

Ordered #1
“Who’s Doing the Driving?”
1 Samuel 13:7b-14
5/22/16

- How many of you have ever gone into another room in your house to get something or do something and promptly forget why you went in that room in the first place?
 - o Then, you’re standing there like you’re lost just looking into space trying to remember what you meant to do or get. You might even say out loud to yourself, “Why did I come in here?”
 - o Who will admit to doing that? Be honest.
 - o Now, I have never done that....just kidding! It seems to be happening more and more with me! Maybe we can chalk it up to age and just getting older.

- It’s like the story of a man who moved into a retirement community to spend the rest of his life there. It wasn’t long until he had made a number of friends among the other residents. There was one lady he was especially attracted to, & she was attracted to him, also. So they spent a lot of time together. Finally one evening he proposed, asking her to marry him.
 - o The next morning he woke up remembering his proposal, but he couldn’t remember her answer. So he went to her and said, “I’m really embarrassed. I proposed to you last night but I can’t remember if you said ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’”
 - o “Oh, thank goodness!” she replied. “I remembered saying ‘Yes’ but I couldn’t remember who asked me!” Ooops!

- Now, I can try to attribute my forgetfulness to getting older and some of that is possibly true. The brain may well be slowing down. I often say that if I don’t write it down, the chances of remembering are greatly decreased. But the fact is that I have been walking in rooms and forgetting what I was going to do or get for a while.
 - o So, the issue isn’t really age. When I think about it...and when I remember what I’m thinking about!...the issue is often that I start thinking about something else while I’m going to the other room and because I’m distracted by the other thoughts, I forget what I was originally thinking!
 - o So then, it might boil down to that there are too many thoughts in my brain! I think about one thing, set out to do that thing, but I’m already on to thinking about something else.
 - o Can anyone relate??

- Well then, this sermon series is going to be for people like us! Today we kick off a new series called, “Ordered.”

- Psalm 37:23 in the New King James Version says this, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way.”* This is going to be our theme verse for this three week series.
 - What an awesome idea...a life in ORDER. With all of the chaos engulfing our society...ORDER. Does that sound nice to you?
- Do you ever feel like life is out of control? Like you just can't take much more? Do you ever feel like you're one catastrophe away from throwing in the towel? How many times do you say, "I need a vacation!" and then come back from vacation still as tired as when you left?
- Have you ever thought, "If it wasn't for my kids or for this person or that person, I would like to try living as a recluse...all by myself, living off the land, being bothered by no one."
 - Or, I will admit that I have thought how nice it might be to be a stay-at-home mom and just deal with the problems and situation in our house and with the kids. Those are so much more manageable. I know I probably wouldn't last long as a stay-at-home mom, but it sounds very appealing sometimes.
 - Have you ever had any of those thoughts or similar thoughts? Those are all cries for order.
- What if you could find a way to make life slow down and come to ORDER? I believe the secret is found in God's word. The secret to a full life is found in God's Word, so the secret for a life of order must be found there too, right?
- We just read that God orders the steps of a good man / woman. The New Living Translation says that verse like this: "The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their life."
 - Now, check out the next verse, verse 24, "Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand."
 - What great hope!! These verses are telling us that IF we can find that place where God ORDERS our steps and directs us...IF we hold on to the hand of the Lord as he directed us...we will find true and lasting peace.
 - Does that sound good or what?
- We are almost half way through 2016. It doesn't seem possible, does it? What do you want to do with the next half? Do you want it to be different from the first half?
- And, I'm not talking about making a half-year resolution that we'll forget about that as quickly as we forget what we went into the next room to get!
 - Instead, I'm talking about ordered living as God intended for us. Paul wrote a resolution for everyday of his life in Philippians 3:12b-14 when he wrote, "I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, ^[d] but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies

ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

- Doesn't that sound like a pretty good way to live? To forget about the mistakes of the past and really just stretch out toward God's plan of ORDER for your life.

- That's what an ordered life looks like: it looks like doing things by God's order, not the world's order. For us to have an ordered life, we have to determine to not conform to the world's ideas of living. The world's ideas will get us going in the exact opposite living as God's plan for living.
 - *Romans 12:2* tell us, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."
 - I like the Phillip's version: "*Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold.*"

- Have you ever felt squeezed by the world? Squeezed for time, squeezed for energy, squeezed for resources. It's because we have been conforming to the world rather than pressing toward to goal of living within God's order.
 - We've let our society dictate what is important to us. We allow society to tell us what we need, what we simply can't live without, what we need to do, how we should be entertained.
 - How often do you find yourself spending the bulk of your time doing the things that are not really that important? They certainly aren't things that are helping you press forward to reach the heavenly prize. If anything, they are holding you back!

