

Title: The not-so royal family  
Text: 2 Samuel 13.1-22  
Theme: Godless power  
Series: 2 Samuel  
Prop Stmtnt: Power unhinged from God is deadly.

People tend to ignore the personal failures of a leader as long as the company, country or church is doing fine or appears to be successful. However, looking over those failures is like ignoring the mines that are being planted in the ground. At some point someone is going to step on them and they are going to blow up. The nation of Israel has been experiencing military success ever since David became king. That continued with their victory over the Ammonites. The battle over their capital city of Rabbah was the occasion for the events of chapter 11 and perhaps part of 12. From the outside David looked invincible. The former crown of the Ammonite king that was worth about \$2,400,000 in gold alone was now his. The nation was completely under his control and the people were now employed at making bricks for his building programs. The formerly indentured people who built Egypt with bricks were now themselves the recipients of that benefit.

But all was not well. The ripples of David's decisions in chapter 11 are now seen as they expand out into the lives of his children. These chapters are dark and dreary. We are descending into a pit that we will not emerge from until chapter 21. The warnings and messages about lust, incest, rape, and revenge are vivid. But what ties all of this together is how power is used without thought for God. Power unhinged from God is deadly. David abused his authority in chapter 11. Here he fails to act on it. Power that is abused is horrendous. Authority that is ignored or passive is equally awful. David's decisions are repeated in his son.

Read Text:

I do not understand the fascination with the royal family in England, particularly since they have no power. For thousands of years people have been fascinated with the lifestyles of the rich and famous in spite of the overwhelming evidence that they are just like the rest of humanity. There is a lot of ugliness with a few examples of good. What makes their ugly seem so much uglier is the power they have at their disposal. The royal and the rich have levers of power at their disposal that they can pull which lets them carry out their desires. The royal and the powerful are tempted to think that they can do what they want. In a sense, they can, but there is final and ultimate accountability. The examples of it in this life serve to remind us not only of the ruin that sin brings, but the stunning surrender of power that Christ displayed.

I've organized this message into 4 points. Point 1: The ugly account and then points 2 through 4 focus on some pointed lessons and take-aways.

1. **The ugly account** (1-22)

- A. **Who's who?**

(chart)

Absalom – 3<sup>rd</sup> son of David (Maacah), apparently 2<sup>nd</sup> in line for the throne  
Tamar – daughter of David, full sister of Absalom  
Amnon – 1<sup>st</sup> son of David (Ahinoam), half-brother of Absalom and Tamar, apparently 1<sup>st</sup> in line for the throne  
Jonadab - nephew of David, cousin to Absalom, Tamar and Amnon (friend to Amnon)  
David

## **B. The disturbing details**

OT writers often used parallelism (sometimes called chiasm) in order to help us see the dynamics of the story. For example, this account begins with Amnon’s “love” for Tamar in vs. 1-2 and ends with Absalom’s hatred for Amnon in vs. 21-22.

A1 Amnon “loves” Tamar (1-2)

B1 Jonadab steps in (3-5)

C1 Tamar is sent to Amnon (6-9a)

D1 Amnon orders his servants to leave (9b)

E1 Amnon makes a demand and Tamar objects (10-14a)

F. Amnon rapes Tamar (14b-15a)

E2 Amnon makes a demand and Tamar objects (15b – 16)

D2 Amnon orders to his servant to come (17)

C2 Tamar is sent from Amnon (18 – 19)

B2 Absalom steps in (20)

A2 Absalom hates Amnon (22)

Love and lust are not the same thing. What Amnon thought was love was lust that consumed him. He wanted something (someone in this case) that he could not have. He made himself ill because of her. He gave into his desires and let them control him to the point where his cousin and friend Jonadab took note. What is wrong with you O son of the king? Dude, you are living in Camelot. Your dad is the king. You are in line for the throne of what is becoming the most powerful kingdom in the Ancient Near East and morning after morning you are distraught. What could you possibly want? Does this not sound like the Garden of Eden and doesn’t Jonadab sound exactly like Satan? Your desires lie to you and tell you that you would be perfectly happy and satisfied forever if you could only experience or have your greatest fantasy. Not only is that a lie, but what is worse, is that Satan often sees to it, to put a voice into your life who reinforces that lie. Beloved, we are all capable of thinking of really stupid and sinful things which is one of the primary reasons why we need to be consistently surrounded by godly people. Amnon told Jonadab that he loved Tamar but she was Absalom’s sister. This statement sounds to me as if there is distrust between him and Absalom, which is probably the case since they are 1 and 2 in line for the throne and they are from different mothers and both have been raised with privilege and not a great deal of discipline. It is also clear that neither Amnon nor Absalom have

