

Title: This won't end well
Text: 2 Samuel 10
Theme: The futility of fighting against the Lord
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: The Lord will always win. Always.

Last week I was working on a project in my yard when I heard a motorcycle going up and down my street. My neighbor has a friend, (whom I'll call Jake to protect the guilty) who was doing wheelies. My neighbor and his daughter and another neighbor and two of his kids were watching and Jake was showing off. I wasn't paying much attention until I heard a crash. I saw Jake and his bike laying in the street in front of my house. My neighbor and I ran over to check on him. Nothing was obviously broken on Jake. He wasn't even bleeding. His wallet was in the street because he had ripped out his back pocket when he slid on the pavement. Jake was stunned, but seemed to be ok, considering. He hobbled to the curb and he sat down. Then I noticed the shifter from his bike was broken off and embedded in the top of his boot. I suggested that he might want to get that looked at since there's a good chance, he messed up his foot since we have so many bones in it. If I had known that Jake's dad was an ER doc at a local hospital, I don't think I would have stated the obvious. In hindsight I now realize that Jake was not looking forward to that conversation. He sat on the curb saying, I can't believe I did that. I should never have done that. My neighbor simply said, "dude, you were just showing off." Stuff like that happens, when you show off. Last I heard, Jake made a trade. He got surgery on his foot, along with a cast and crutches for the summer, in exchange for his motorcycle which you may be able to get on Facebook Marketplace for a fairly low-price cause it's missing a shifter knob. Arrogance does not end well. It is particularly dangerous when it drives the heart of kings and princes who end up making others pay for their folly.

Read Text:

1 and 2 Samuel are seeking to answer the question of: Who should be king? I want to keep that before you not only because that is what is in view, but it is in view because God knows that is the question that you are dealing with. Who should be your king? Who is your king? Who is it that you follow? The writer is answering that question while giving us a theology of power. We read accounts that are like a surgeon's scalpel which exposes the corrosive effect of power upon the human heart. When power is given to one who is deeply insecure, like Saul, power is particularly dangerous because his insecurity is the root of so much irrationality. His paranoia was legendary and devastating. Next week, however we will see the corrosive aspect of power when it is wielded by one who is too secure and feels entitled. Today, we see the all too familiar combination of arrogance and power. Arrogance does not end well.

1. **Arrogance clouds the judgement of others.** (1-3)

I don't trust him. I don't trust them. I don't trust any of them. I don't trust anyone. You have probably said that before and maybe with good reason. Maybe not. Our failure to trust the

good intentions of others is more of an indictment of us than them. We call it projection. We project on others what we would likely do in a similar situation.

Ammon is the kingdom directly east of Israel. Ammon was led by Nahash, who infamously threatened Jabesh-Gilead (an Israelite city on the east side of the Jordan River) in the early days of Saul's reign, which became the occasion for a glorious victory for Israel and a complete rout of the Ammonite army. The Ammonites were not depicted as nice people in general. In 1 Samuel 11, they threatened to gouge out the right eye of every Hebrew male they conquered. In Amos 1, we find out that they sliced open Hebrew women who were pregnant in order to kill two generations at the same time. These are a violent people, but Nahash, had enough sense to be at peace with David and David honors that peace. So, when Nahash dies, David sends some representatives from his kingdom to bring condolences to the son Hanun, the new king. David is a good king. He "administered justice and equity to all his people" (2 Samuel 8.15) and here he is doing it to others as well. David has no interest in attacking Ammon. In fact, we have the advantage of eavesdropping on a statement that David made in v.2. "I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me." David is strong and kind. This is nothing but kindness, but the princes of Ammon do not have a category for that. They cannot conceive of someone being in power who uses that power for the good of others. They are only capable of assuming that those in power use that power for sinister purposes.

In chapter 9, Mephibosheth, a prince believed in the kindness of the king and was welcomed into David's house. In chapter 10, these princes refused to believe in the kindness of the king and assumed and assigned sinister motives to him. David has done nothing as a king that we know of that would be reason to distrust him. I wonder how this resonates with those of you who resist believing in the goodness and kindness of God. What has God done that gives you pause to trust him? God has revealed himself in creation. He has laid open his person and his plan through his Word. The advent of Christ has literally changed the world. Do you assign sinister motives to God? Do you resent his authority and believe that you have inside information that allows you to accuse him of evil? For your own sake, try to identify what that might be. Why are you so willing to trust in your own judgment and character and be so suspicious of God? Are you really better than God?