- It seems to me, and this is just based on my own observation and not necessarily any scientific research study, but it seems that there are currently two opposing views in our society on how to live.
 - First, there is the idea that you must live life being busy. Busyness has just become a way of life for many of us. We wear it like a badge of honor.
 - Wayne Muller writes: "The busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves and, we imagine, to others. To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time for the sunset, to whiz through our obligations without time for a single mindful breath, this has become the model of a successful life."

- The opposing view seems to be in negative reaction to this idea of busyness. It does seem to me, not to stereotype anyone, but there seems to be this reaction from younger generations to not choose busyness, but instead to go to the opposite extreme and choose laziness.

- This is when the entitlement mentality kind of kicks it and people think they are entitled to get something in return for minimal, if any, effort.
 - Maybe it's because the younger generation got sick and tired of never seeing their parents who were so busy making money to buy them everything they wanted, but didn't give them their time which was what kids need most!
- So, there are these two opposing world views. The problem with both is that neither are God's design for an ordered life. Both of them are out of order and they both can lead to greater depths of being out of order.
- Today, we are going to look at the life of busyness first.
- If there is one thing I never wanted to be called, it's lazy. So, to ensure that no one could ever call me lazy, I have certainly succumbed, at times, to being busy, overly busy. Some might say it is being driven. That sounds better, right? She's so driven!
- But, here's the reality - we can be too driven...and it can be dangerous because it can take us out of God's order for living. Out of order busyness can lead to out of order driven-ness.
 - We might not be lazy, but we still are not in order with God, we are not allowing him to direct our steps, and we are not pressing toward His prize, but a prize of our own making. That is dangerous living. It is living that will put our whole life into disarray and eventually will burn us out.
- See, hard work is one thing, but a stress-laden, compulsive lifestyle is another. Previous generations have worked hard. But they generally knew when to stop working. At the end of a hard day of work, they would sit on the porch and talk, listen to the radio, get a decent night's sleep.
- People got tired back then, but today's tired is just different. Have you ever thought about how much we talk about fatigue today? Everyone is worn out. I wake up and I'm already tired.
 - Is this God's plan? Is this God's ORDER? Is this God keeping us from stumbling? I don't think so. How did we get to a day when stress and fatigue are almost a badge of success? It's killing us!
- Now, I'm not going to attack driven people. They make the world go around. They take risks, employ people, and initiate great things that benefit society in many ways.
- And, many driven people have pure hearts and pure motives. They want to do the right thing. I want to do the right thing. I want to make God proud. And, that's when I get out of order – I think I have to perform and be driven to make God proud. When in reality, walking in his perfect will and pressing toward the heavenly prize makes him proud.
 - See, sometimes that DRIVE pushes us out of God's ORDER when we are pushing our bodies forward, but God is wanting time with our souls.

- It's like the story of a 19th century explorer who hired a group of African villagers to lead him through unmapped Africa. On the first 3 days, they achieved an unexpected rate of speed, which put them far ahead of schedule. But all of this changed on day 4.
 - o No one moved. The Africans decided to take the day off. Why? They said they'd been moving too fast and that it was time to stop and let their souls catch up with their bodies.
 - o Does your soul need to catch up with your body? You are so driven in so many areas, but your soul, the most important piece of you is out of whack because you haven't taken time to care for it by being within God's will and putting your focus on his prize for you. You surely haven't spent any time rejuvenating your soul by being still during any kind of devotional time with God.
 - o Instead, we fill our life with to do lists and figure that if I make good time today, I want to exceed it tomorrow.

- This is symptomatic of how we have left God's ORDER. It's when our driven-ness drives us away from God rather than toward him.
 - o Paul was driven for the Lord. He was busy starting churches, writing to churches, proclaiming the gospel. But, his soul was in line with his body as his driven-ness always drove him toward God, toward a life of order and toward his heavenly prize.
 - o How about us? We have to ask the question in the title of the sermon, "Who's doing the driving" in our lives. Is it really God like it was for Paul? Or is it really us? If it's us, we are leaving our souls behind!