David's love for God. The other ugly factor of power and politics is how often there are those who are in positions of power (like Amnon) and they attract those who either want it and can't have it, or derive their sense of identity from being as close to that as they can. Like Haman to Ahasuerus and Grima Wormtongue to Theoden, these people are like leeches who seek to suck on the blood of power for their own sense of arrival and influence. They have no core principles but to be in power or be as close to power as possible. We look at those in power and scream. "Can't you see what this person is doing?" But they are conniving, flattering, and able to make themselves appear to be needed and indispensable. Jonadab and Amnon are a terrible combination. He says what Amnon wants to hear and Amnon acts as if this is a legitimate plan for him to be alone with Tamar. Jonadab helps his cousin be able to rape his other cousin. When the plan is presented to David, David, of all people should have recognized the danger of this, but the picture we have of David as a parent is one who is distant, disconnected and indulgent. Whatever Amnon requests, David does and Tamar suspecting nothing because her dad asks it is set-up for this sexual assault.

Once Amnon gets Tamar alone, his real intent is revealed. And when Tamar refuses to give him what he wants, he then becomes completely unhinged and takes it anyway. Our hearts go out to Tamar for not only the obvious reasons of being raped, but also because she is the only godly voice in this. This is not what the people of God do! Think about me. What am I going to do? Think about you! Is this the reputation you want? Talk to our father, but not this! But lust and logic and long-term thinking never get along and Amnon stole what he wanted, but what he got did not give him what he thought. Sin never does.

He ordered her out of his room. To keep looking at her was to keep looking at his own heart and he was not willing to face what his own heart had been exposed as. Once again Tamar pleads with him. Don't do this. It will only add to the shame and horror of what has happened. Once again, Amnon refuses to listen and Tamar is sent away from him, but she is not silent. She puts ashes on her beautiful head and tears her royal robe and wailed. Absalom finds out what has happened. His suspicions of Amnon are confirmed. David hears and is angry. What will he do?

The chapter ends, but the situation is untenable. Amnon has sinned against God, his sister, his family and in a sense the nation and nothing has been done about it. Tamar is inconsolable. Her brother, she should have been protected by has been her nightmare. Her father, who should defend her, does nothing and her brother Absalom gives her shelter, but cannot remove her shame. In the beginning of 1 Samuel we were disgusted over Eli's failure to hold his sons accountable. Now, David looks just like Eli.

## **2. You affect and are affected by your family.**

### **A. Sin is serious and it is personal.**

The parallels between David and Amnon are too blatant to ignore. Both saw, both lusted, and both used their power to act upon that desire and take what didn't belong to them. Now, at the same time, Amnon is responsible for his sin. David's sin may have given him an excuse, in a

sense, but Amnon was responsible for his decisions. David's sin had ongoing consequences, not the least of which was a perceived loss of moral authority and the ongoing failure to raise his boys to be godly men. The family was never the same. The rest of this book deals with the fallout. Many of you know firsthand of what this text addresses. Sexual sin in a family is like the falling of Humpty Dumpty. You can never get the pieces all back together in this life. Moms, dads, siblings, I implore you to consider the impact of where your sinful desires will take you. We can only imagine the carnage that could have been avoided had Jonadab been a voice of truth instead of the hiss of a serpent. If you give space in your life for the hiss of the serpent who fuels your thoughts for sin, please see read this and feel this. Sin will not be tamed. It must be killed. It must be starved.

