

Title: Facing truth
Text: 2 Samuel 18.19-19.10
Theme: Facing the truth about ourselves
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmt: Facing the truth means that we have to admit our weaknesses and failures.

There were two sisters who were members here for many years. The one refused to tell you her age and would get rather snippy if you asked her about it. The other sister told anyone who asked and seemed to enjoy it. The problem was, (or funny part was) they were twins. They are both with Jesus now, so they don't care if I tell on them, but some of you know who I am talking about and it was kind of funny, though more than a bit touchy. Some of you are like that, aren't you? You don't want people to know your age, or possibly other things. Some of that can be understandable due to certain circumstances. But, are you willing to face the truth about yourself? Who do you see in the mirror? Is it someone that you want to be and pretend to be? Is it someone that you think others want you to be? Or, is it the person that God knows you really are? That is the person we seem to be the most fearful of. But, to the degree that we refuse to face the truth about ourselves, we will not enjoy the overflowing, overwhelming, overpowering grace of God.

Our text tells us about different people who did not want to face the truth. And once again, we find the stories of our lives all over it. Our text is long and I will read it as we go through the account, but I want you to focus on 19.5-6 because I believe that this is the focal point of the account.

Read Text: 2 Samuel 19.5-6

Pray for God's help to see ourselves as he does.

David has been king over Israel for many years and has led Israel to a height of military, economic, political, and territorial prominence that she could not have dreamed about one generation before. But while David could not be defeated by an enemy on the outside, he was no match for his own heart. His failures set the stage for much conflict in his home that came to a peak in a revolt against him that was led by his suave, sharp, and sinister son, Absalom who proclaimed himself to be king. David had to run for his life from his palace and capital. Absalom was leading much of the nation in a coup and was coming for David's life. Those loyal to David rallied around the true king and the civil war, while extremely bloody, was also extremely short. In spite of the direct orders of David, Absalom was executed. David's son died hanging from a tree because of his own sin, unlike David's greater son to come who die for ours. David's primary general, Joab, blew the trumpet and restrained his men from killing anymore of Absalom's army who now retreated in shame and embarrassment to their homes wondering what would come next.

David did not go out into battle. He anxiously awaited news from the battle back in the city of Mahanaim. Joab had to report the news to David. Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok stepped up. (read 18.19-20) Here is the first example of this obvious but never obsolete point.

1. **Facing the truth about ourselves is very difficult.**

A. **Ahimaaz was not the guy to deliver the message.**

Let's hit refresh screen for a second. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests who brought the Ark of the Covenant with them from the tabernacle in Jerusalem with David's entourage when they fled the capital. David was grateful for their loyalty and their sentiment, but knew that the Ark was not his to take around, and sent them back to Jerusalem not only to take the Ark back, but to be moles and send word to David as soon as they found out what Absalom's plans were, which they did. Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan were the runners who evaded Absalom's men and got word to David. They performed a critical service, showed themselves brave, resourceful and loyal. And now, their service has contributed to a victory. So, of course, Ahimaaz wants to be able to deliver the news. Put me in coach! I'm ready to play! I can do this. I can run. Joab said no. Another day, yes, but not today. The king's son is dead. Joab did not believe that Ahimaaz was the right person to deliver such important and such delicate news. This had to be handled very carefully and Ahimaaz was not the guy, not today. He was not yet prepared for this job and this was too important to mess up. Joab knew that as far as Ahimaaz was concerned, "we won!" And he was correct. But, what David would hear would be, "My son is dead." Someone else needed to deliver that message. That is not what Ahimaaz wanted to hear and he clearly did not understand. Joab sent the Cushite. There were several men who were part of David's entourage who were from other countries who were loyal to David. That is a fascinating part of the account recorded at the end of chapter 17. One of these was a man from the Cushite Empire which was a major kingdom south of Egypt, in modern Ethiopia. This man, while a capable runner was chosen by Joab, perhaps to protect Ahimaaz from being associated by David with bad news. Ahimaaz was likely in line to be a priest and would be serving very closely with the royal family. Being the one who tells the king that, they won the battle but that his son is dead, may not be a good place for him. Along with that, Ahimaaz was likely young and a little too excited that the good guys won and would not have the wisdom to break this news to David as needed. And in the moment, Joab probably did not have all day to explain all of the nuances to Ahimaaz. Ahimaaz, no. He sends the Cushite, who ends up being the one who tells David as tenderly as possible the news of the day. Now it is David who doesn't want to face the truth. (18.31-33)

