going to take for you to really listen to God?" She thought about it for a moment and understood. "You can't keep trampling God down and making Him mean nothing and finally come one day and say, oh, I want to listen to what you say. If you have no respect for God, how do you listen to what He says?" Recognizing that, she got down on her knees and gave her life to Christ. Some of you in this room today have not been listening. The reason is you brought Him so low down, He doesn't speak with a voice of heaven. Maybe this is the day you need to get down and say "Lord, I want to hear what you have to say to me."