Some of you identify more with Tamar. This is a hard story to hear. She is exploited, trapped, ignored, raped, hated, thrown away, devastated and ignored. Amnon ignored her. David's failure to respond ignored her. Tamar is the B-word that some of pop-culture mocks and brags about. Tamar's story has been repeated in this world hundreds of thousands of times and the result is: desolation. Why would God put this story in his Bible? It is not only as a warning to the Amnons and Davids, it is a strange comfort to you since God sees and God knows what happens to those who in the moment do not have the power to stop evil from happening to them. This world is severely broken and we live in it and with it. But there is a day coming when all wrongs will be made right and all broken pieces will be made whole.

### **B. Children are born into sin, not grace.**

Our kids tend to look like us. Sadly, they naturally pick up and magnify our worst behaviors. Our children are born, like we are, in Adam. We are all born into sin. Therefore, your children are going to sin. They are going to naturally gravitate toward your worst, not necessarily your best. Whatever we do, our kids will tend to do even more. I don't need to give you stories to prove that point. You see it. You grew up with it. Having children is one of the most amazing and terrifying things that can happen. Parenting is like standing on the sidewalk trying to catch our kids who just jumped out of the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of the office building. Like us, our children are born into sin. Like us, they need to be reborn into grace. Pray for your children. Pray for the children of this church. Our parent/baby dedications are cries for help from our church family to pray that our kids will land in the gospel net. Help parents hold that net.

All children, like Amnon and Tamar will sin against others and will be sinned against. Like you, they need to be rescued from that sin. The ultimate priority of parenting is pointing our children to the gospel because we are pointing them to the Savior they have to have. (gospel)

### **C. Families are inevitably going to experience a measure of tension.**

David was a sinner who deserved to die and was saved only by grace. His family was messed up by his sin and by their sin. I imagine that some of David's family looks like yours. I know it does mine. There are parts of my family story that I will never talk about publicly. If your family has been wounded by the sins of those in your family, you are in the majority in this room. You are

not an outlier at all. But, know this. Because of Christ, sin will not have the final word and your joy, your hope, your peace and your future is not in the hands of others, but is in the hands of God.

### 3. How do you address failures that are echoes of yours?

David sinned. David confessed his sin to God and was forgiven. But God told him that his sin would carry consequences. Those consequences may be temporal and not eternal (praise God), but they are real. What if your failures have contributed to you tension, perhaps ruptures in your family? What do you do?

#### A. **Own your sin.**

Do not excuse it. Do not minimize it. Do not blame others. Whatever it is that you have done that was wrong, own it. You may not have been a good example in the past, but you can illustrate what repentance looks like and every one of us needs to see a good example of repentance. You do not need to wallow in it. But admitting what you did before God not only is part of repentance, it is part of freeing others around you who know that this can be discussed with benefit. But it is not easy to do that, but it can be helpful...

#### B. **Let the weight (grief and tension) deepen your understanding of the weight of sin.**

This is one of the ways we counter-attack sin in our own lives. In Ukraine's counter-offensive against Russia, there have been some examples of Ukraine capturing Russian tanks and other pieces of equipment, fixing them and then using them against the Russian army. Satan wants to destroy you with sin. If he can't do that, he will seek to destroy you with shame or sorrow. But if you acknowledge the sin and acknowledge its weight and consequences and let that be a reason for not trusting in yourself but instead, embracing God's grace, then you will turn the occasion of failure into a means of growth.

#### C. **Address the situation with humility and truth.**

It seems as if David was an absent and indulgent parent anyway. His sin with Bathsheba likely contributed to his hesitancy to speak truth to his kids. If you have failed, can you still parent? YES!! You have to! Be humble about your failures, but your failures do not cancel God's Word, they actually illustrate it. You are the standard, God is. Be humble in acknowledging your own failures, but be honest and clear in stating God's truth. Your kids need the truth. They need the water of life even if it is poured from a jar that has some cracks and chips in it.

### 4. What should you expect from leaders?

Every leader is flawed. Don't be surprised by failures. Joe Biden is flawed. Donald Trump is flawed. Putin, Zelensky are flawed. Our hope and security rests in Christ. He is the unflawed one. Our joy and security are not found in our earthly leaders. We want good leaders and we

are called to pray for our leaders. But be wise in your expectations. We should desire leaders who reflect Christ, but there is only one Christ. So as we seek good for the country we live in, we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and long for the day when Christ returns.