B. **David did not want to face the truth about Absalom.**

David doesn't want to face the truth about Absalom. But can you blame him? There was grace for David after he repented. We can't blame him for holding out hope that his son would repent and experience grace too. We can understand the heart of a dad who would die for his son. But even if David died for Absalom, it wouldn't have rescued him from his sin. Absalom needed a greater Savior. This is his son and this is related to his own failures. The soul pain, deep sorrow

and gut grief of this cry has many layers. Some of you are all too familiar with them. You know the son, daughter, grandchild who has caused so much chaos and has burned so many bridges and has hurt so many people, and yet, you would still die in their place if you could. As a father, David did not want to face this. As the king, he had to. This is a terrible dilemma David is in. There are some problems that no human government can fix. There are some illnesses that doctors cannot cure, problems that psychologists cannot heal, and relational ruptures that cannot be mended. But what man cannot do, God can. But, facing the truth about his son meant that David had to reface some things about himself. It is so hard when the consequences of our sin keep reminding us of how serious they are. We don't want to face it. But David was not alone in facing the consequences of some bad choices.

C. Israel did not want to face the truth about their revolt.

Look at 19.8a. Read this carefully. *“Now Israel had fled every man to his own home. (9) And all the people were arguing (imagine that, people arguing about politics!) throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, ‘The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom. (10) But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle...”*

Oh my! This is so spot on! On the one hand, the king (at least they call David the king) delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines...Whoa! Hold the phone!! That is massive! That is why y'all demanded a king in the first place, right! Why are you even debating whether or not he should be king? But, on the other hand, he fled out of the land from Absalom. Well, yea, he fled. He fled because you and just about the entire nation rose up against him and he did not want a bloodbath in Jerusalem. Israel did not face the truth about their own rebellion. They got tired of David. Absalom was the new, young, hot thing. He told them what they wanted to hear. He had the image, the vibe, the looks and oh how quickly David was old news, yesterday's hero. He had come to his own and they initially loved him, applauded him, and sang his praises. But then his own received him not. They wanted another king. It was prophetic and sadly, commonplace. People forget so quickly. Loyalties are so incredibly fickle. Here is the hard truth about leadership. Many people have short memories of the good that you do, and long memories of your failure. (look up the story of Bill Buckner as an example) If you aspire to leadership, realize that you are leading many people whose motto is, “what have you done for me today.” It is astounding to me, the sacrifices that are made for people, and they can just walk out of your life or treat you like you are as disposable as Kleenex. Israel, do you not realize what you have done? This is on you! Do you realize how deeply you stabbed David in the back? And you act like he is a commodity to be traded and not a person. But that is so hard to face.

Oh beloved, it is so hard to face the truth about ourselves. We just are not what we tend to imagine. We all have regrets. We all have weaknesses. There are people smarter than us, stronger than us, faster than us, prettier than us, funnier than us, wealthier than us, younger than us, more successful than us, more liked than us, people who are more talented than us,

who can speak better than we can, sing better than we can, act better than we can, organize better than we can, lead better than we can, etc. I am in constant need of a reality check.