- King Saul, in the Old Testament, is the Portrait of a Driven Man. In 1 Samuel 9, he was anointed and crowned the first king over Israel. He was wealthy, he was hot (Scripture says he was the best-looking guy in Israel) and he was built (he stood a head taller than anyone). The people looked at him and saw "king!" He just looked the part.
 - o But, he also acted the part. He spoke well and he was driven. He wanted to be a good king. He wanted to do right by the people. But he let his driven-ness get the better of him.
 - o He became incensed with hunger for power. He had to win battles, conquer cities, expand his kingdom. He had to be on top! Oh sure, he still believed in God and often went to Samuel, the prophet, to make sure he was within what God wanted or to get advice, but the more power he got, the more he felt like maybe this was an unnecessary step.

- Until his driven-ness caused him to disobey God completely. Let's read the story in **1 Samuel 13:7b-14**

- Here, Saul is facing a battle with the Philistines and the Philistines outnumber the Israelites by a bunch. The Israelites were getting a bit uneasy about their odds and so some of them were just sneaking away.
 - Before battle, Saul was always supposed to have Samuel, the prophet, come and offer the necessary sacrifices. But, Samuel was taking too long!
 - Saul grew impatient and knew men were sneaking away. Saul thought his timetable was being compromised. Samuel wasn't confirming to his personal goals, so Saul took matters into his own hands and disobeyed the commandment of God and performed the sacrifice himself.
- That is certainly something that driven-ness and power does – it makes us too big for our britches. Who does Saul think he is to do the work of God's prophet? Saul might be king, but he wasn't God's chosen prophet! In effect, Saul thought he knew better than even God. That is out of order! That is dangerous living!
 - From this time on, Saul saw it all slip out of his hands. He lost God's favor and gained his wrath. None of Saul's heirs would ever inherit the throne. God replaced him with a new king.
 - What may have begun as a healthy desire to lead God's people, morphed into an out-of-control hunger for personal power and notoriety.
- As we look over Saul's life and mistake, we find some Warning Signs or dangers of out of control driven-ness. If you are busy and driven toward something, examine these warning signs to see if your life is out of order.
- The first is that out of control driven-ness is gratified only by accomplishment. The only way you can feel good about yourself is through accomplishment. When you accomplish or perform good enough, then you are worth something.
 - Sometimes this results from not receiving positive accolades as a child. Isn't that sad? But, how true it is. Just go to some Little League games and you can hear it.
 - A kid runs up to his dad after a soccer game: "Dad, I scored a goal today." "Yea, but you missed 2 other opportunities."
 - So, we develop an accomplishment addiction to prove our worth/value.
- This person sees life ONLY in terms of results. Results are important, but not the most important. It's not just the destination; it's the process.
 - Remember our theme verse says, "The STEPS of a good man..." It doesn't say the results/accomplishments/goals of a good man. It says that the Lord delights in every detail, not just in the perceived successes. To him, how you got to the accomplishment or the goal is as important, if not more, as if you got to the goal.
 - EACH STEP matters to God. Every detail is meaningful in God's sight. How are you living your life? Don't be like Saul who only focused on the results so that he failed to see the reason for God's steps. There is a reason for

each of God's steps. Only following his steps and details will lead you to the reward and the prize that he has for you.

- The second warning sign preoccupied with symbols of accomplishment. Saul was preoccupied with being the king which blinded him to the fact that he was NOT the King of kings!
 - o The most important things when you are preoccupied with symbols of accomplishment are: titles, office size, positions, status, house size, the kind of car driven, how much is in the bank, etc.
 - o Can I just tell you, that it makes me real nervous when people introduce themselves with their title? Now, there are times when that is appropriate. But, most times it isn't.
 - You are not your title. You are your name. Using your title points to accomplishments, not to who you are. People want to know who you are. Leading by what you have done builds barriers rather than bridges.

- This out of order life is also exemplified by name-dropping and size-dropping – always pointing to personal accomplishments. Now, you won't think this would ever happen among pastors, right? Wrong!
 - o It's the question of "So how many people do you have in attendance?" It's the comparison games – "We had 55 people baptized like week." "We are receiving above and beyond our budget." "Billy Graham is my personal mentor."
 - o It's not really about how this person is doing or connecting on any deeper level. It's about who knows what I'm doing. It's about connecting with other people of power. How can I connect with the top shelf people? How can I make a name for myself?

- Which leads to the third warning sign of out of control driven-ness and that is uncontrolled pursuit of expansion
 - o Now, most of us want to be a part of something successful. I mean, we don't want to say, "Yeah, I was involved in that colossal failure! It was great! We didn't just fail, we failed big time!"
 - o But even this desire to be successful and part of something of value can get out of control. When out of control, we never appreciate achievements. Instead, we recklessly pursue more and more.

