

Title: Treason
Text: 2 Samuel 15
Theme: Insurrection
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: The mercy of God even in discipline

Last Sunday, Dave took us through 2 Samuel 14. I was looking forward to how he, in particular, was going to handle verse 26, but apparently there was not enough time to deal with every detail of the text and that one was conveniently left out. What he did, and obviously, more importantly focused on was the issue of incomplete forgiveness, incomplete reconciliation and David's dilemma of whether he should show justice or mercy. The related issues of forgiveness and reconciliation are deeply personal for all of us and therefore this is a subject that we must visit often. Recently, (book talk)....

Read Text:

These chapters are like watching the replays of a NASCAR wreck in slow motion. You see the moment the tire blows, then the car starts to slide and hit the wall when pieces start flying in the air. The pieces of David's family and now kingdom are coming apart. It all goes back to chapter 11. It is hard to watch, but like most wrecks on the side of road, it is almost impossible not to. The guy who had it all, looks like he is now about to lose it all. May God give us true humility so as not to presume that we would be better if in his shoes. David has no moral authority. He got angry at Amon's sin, but did nothing. He was devastated over Absalom's murder of Amon but had to be prodded into doing at least something. The man who loses moral authority often loses the will to make convictional decisions. David seems to be in a fog and it almost cost him the kingdom.

The chapter divides in two. Absalom's insurrection and David's exile. The chapter begins with David in the palace, in the city, in the capital, in the seat of power while Absalom is the one frozen out of the inner circle and inner workings of the kingdom. But, by the end of the chapter, there is a dramatic shift. Absalom is rising to power and David is descending to exile. Absalom is entering the city (from exile) and David is heading into exile, to the wilderness. But something else happens. David throws himself on the mercy of God and in this disaster, his faith in God, once more, shines. The more we learn about Absalom, the more we realize what a treacherous monster he is. His stunning features, impressive presence and smooth words distract for a time, but this guy is evil.

1. **The Treasonous Traitor** (1-12)

A. It began with poor parenting

How does stuff like this happen? This is not just a guy with a grudge who makes a really bad decision one day. This is what an adult looks like whose parents never told him "no." This is a major problem with David. He is, in many ways, a wonderful king, a deeply devoted worshiper

of God, a military hero times 100, but a terrible father. He does not tell his sons, “no.” Absalom is used to getting what he wants, so when he does not get what he wants, he murders, he sets his neighbor’s field on fire and now, he tries to overthrow the king, his dad and take the throne. He can’t wait for his dad to die. He wants it now. In his mind, he deserves it. He is entitled. At the same time, we need to understand some of the factors that may have influenced David’s weaknesses and failures as a dad. Chileab, his second oldest has disappeared. We presume that something happened to him (sickness perhaps) and he died. If so, David’s grief at the loss of a child, may have influenced him to be an indulgent father instead of a godly one. Then Amnon died. He was murdered by Absalom, but David lost a second son. If David is going to deal with Absalom with some measure of justice, then he has to at the very least banish Absalom and cut him completely off. But Absalom is stunning in appearance, gifted in people skills, exceptionally capable in organization and planning. The guy is beautiful, talented, disarming and tremendously popular. We can understand some of the circumstances that make it convenient for David to be neglectful, but none of these are excuses and David’s failures are disastrous. Some of you may feel sorry for your child or for yourself because of some challenging circumstances and you want to make their life easier rather than more difficult. If that motivates you to be an indulgent parent then while you may make their life easy now, it will be disastrous later.

Your kid is born with a heart like yours. Your kid believes that he or she is entitled to everything that they want. You may not have had an easy life growing up, but do not assume that your job as a parent is to give your kid everything that you didn’t have or get to do. Your kid needs Jesus and if they always get what they want, they won’t need Jesus, ‘cause they have you. But you can’t satisfy spoiled. And one of the best ways to raise an angry and out of control kid is to tolerate their disobedience, make excuses for them, don’t hold them accountable, let them ignore you and not do what you say the first time, let them have what they want cause everyone else does, and try to make them happy by letting them eat whatever they want, whenever they want, wherever they want, say whatever they want, whenever they want, watch whatever they want, whenever they want and have whatever they want, whenever they want. I talked with a dad in his 80’s who spent his adult life spoiling his son. His son was a mess and this dad was grieved over the mess and the fact that his son did not follow Christ. I told him that day that his son didn’t need Jesus because he had his dad who was still giving him whatever he wanted. But he was going to die and his son was not ready for this life and certainly not for the one to come. Absalom had the life that David didn’t growing up. He was raised with privilege and did not love his dad for it, but aimed to overthrow him and if need be, kill him. Love your children more than you love yourself. Love God, more than you love your children. With that in view, you will be in a position to give them what they need, and not what they want.

