

Title: Who is the real king?
Text: 2 Samuel 2.1-11
Theme: A divided kingdom
Series: 2 Samuel pt.3
Prop Stmtnt: A kingdom divided against itself will not stand.

I have never understood the monarchy in England. I guess it is like certain religions. There is pomp, ceremony, rituals and traditions, but there is no reality and no authority. What is the point of a crown, a scepter, throne, robe or an orb? They are symbols of authority. But, if you do not actually have any authority, then what good are the symbols? They are costly jokes. A palace, carriage or royal ring does not make a king. The simplest definition of a king is one who has the power to levy taxes and to raise an army. Those two elements go together. If the king is a good king, then he uses the taxes to pay for the army to defend the nation and protect the people so they can live in peace. If the king is a bad king, then he uses the army to raise the taxes, and to defend and enrich himself so that he can live in pleasure. Either way, he issues a command and it has weight. Poor Charles. He cannot do either, which is why unless he can somehow ingratiate himself to the people of England, he will simply be the object of endless ridicule. It used to be suicide to ridicule the king, but not in England. It is a national pastime. It's like the people are expected to do it. My point exactly: They really don't have a king.

For 400 years, neither did Israel. They had judges from time to time and those judges made appeals and raised temporary armies but they did not have standing armies and they did not levy taxes. They were not kings. Eventually, the people demanded to have a king and for the last 40 years, they had a king. Israel had been a provincial country with 12 tribes that was finally united under the kingship of Saul. But their king is dead and so is his 3 oldest sons. Now what? That is the question that everyone is asking. And there is not agreement on the answer. In fact, as we will see, people are willing to die over this. Now what? Was there a succession plan? Who picks, anoints and installs the next king? Who has that authority? This is crazy stuff because anyone who misspeaks, missteps and eventually finds himself on the wrong side of power, can expect to lose his head. Transitions in companies and in countries are the most dangerous and frightening times to live through. This is a dangerous time as we will see in the coming weeks.

Read text:

For many years Denys Kiryeyev was a smooth operator who had connections with powerful people in Russia and Ukraine. His ability to navigate those murky waters funded a lifestyle that appeared to be pretty plush and envious. Friends say that he loved the 007 intrigue. Then Russia invaded Ukraine. The war exposed his duplicity. You cannot be loyal to two sides when they are at war. A bullet hole in the back of his skull is deadly reminder of that. The same thing is true for us. Who is your king? The theme of the Bible is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The story of our world is the struggle between the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of man. They are at war and you have to declare an allegiance. The story of the Bible is the story of these 2 kingdoms and it all comes to an epic, cataclysmic crescendo and conclusion in the book of Revelation. It is all laid out. The kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan, disguised as the

kingdom of man. The Christ and the antichrist. The Trinity vs. the antitrinity. The legitimate and eternal king vs. the imposter and temporary fraud. Revelation is the culmination of thousands of years of history. Our text is part of that grand narrative. Here we have two kings and two kingdoms. The one is appointed by God and the other appointed by man. The one lasts, the other doesn't. Who are you going to follow? Who deserves and rightfully demands your allegiance? 1 and 2 Samuel are answering the question of: Who should be king? Whose kingdom do you belong to? You have to choose. The final answer is bigger than David or Saul. And your eternal destiny is hinged on what you really believe the right answer is.

After going through 1 Samuel, we assume that David is going to be the next king because God said so and God sent Samuel to anoint David and Samuel did. But, who, outside of David's family actually knows that? Saul seemed to know it (1 Samuel 14.20), at least he said that he knew David would be king at some point. But was this common knowledge. David could claim that Samuel anointed him and his brothers could vouch for it, but that is not convincing evidence. So, even though we think that David is going to be the next king, how on earth is this actually going to happen? There has never been a transition of power before in Israel and this is not going to be smooth since we have a change in dynasties as well. But this is part of the story of two kings and two kingdoms. And of course, it does not work.

Can you imagine what it would be like if we had 2 presidents? That would be crazy. It would not work. The monarchy inaugurated by Saul finally brought the country together. But, when he died, a major break occurred and the monarchy was not strong enough to hold it together. In fact, for 7 years and 6 months, the kingdom of Israel became a divided monarchy with two kingdoms: The northern kingdom of Saul's line and the southern portion of the country, known as Judah (although Simeon had been part of it). Judah declared its independence by anointing David as king. It is a preview of what much of OT life is going to be like. Judah was the line of the real king. This is where the Messiah would come from. He was going to be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. In this text we get a little preview of what he will be like. Who should be king? Who is going to be your king? The answer should be, the one who most faithfully reflects the final King. Here, that is clearly David. Because, he is...