- This can even happen in ministry and church service. When we were in seminary, it never failed to make me shake my head when usually the younger seminary students who never held a pastoral position in the church before knew so much about how to do ministry and had such high expectations for their future churches.

- They would never be content to be in a church under 100 people. They just knew that God was calling them to something much, much bigger.
 - During one class, Jeannette Flynn came in as our guest speaker. At the time, Jeannette was the ministry coordinator for Church of God ministries. She was the second in charge of the Church of God under the director. She was speaking to the class about humility and integrity.
 - She said, “As current and future pastors, you have to be humble enough to submit to whatever God’s plan is for you. Most of you will probably pastor churches that are 100 or less people in attendance. Everyone wants to be the pastor of a large church, but God most often works through and uses the efforts of churches that are smaller in number because they are greater in focus. If you are caught up in numbers, you will never experience the fullness to how God can use you.”
- But, in this danger sign, it’s not enough to be content being within God’s will, especially when God’s will isn’t as grand or prestigious as we want it to be!
 - Charles Spurgeon was pastor of the world’s first mega-church in London. At its height, in the 1800s, it was 20,000 people.
 - He said this, *“Success exposes a man to the pressures of people and thus tempts him to hold on his gains by means of fleshly methods and practices, and to let himself be ruled wholly by the dictatorial demands of incessant expansion. Success can go to my head and will unless I remember that it is God who accomplishes the work, that he can continue to do so without my help, and that he will be able to make out with other means whenever he wants to cut me out.”*
- The next danger sign of out of control driven-ness is limited regard for integrity. Because it’s all about accomplishment and success; it doesn’t matter how you got there.
 - They are in such a hurry to get there, they never slow down to let their soul catch up. So, then, their goals/career/plans are racing far ahead of their character. And there is an ever-increasing gap.
 - People living in this danger sign are so sure their plans are the right ones, they never question their motives.
 - Saul thought he was right to sacrifice before God to gain the victory, but his motives were all wrong.
- Eventually morals and values are compromised. They will take any shortcut to get them to success. And defend themselves while belittling others to deflect blame.
 - Lying, cheating, stealing...we’ve seen it all, haven’t we? Look at all the big corporations who have done this. Look at all the CEOs who wanted more and stopped at nothing to get it. Even CEOs of non-profits who bring in HUGE salaries while claiming to help those in need.

- That's because they have also succumbed to the next danger sign: they care little about others
 - This person is rarely sensitive to the feelings of others. Although he/she can get a lot done, there is usually a trail of bodies left in his/her wake.
 - In the battle at Gilgal that we read of, God helped Saul win against the Philistines. But, because Saul had disobeyed, God began to remove his hand of favor. How many young men died in battle because of Saul's prideful disobedience?
 - When people are abused, overused or just tools to accomplish personal goals, driven-ness is most certainly out of control and out of God's order!

- Driven-ness is also out of order when we become too busy for the important things in life
 - You know, busyness makes good relationships impossible. You can't have good relationships with family, friends...especially with God who calls us to be still, when we are focused on what we need to do next.
 - There is just not enough time in the day to accomplish the personal goals and develop relationships.

- It's also when we view the time we spend at church or in service negatively. We see it as time we could be doing something else rather than the life-giving and life-changing importance that it is.
 - Can I just tell you, if you view church as one of the things that contributes to your busyness, then you have relegated church to just something to do on your to-do list, not the foundation to building your relationship with God and with the people of God placed in your life for encouragement and accountability. You have got to get out of that mindset!

- How many can admit today that you have fallen in the trap of busyness or driven-ness. Busyness has become a way of life. You even try to impress people with your schedule. Or, you want pity for the "trap" of responsibility you are in. You believe that no one is in the boat you are in or no one's situation is as important. You want recognition for what you do. You have mistaken God's good things (such as devotional time, church service, relationships) as bad and the world's bad things (such as monetary gain, material things, accolades) as good.
 - That driven-ness must be taken under God's control. It must be crucified so that you can work to build something that will last, not something that you can't take with you anyways!
 - The Lord is saying, "Who do you think you are? You can't do this on your own. You keep trying to build something, but it is like building a house on the sand. Build on me – the Rock! Stop cramming your life with useless activity and stuff and press on toward your heavenly prize. Give me your life and I will order your steps and show you how to really live. Put me in the driver's seat of your life. Then you will be driven in the right direction."