Saul has become paranoid about David, who has to flee with his soldiers, for fear of his life. When they arrived at Nob, where the priestly family of Shiloh were established, David had no food for his men so he went to Ahimalech. The Priest was clearly worried about David’s appearance so David told him a downright lie – “King Saul sent me to you.” **WHY?**

Some excuse it as a fair ploy in war for a good soldier to deceive the enemy

Others suggest that it was David trying to shield Ahimalech who in the event of Saul hearing about it, could truthfully plead “Your top soldier told me it was an order from the King.”

Ahimalech only had Holy Bread in the house.

On the Sabbath the Priest entered the Holy Place and put 12 freshly baked loaves on the small table. This bread was called the “Bread of the Presence” because it symbolised God’s presence among the people and that He was taking care of their physical needs. The bread which was replaced could only be eaten by the Priests on duty. So Ahimalech had to break the law to give the sacred bread to David, but only after being reassured by David that the men were “clean” (not having had any sexual activity) as they had been with him and away from any women. He put the men’s needs above religious ceremony.

It is interesting that St. Luke records Jesus as referring to this incident when he was accused by the Pharisees of “working” on the Sabbath because as he walked through a field of corn he had taken an ear, rubbed it and ate the contents. “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”.

David’s next request was an even bigger surprise – “Have you got a sword?”

My first thought was that surely no soldier would go into a battle situation without a sword so why ask for another. Perhaps the one he had had become blunt through over use.

My second thought was why did he think Ahimalech would have a sword in his house – rather like me asking the Vicar if he had a gun! - Perhaps he knew that most large families had a sword for their own protection. The priest gave him the sword which he himself had taken from Goliath after he had killed him with a stone from a sling.

We do not know the outcome at this stage, but one of the King’s men had witnessed these events and informed Saul. The King was furious and refused to accept Ahimalech’s plea that he had only given aid the His Majesty’s bravest and most loyal soldier. He and his family (understood to contain 85 priests) and the town of Nob were butchered on the King’s orders.

Then David left Nob and went to Gath. It appears he jumped from the frying “pan into the fire” and had to hasten his retreat by pretending to be mad. (That would make some theatre)

In the NT reading Jesus is casting out a demon which was mute. In all my years working with people with mental disorder and other disabilities I have never met a truly mute person. I have known two **elective** mutes, both of whom had learning difficulties and later chose to speak for differing reasons, However the main point of the story is that most were amazed but some expressed the view that he was performing this by Beelzebub (the devil) without any proof whatsoever – pure gossip!

Jesus turned their gossip on themselves. There were 2 common interpretations:

1. Some of the Pharisees followers were casting out devils themselves, which made their accusation about Jesus desperate. To accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the devil could be interpreted that they themselves were following the same practice.
2. The followers were not casting out demons, perhaps after having tried and failed.

Firstly Jesus dismisses their claims as absurd and then asked them how they tried to cast out demons. They are stumped. They dare not say by the devil and if they say by God, they will have to accept that Jesus had the same right of claim. Having got them beaten he drives home the message: If you are not on God’s side you are on the devil’s; there is no sitting on the fence. It is not enough to be emptied of evil but is important to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit,

What do we learn from these two stories?

I suggest to be careful of what we say and do as there will be some form of repercussion..

That fib we make to get us out of a difficult situation we hope would not have the seriousness of that of David and that little bit of gossip which we love to pass on may well be turned back on us.

I wouldn’t do such a thing???????????????

O Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners, Spare them, O God which confess their faults, Restore thou them that are penitent, According to thy promises made unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen