

Legends are made, not born

They have played 598 games, won 461, drawn 22, lost 115. Their win record is 77.05%. Their first player was James Allan from Otago, the 1196th, Finlay Christie from Auckland, they are of course, the New Zealand All Blacks.

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Like many young men and now women in New Zealand I played rugby. For the Waipu 6th grade, and the first XV. I loved it, especially getting ready for Saturday morning, heading off in a mate's dad's V8, to various places around the north.

The thing with being a kiwi boy in the 1970's, was that rugby wasn't a game, it was a religion. I knew the names of all the All Blacks, the clubs they played for, their provinces, how many points and how many games they'd played. I knew about the 1905 originals, the 1924 Invincibles, the 1945-46 Kiwi team in the UK, and then the stories about the 1956 Springboks in NZ ... and on it went.

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This process went on in thousands of young men's lives, whether they played rugby or not. It was in the air you breathed, the water you drank, the sun you soaked in. Rugby and the legend that was and is the All Blacks.

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But not all All-Black stories are good ones. Keith Murdoch getting sent home for smashing up a pub and punching a security guard in Cardiff in 1972. Aaron Smith and his marital unfaithfulness at Christchurch airport. There have been stories of violence against partners and wives, of alcoholism, of people getting bashed, jumping on cars, rumours of drugs, and then the 1986 Cavaliers tour to South Africa.

Yet in spite of these not good All-Black stories; sins, crimes even, the All-Black legend has survived.

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The thing with all this, is, that this is what we are witnessing in our reading from Samuel, and have been seeing for these past 3 weeks. The legend of David being made, shaped and reshaped, tuned and honed, then fine-tuned again.

David is anointed King in our passage, a confirmation of his anointing by Samuel in front of his father and brother's, back in 1 Samuel 16. The Spirit of the Lord has been with him all this time.

He has fought many battles, killed Goliath and many others, made friends with the King's son, been in hiding, pretended to be mad, lived with the Philistines, chased by the King, has sung and played for that same King, married his daughter, had many other wives and children, and finally, today, captures the new capital of Israel; Jerusalem.

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But not all David stories are good ones.

As we follow this legend of David, this is what we see. Nevertheless, the legend has survived. In spite of many of the terrible things said and done ...

and I think this is by the grace of God. Grace certainly for David and even for Israel ... but today, grace, also for us.

Because just as David sinned and survived, just as other legends sin and survive, so do we.

I find this encouraging. Encouraging that in spite of these sins, God stuck with David. God stuck with him from that first anointing, to this one, today, and on, right until his death.

Just as God sticks with us. In spite of our sins. In spite of what we have done, have been, said, or thought. God sticks with us.

In Jesus the Christ, David's even more famous son,, God sticks with us too, right to the end.

As the Apostle says to us, "His grace is all you need,"

All we need, to be a part of the legend ... **a legend that is made, not born!**

Thanks be to God.