1. **The one who depends on God.** (1-4a)

Wow! This is not politics as usual. How do you get appointed as king? Don't you gather advisors together, develop a plan, wine and dine the king-makers, get the military leaders on board, go on a listening tour, write a book, get on talk radio and do TV interviews, make flyers, buttons, pay for advertising, put up large banners and do rallies. You know the routine. But that is not what David does. He inquired of the LORD and the LORD answered him. This king (to be) is already different than the king who was. We got the clear sense from Saul that he called on the LORD because it looked good, not because he really depended on God. Or, he called on the LORD because he had no other choice, not because he actually loved God and trusted him. The LORD gave Saul explicit instructions and he ignored them, so the LORD stopped answering Saul because it was clear that Saul did not really want to depend on the LORD, he wanted to use the LORD in order to get what he wanted.

The 4th chapter of James talks about our tendency to do the same. James says that in many cases, we don't have because we don't ask, or we don't have because we do ask, but we don't ask with the right motives. God loves to be depended on and we need God. It should be a beautiful thing. We should love to depend on God and ask him for direction, help, strength, grace, wisdom, discernment, and holiness.

David inquires of the LORD. *"Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?"* And the LORD said to him, *"Go up."* I think that should both amaze us and thrill us. David asks and God answers. Alright then, we know that what we are about to do is absolutely the right thing. We are going to go up into Judah. That is really helpful because David and his men are in Ziklag. Ziklag was burned to the ground by the Amalekites and Ziklag is at this point, part of Philistia. It's not a great place to be, nor a safe place to be. So, it is really helpful for David and his men to know that they need to move. But then comes the question, oh yea, which city should we go to? So, David asks again. *"To which shall I go up?"* And the LORD said, *"To Hebron."*

Look at verse 2. *"So David went up there."* David, his two wives, his men, everyone who was in his household, they all went. It's rather simple, isn't it? He asked, the Lord answered, and he did what the Lord said. I want us to stop for a minute and relish in the goodness of this gift. We are all at the mercy of those who are in authority over us. We all know what it is like to be under authority that fails. There are times when umpires and officials make the wrong call and it changes a game, a season and careers. I don't have to illustrate this, you know it. But, think of what a gift this is to be under the leadership of someone who talks with God and God answers. What a source of peace and confidence and hope this would be. Imagine these guys who have been running for their lives and hiding in caves and being viewed as enemies and outcasts to know that what we are doing right now is without a doubt, exactly what God wants. We are following a leader who is following God. Wouldn't you want a leader like that?

What would it be like to have a president or a governor like that, or better yet, a king like that? As followers of Christ, someday we will live in the fully realized kingdom of Jesus Christ and it will not only be good, it will be perfect and will never stop being perfect. Oh beloved, if the Lord puts you in any position of influence or authority, do you see the gift you can give to others by leaning on the Lord? Oh dads, lean on the Lord. Inquire of him as to how to love, serve, provide for and give direction to your family. Moms, lean on the Lord. Inquire of him as to how to love, serve, give wisdom to your children and grace to your husband. Do you have oversight of anything or anyone at work? Depend on the Lord. Be a gift of God to those you lead.

Now, a note about Hebron. Hebron had a history. This was the city of Abraham. This was where Abraham had settled, where Sarah died and was buried, where Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were buried as well. The first family of Israel lived and were buried here. The promises that God made to Abraham are now linked to the promises that God made to David.

Now, a note about David's wives. David was married to Michal, Saul's daughter. Saul took her and gave her to another man, though David still considered her to be his. David then married a

second time and third time. He married Abigail after her idiot husband died and he married Ahinoam, whom we know little about. Now, polygamy was not yet forbidden. On the one hand, there could actually be some benefit to a single mother, who would be enfolded into the household and protection of an influential husband. That is a generous interpretation. But even that does not mean that it was ever a good thing. In fact, about every OT example of it, is a trainwreck. In fact, my personal opinion is that this is one of the glaring deficiencies of David's life. Remember what he said about Jonathan in the previous chapter? "your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women." Some people have jumped on that and tried to say that David and Jonathan were gay. That is absurd. What is true is that David and Jonathan had a very close relationship and David trusted Jonathan more than he trusted Jonathan's sister (his wife) and with good reason. It seems that from that point on, David never experienced marriage the way he should. How could he when he added a 2nd and then a 3rd wife and there would be more. The bond that David should have had with his wife, he didn't have, but he needed it. The more wives he took, the less of a man, he was.

Our new king is not perfect. His weaknesses set in motion what will become failures and those failures will make us long for a perfect king. At the same time, his strengths point to what life could be like with a perfect king. Who should be king? One who depends on the Lord and if someone depends on the Lord, you would know it because their life will be marked by mercy.

The narrator does not spend much time on David's coronation, does he? Verse 4 talks about the men of Judah. The first part tells us that they anointed David king. The second part tells us that they were the ones who told David what the men of Jabesh-Gilead had done to provide a proper burial for Saul. We know very little about the coronation. The narrator briefly mentions it and moves on to a related issue. The men of Judah not only crown him king, but they also tell him about what the men of Jabesh-Gilead did for the body of Saul.