B. It was fed by “politics as usual”

Politics as usual, wouldn’t be so usual, if people weren’t so predictably gullible. There are some legitimately good and even godly people who are in political positions of influence and who seek to serve their constituents faithfully. They are often smeared with grainy pictures and half-truths, but praise God, they seek to be faithful. There are also many who are Absalom’s, who

say what people want to hear, pretend to care, pretend to listen, and make promises they never intend to keep. Our text begins with Absalom hiring a political consultant and campaign manager. He already has two major advantages for political power: Name recognition and incredibly good looks. His mother was a queen, his father and grandfather were kings. His daughter was stunning and Absalom knew how to play people. He got himself a chariot and horses and 50 men who would run before him. Jerusalem is not that big. This is the first record, that I am aware of, of a chariot in Jerusalem. It really wasn't practical. Jerusalem was in a mountainous region and the city itself was not marked by wide boulevards. This chariot was not needed, but was for show and Absalom knew what would look impressive and intimidating to the commoners.

He looked the part and acted the part. People love to follow a leader they dream of being. But there was more, way more. Day after day, Absalom would rise early and be at the city gate in order to meet any citizen who came to the king for justice. Absalom would call to the man, pretend to be interested in his case, and then would side with him. Everyone he talked with was convinced that Absalom heard him and agreed with him, which is easy to do when you are not in power and you don't actually have to make any decisions. Then came the dagger. Too bad the king does not have a means to hear your case. If I were king, things would be different. Not only that, but he would not let commoners bow to him, he would instead grab them by the hand and kiss them.

It's like the carefully orchestrated campaign stops and photo ops in barns, factories, fire stations, and ice cream stands. Here is the politician listening, , rubbing his chin, frowning his eyebrows, nodding and agreeing, understanding, identifying with and showing the world that he/she is just a commoner like everyone else and really gets the needs of the constituents. He gets us. It makes for 30 second sound-bites, placards and press releases that are designed, like Absalom to steal the hearts of the people by pretending to be something you really aren't. Day after day, drip, drip, drip, for four years Absalom did this and little by little his standing grew until many of the people actually wanted him to be king instead of David.

But then comes the master stroke. It is like the scene in the Godfather movie when at the very moment Michael was having his child sprinkled by the priest and when Michael claimed to denounce the works of Satan, that he was simultaneously having the heads of the other crime families murdered. Who, in their right mind would use God as a cover for doing so much evil?! Only those who think they are God, or can get away with exploiting him. That is exactly what Absalom was doing. He knew what would appeal to his dad and would disarm him. Pretend that you love God. Pretend that you are wanting to honor God. The last time Absalom told his dad about a little shindig he was organizing was all for the murder of Amnon. Absalom better come up with a really good story now. Absalom knows that the people of God believe in forgiveness and that we live with hope that people will change and love God. This is what makes us so gullible. We are believers. We believe. We love. We hope. And Absalom knows how to play his dad and he does. Not only that, but there were at least 200 others who traveled to Hebron with Absalom, who had no idea of what he was planning to do. But there were thousands who did and Absalom was prepared for the moment when he would be announced as the king at

Hebron, complete with trumpets, sacrifices, location and Ahithophel, David's close advisor and confidant. You may remember that Ahithophel was the father of Eliam who was the father of Bathsheba. Apparently, Ahithophel never forgave David for what David did to his granddaughter, and Absalom's rebellion was an opportunity to get even. Hebron, you may remember was where David was installed as king of Judah and where he reigned for seven years before the entire kingdom was united under him. How did Absalom pull this off? Tell people what they want to hear in order to get power. Then use that power to crush any who would challenge you.

Some of you can identify with Absalom. You possess some of the gifts, talents, personality, beauty, connections, background, family that opens doors for you and in some cases, you just don't have to work as hard as others for things to fall your way. That is so dangerous because your heart wants to believe that you really are better and that you really are entitled. Therefore, when you don't get what you want, you pout, you rage, you boil and then you explode. You need to be humbled. Listen to the wise counsel of James. "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil..." Resisting the devil is aligned with addressing the pride of your heart.

Others of you, many of you/us can identify with the people who were played, used, manipulated and deceived by Absalom. We want to be and should be people who are generous, but people who are discerning. Just because an athlete points to the sky after hitting a homerun or scoring a touchdown does not mean that he is ready to be inducted into the Christian Hall of Fame. It is embarrassing to me to see how evangelicals have been repeatedly played by politicians who pretend to be interested in God, or believing in God or want to get their picture taken with people praying over them in order to get your vote and know from the data that their campaign manager and speechwriters feed them, what lines to use to get you to drink the cool aid. Beware of traitors, starting in our own hearts.