2. Arrogance motivates irrational actions. (4)

I have read and re-read v.4 dozens of times and cannot imagine what on earth Hunan was thinking. I mean, in a way I can imagine, but what I imagine is asinine. Your neighbor has just defeated the kingdom to your south, and the kingdoms to your north. This same neighbor has not threatened you and, in fact, you have enjoyed peaceful relations with him. Now, you decide to humiliate his envoys. To what end? What do you have to gain from this? What good do you possibly think will come from this? The only scenario I can come up with is that Hunan is young and arrogant, and wants to show bravado to these princes that he is not intimidated by anybody. He is not impressed by David. And there he is, surrounded by his tough-talking advisors, in his palace, in his city, in his country, drunk on the power of his fresh coronation, he is going to make his mark. Ammon has a new king. We will not be beholden nor impressed by

David or anyone else. I will show you who is boss. I will show you who is king. So, Hunan has half of the beards of these men shaved off, which is highly insulting. Adding even more shame, he cuts their garments off in half. That could mean vertically or (most likely) horizontally. These men would have to cover themselves with their hands leaving their faces exposed to the humiliation of the mockers who would deride them as they scurried away. Crossing the Jordan they got to Jericho, the first settlement of size on the west side of the Jordan, where they took cover. Word got back to David.

Now, if this were a scene in a movie, we could imagine the clenching of David's jaw, a piercing look in his eyes, his slowly rising from his seat, the hush that comes over those in his presence and then in a slow, deliberate cadence he says, "Strap-on-your-swords!" But he apparently doesn't do that. In fact, his concern is for his men and he has them stay in Jericho until their beards have grown out and they can return without disgrace. He is not embarrassed of them. He does not treat them like failures and he does not rush to avenge himself either. All this is clear evidence that David is not what the princes have accused him of, is he? In fact, David is not the one who is depicted at making the next move.

Now, let's stop here for a second because we have all been at this place on the road. Somehow (according to v.6) the Ammonites realize that they are in deep weeds. We can only imagine the blame game taking place back in Rabbah as to which genius thought that it would be a good idea to humiliate the emissaries of David. The Ammonites realize that they have a problem. They are now a stench to David. We have all done sinful things and in so many cases, we know that it is sinful, we know that it is stupid, we know that there will be consequences, but, in the moment, we don't care. I was in the parking lot of my high school on the morning of the very last day of my senior year. A friend of mine was pulling into a parking spot, when his brain and all sense went completely AWOL. He deliberately ran his car into the car of a classmate. Then he backed up and did it again. Then reality set in. You know the feeling. You write out an email or text message that is like a heat-seeking missile and then you hit send and within seconds you begin to realize the carnage that you have created. You know you shouldn't eat that, drink that, click that, go there, drive like that, say that, but you do. Now what?! What are you going to do? That is the place on the road I am referring to.

Let's all admit the obvious. We have all been there. Some of us are there right now and the rest of us will be there probably before the day is over. What are you going to do? You can own it. Admit it. Ask forgiveness and make reconciliation. Or, you can dig in your heels. The first response reflects humility. The second arrogance. Hunan was not a wise and good king.

3. **Arrogance creates a chain-reaction that will not end well.** (6-18)

The verb "sent" is appears 7x in 7 verses. David sends his servants to Hunan. Then David sends to consolation to his servants. Then Ammon sent and hired the Syrians. Why? We don't know all the details, but the text says nothing of David threatening Ammon at this point. It is possible that David is simply not willing to go to war over this. Based on v.7, that is how I understand this. David did not make a military response until Ammon poised a threat. What is clear is that

Ammon wrote a check that she could not cash. She was clearly out of her league. She was manned, so she had to hire the Syrians of Beth-rehob, the Syrians of Zobah, the king of Maach, and the men of Tob totaling 33,000 soldiers. These were mercenaries and they are not cheap. A little humility would have saved them from a mess that would have serious repercussions for the kingdom as we will see in chapter 12. Now, David sends Joab and all the host of the mighty men. We are first introduced to David's mighty men, here. David had an elite group of soldiers who were fierce some. Their skill and their presence stoked confidence in this entire army. Ammon has made a grave mistake. She has rebuffed the kindness of the king. She has not admitted her folly, but instead has declared war. It is a war that she will not win, no matter how many allies she seeks to buy.