2. **The one who is marked by mercy.** (4b-7)

Think about this. Why would the men of Judah tell David about this? Most people would assume, (like the unfortunate Amalekite) that Saul was David's enemy. And since the men of Jabesh-Gilead were so loyal to Saul that they risked their lives to retrieve his remains from the Philistines in order to give him a proper burial, I think it is safe to say, these men are not going to be quick to accept David as king. In fact, the men of Jabesh-Gilead might be on the list of adversaries. How is David going to respond to these men? Is he going to be threatened by them? Is he afraid that the burial site of Saul and his sons will become a rallying point? Here is more evidence of why David so often had the heart of God. His life is marked by mercy. Here David really reminds of Christ.

A. **He praises them.** (5)

David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead. These were official, royal emissaries from David who were charged with going through unfriendly territory in order to deliver a message of thanksgiving. David's praise is heart-felt and God-ward. "*May you be blessed by the LORD,*

because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him." David desires good for them and he tells them. They are not a threat to him. His attitude is such that he wishes there were more people like them, not less. Just as David executed the Amalekite for claiming to have killed Saul, David extols these people for their sacrificial care for Saul.

B. He prays a blessing for them. (6a)

"Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you."

How you pray for someone reveals what your heart's posture is toward them. When you pray in private you are talking to God directly about this person or these people. This prayer was public. When you pray in public, your prayer is intended not only to influence God, but it is designed to influence others who will seek to influence God. David really desires for these people to experience the goodness of God. He prays for God to do this and...

C. He makes a promise to do them good. (6b)

"I will do good to you." This is merciful and hopeful. David is telling them that when he has the chance, he is going to do good to them. They have no reason to fear David, in fact, the opposite. They should anticipate David doing them good. He then...

D. He encourages them. (7a)

"Let your hands be strong, and be valiant" Now, he ties this to this next phrase, but he is telling them that this is the kind of character that is needed. Keep this up! Way to go! You did the right thing and it blessed me.

E. He leaves door open.

"your lord is dead and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them." You don't need to fear me. I'm not that kind of a king.

Who should not be king?

3. The one who is owned by another. (8-10)

Verse 8 is a gut-punch. Abner. Abner is the son of Ner. (slide) Ner and Kish were brothers and Saul was the son of Kish. Abner was Saul's uncle. Abner held a position of power in the kingdom. He was the commander of the army. One of the questions that kingdoms wrestle with is this: who is really in charge? Is it the king or is it the commander of the army? If, they are one in the same, there is no question. But, if they are not, then the answer is: to whom the soldiers are most loyal. As I keep telling you: the power of the army is not just to defend against the enemy, it is also able to attack its own people and enforce the will of the king. Do you remember Abner? Abner was there, next to Saul when David killed Goliath. Who was the hero

on that day? In 1 Samuel 26, David spared the life of Saul when he snuck into Saul's encampment and took Saul's spear and jar of water. Saul was asleep right next to Abner, the commander of the army. It was ultimately up to Abner to protect Saul and there was a colossal failure in the army discipline that night and David called Abner out by name in front of his army. It was David who had success against the Philistines. It was David that they sang about. It was David who was the hero and Abner who was the commander.

The narrator is very clear. Abner is the one who took Ish-bosheth and made him king. Abner took matters into his own hands. He was not going to submit to David. He was not going to lose his influence. He was not going to let his family be dismissed from history like this. It did not matter to him if the Lord had anointed David, he would make Ish-bosheth king. By the way, Abner knew that David was chosen by God to be king. He says so in chapter 3. What Abner does is ugly politics. It is an ungodly power grab, that is destined to fail. But who is the king? Is it the king, or is it the one who "made him king." If someone can make you king, then they can unmake you king, right? That means that if the king wants to remain as king, then he has to do what that person wants. Then, they are not really king. Ish-bosheth is owned by Abner. Later on, we find out that Abner gains more and more power to the point where Ish-bosheth has no control over him.

Which king and which kingdom would you want to be under and in? The first is the rightful king, who depends on God, who is marked by mercy, who praises, blesses, prays for, encourages and does good. The second is a puppet king, propped up by another seeking power. How do you think that is going to turn out? But this is the story of the Bible and the story of our world. There are two kingdoms and two kings. The one is right, real and eternal. The other is wrong, a fraud and destined to fail. The strengths of David point to Christ and give us a taste of what life under his authority is like. He rules with truth and grace. He blesses, encourages, does good and protects. He dies for his people and not only comes back to life, but he forgives us, justifies us and resurrects us to eternal life. Why would you not follow him?

The lie that many are tempted to believe is that I can be my own king. I can do my own thing. Do you realize that you are nothing but a puppet, a fraud, an imposter? Satan is your Abner telling you that you can rule, it is your right. He doesn't care about you. He is using you for his own purposes and will discard you like a cheap whore when he is done. Open your eyes. There is only one true king and he is good and he is worth your soul's trust.