2. **The Jolted and Decisive King** (13-37)

It is difficult to imagine that David was not aware of some of the underhandedness of Absalom. But, David does not nothing, again until he gets word in v.13 and finally, the indecisive king awakes from his stupor. He is jolted into reality and we begin to see some of the old David again. He knows that Absalom and those loyal to him are capable of killing family members and will. Rather than hiding out in Jerusalem and risking the city going under a siege. David quickly makes the decision for him and his servants to evacuate. David does not want the city to suffer on his account (14). For the second time in the text, we read the phrase about the hearts of the men of Israel. They have gone after Absalom. This had to be a deep wound. From David's perspective, he could have banished Absalom after the death of Amon. Begrudgingly, he allowed him to return, but he did allow him to return. Absalom now returns the modified grace with treason and the once undisputed king and sovereign of the nation is running for his life from his own while the hearts of the people that he repeatedly saved and defended have turned on him. David moves with urgency. He leaves 10 concubines at the house to keep it, a wincing fact that will have terrible consequences later on.

It is a very hard lesson to learn, but beloved please take this to heart. You know it. You see it. But, take this to heart. This world is cruel and it is cruel to its own. Holding on to fame, glory, and power is like grasping sand in your hand. You dream of going far, but every athlete feels the stab of ridicule and boos of disapproval deeper than the applause. The same fans that cheer will jeer. It is a hard lesson of leadership. Some of the people that you care for, sacrifice for will, at times for no real reason at all, just walk out of your life. You can do 100 things right, but the one time you don't measure up, they move on. This is particularly true in leadership. Time reveals all of our weaknesses and there are some, many it seems, who are very quick to gloat in the failures and misfortunes of others. We all know that leaders fail and breakdown. Look closely at the families of leaders and you will find blemishes. The world revels in it. We find no glory in the demise of others, even if we do not agree with their views.

David is humbled by this as we will see. He also takes charge. As his entourage leaves the city he stops at the last house and has everyone else pass before him. He will be the last to leave, not the first. Those who are loyal to him are formidable as well. And in this, we see some of the mercy of God.

3. **The Mercy of God in discipline** (18-37)

God is faithful to discipline David. God does with his child David, what David does not do with his child. He disciplines him. He warns him about what is going to happen and it does. But, in the discipline, there is mercy. David is experiencing the grievous consequences of his decisions, but God does not abandon him. This is what is so fascinating on a couple of levels. The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom (v.13), but the Cherethites, the Pelethites and the Gittites have not. These are foreigners. These foreigners are willing to fight for David and die for him. He is not abandoned by them. David is blown away by their loyalty and releases them from it, but Ittai insists on staying with David, no matter what. Did you notice what this warrior from the Philistines said to David? (21) *"As the LORD (Yahweh) lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be."*

God disciplines his kids because he loves them. But God does not abandon us in the discipline. All of us have been discipline by God and all of us know brothers and sisters who have been chastened by God for foolish and sinful things they have done. Therefore, I have two things to say to us: 1) Take hope and 2) Give hope. Take hope. God will show you mercy even as his refines you. And give hope. You may see someone experiencing the consequences of their own folly. Don't ignore them. Put the gospel on display and come alongside of them. Be present in their life. There is more that I want you to see, but will have to wait until next week. I want to leave you with this.

4. **The Preview**

Like David, Christ entered Jerusalem in triumph and like David, Christ left the city as he was being betrayed by one of his own. The language in this chapter is too specific to be merely coincidental. David crossed the brook Kidron (v.23) and then went up the ascent of the Mount

of Olives, weeping as he went (v.30). Compare that to John 18.1 where Jesus, with his disciples goes across the brook Kidron where there was a garden. In David's case, he was suffering, in part for his own sins. In Christ's, his suffering was because of us. And this, is perhaps the hardest point of the story to grasp. We often find ourselves identifying with David at times and there are times when we can and should. This chapter has some of those. But, in the bigger picture, we are Absalom, only we don't have an indulgent and inconsistent father, we have a good and perfect Creator and we participated in a rebellion to overthrow him from the throne of our hearts and this world. We are sinners who have made a mess of our lives and our world. God would be perfectly just to condemn us for our mutiny, but God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He sent Christ to this earth to be our Savior by living a perfect life in our place and dying a death that absorbed the just and righteous wrath of God and paid for every sin of every single person who would ever turn from their sin and trust in Christ. All of these fascinating stories in the OT set the stage for the ultimate story – Christ. It is all here. It all fits together in one amazing picture. David will return to Jerusalem and will finish his reign. Christ will one day return to Jerusalem and will also reign. Only his will never end, because this king will never die. His kingdom is forever. The ultimate issue is, are you part of it?