The initial battle creates a chain-reaction for others. There is not a lot of military information and strategy. Joab is back on the scene and here he is, in many ways one of the heroes of the story. Joab is tapped by David to lead the army against the Ammonites. Joab is aware that he will have to fight on two fronts. Joab takes the special ops forces with him and leaves the rest of the army in the care of his brother, Abishai. His speech in vs. 11-12 is wonderful. And I assume that he means this and believes it. If so, this is a great confession on the part of Joab. The details of the battle itself are few. Joab faces the Syrians and they flee before him. The Ammonite army is distressed to see that the soldiers they hired are running away, so they do the same. Joab returns to Jerusalem in victory. Ammon has apparently retreated into the capital city. Joab will return in the spring to finish the job. This should be the end of it, right? It isn't. The Ammonites are not the only idiots in this account.

The Syrians are embarrassed. So, they go home and decide to come back bigger and badder. So, this war has a second phase to it. Now it is the Syrians who are hiring soldiers and they come against Israel with at least 40,000 soldiers (possibly and likely more), and at least 700 chariots. The Ammonites are not the focus, the Syrians are. David leads the entire army out against them. Israel wins. The borders are secure. The enemies are defeated again. The kings sue for peace.

In this sermon I have focused more on the arrogant folly of Ammon, but I have tried to point out the contrast with David. There is much in this account that helps us see what godly leadership looks like. David is not looking for a fight. David does not respond to being disrespected with a war. He could have. How many times have we seen things escalate to tragic levels because someone was disrespected. We are followers of Christ. Our king was disrespected and was crucified. We are called to turn the other cheek. Our mission is to put Christ on display, not demand respect. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. We need the Spirit's help to stand down when we want to engage. There is a bigger battle, than being respected. The Lord will take care of his own. Jesus began his first full-length recorded sermon by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." That means humble. Two statements later he says, "Blessed are the meek." We never graduate from that. We never move on from being a people who deflect the attention on to others, and seek to live with strength under control.

4. Arrogance has to die by making peace with the king. (19)

I was at the gym this week; I'm not always sure, why. There are guys there 3 and 4 times my size. I just try to stay out of the way. There was this one guy who looked like he could bench-press Kia who was walking by on his phone and I heard him, "Hey Mama!" I had to smile. Here was this guy whose arms were bigger than trees in my yard, who was a gentle giant. That is how David is presented here. Ultimately, David points to Christ. He came to this earth in order to make peace with you. He died on the cross, so that you might live. He paid the price of your sin so you could be forgiven. Why would you reject that? Why would you seek to offend him? What could you possibly gain from that? And, if you have, why would you keep it up? It won't end well. At the end of this account, these kings submitted to the king. They had no choice. That is the message. You can love Christ and bend the knee of your heart in heaven, or reject him and bow before him in hell. But every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. It's just that some will do it out of love and the rest will do it because they have to.

Earlier I asked you why you would not trust in the kindness of the king? What possible reason is there to mock and humiliate his envoys, who come to bring you message of peace? The choice is yours. You can accept the message of peace or in your arrogant rejection, face his wrath. Why would you do that? Why would you give God the bird and dare him to come after you? The account ends sadly for Ammon and Syria. In her arrogance she has created a mess that made her stench to David and now to everyone else. Over what? Arrogance.

Hunan's and Hadadezer's arrogance ruined their countries and the lives of tens of thousands of others. It was so simple. All they needed to do was acknowledge the kindness of the king. But arrogant people cannot imagine a king being strong and kind. But this king was, at least up until this point. Next week, our hearts will break as we see this good, strong and kind king become like Hunan and Saul. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are asking the question: Who should be king? At first, we thought it was Saul, but soon realized, not him. Then we started cheering for David and up until now, we still are. But we will find out that even David cannot be trusted with power. We will have to wait 1,000 years for the answer. But it comes. Christ.

So much of the Bible teaches us a theology of power. Power is presented like money. Power is not the problem; it is the love of it that is the problem. Godly power is authority over in order to be power under. Jesus was very explicit to his disciples. We don't exercise power, like the world does. We do not intimidate with it, nor use it to serve ourselves. We use the strength we are given, the positions of authority in order to protect, to serve, to enhance, to give life, to love, to show mercy and give joy. Power gives you the ability to send. You send others to do things for you. What you ask others to do reveals your view of power. What did Jesus do? He gave us power and sent us to tell others that they can have peace with God.