2. **If we don't face the truth, we will distort reality.**

Let's go back to Joab and Ahimaaz. Joab sends the Cushite and Ahimaaz keeps pestering Joab, until Joab finally relents. He probably figured that given the head start that the Cushite had, that it would be a moot point for Ahimaaz to run. But Ahimaaz takes a different route and out runs the other guy and is first to deliver the news of the battle to David. But when David asks Ahimaaz about the fate of Absalom, Ahimaaz double-clutches, right? He pretends that he did not know. He actually puts this on Joab (18.29). "uhh, there was a great commotion, but I do not know what it was." That's not true! V.20 makes it very clear that he knew exactly what had happened. But, in that moment Ahimaaz, unwilling to face the truth about Joab's decision is now humiliated because he is a messenger who is not prepared to give the complete message, so he tries to cover it up. Joab had been right all along and Ahimaaz was too proud to listen. The king tells him to stand aside and he does. He is not mentioned again during David's reign.

It had to be a bit awkward when the Cushite arrived only to find out that Ahimaaz had not told the entire story. So now, the wisdom of Joab is justified. Ahimaaz was not the man for this job. But now David's failure to accept the truth is jeopardizing the entire battle and the kingdom. So, Joab, verbally smacks David in the face. All you can think about is yourself and your loss. But, you are the king and these servants, soldiers and commanders have laid down their lives for you, and you are making very clear that they do not matter. You are loving those who hate you and hating those who love you. We are not the enemy. We fought for you.

Beloved, your emotions do not always tell you the truth. If you are unwilling to face the truth about yourself than you will create stories and scenarios that are not true. Let's say that as a little girl, your mom told you that you were the best singer in the world, but you're not. In fact, you are tone deaf and had no idea of how bad you really are. So, you come to Derek and not only want to sing in the choir, you want to be up front with your own mic. Why not? You're the best singer in the world, right? Well, if Derek doesn't do that, then what? You will be tempted to distort reality. Derek doesn't like me or others are threatened by me, or maybe someone is paying him off, or it's all political, I'm just not in the right circle, etc. Maybe you can't sing! That can be repeated in so many different ways.

3. **We need faithful friends who are willing to tell us the truth.**

In this text, Joab is a faithful friend who is willing to speak the truth, well at least some truth. He accuses David of loving those who hate him (like Absalom) and there is some truth in that. He then accuses David of hating those who love him. That is not really true, but the fact that David is overwhelmed by his grief means that he is not giving attention to appreciating those who risked their lives to save him. David is a human. He only has so much emotional bandwidth. Right now, his position as a father is breaking his heart, while his role as a king demands things that he cannot give. This responsibility, like much of life is beyond what he is capable of at the

moment. It is an impossible situation. But at some point, David has to give attention to his people. And Joab is angry with David and sees the political reality. David could still lose the kingdom. The nation turned on him and David is making those who remained loyal to him feel like the enemy. So, Joab is right to be alarmed and he is right to warn David. I want us to feel the weight of this dilemma. This is messy. There is no perfect solution. If David is going to lead, he has to ignore his grief. If David is going to grieve, he has to ignore his people. There is a cost to being a leader. You have to set aside your grief for the good of others. And Joab was right to remind David of that, even though he was not too gracious in how he did that. We not only need faithful friends who are willing to point out our blind spots, we need to be faithful friends who help others see what they are missing. But you can see important it is that we approach these kinds of situations with grace and wisdom. Here is the hard truth....

4. Facing the truth about ourselves demands humility.

(graph #1)

And most people are short on humility. The touchier you are and the easier it is to offend you, the higher you are on the chart. It is so hard to hear the truth about ourselves and it is almost impossible to tell people the truth about themselves in such a way that they hear you. In Luke 11, a lawyer said to Jesus, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." Now, who's problem is that? Did Jesus do something wrong? No! This lawyer was offended because Jesus was right. Beloved, this is why the gospel is so foundational for everything in our lives. One of the core essential truths of life and therefore the gospel is our own sinfulness. Sin affects everything about us. It is pervasive. It is so pervasive that we don't know how pervasive it is. It affects the way we see ourselves, which is why we need embrace the truth that we are unable to see ourselves as we really are. We need God's help to realize how broken we are. And God uses others who can help us address our weaknesses. But in order for us to hear them, we have to be willing to listen. In fact, we need to invite people into our lives who have wisdom and who love us and are willing to help us see things about ourselves. Joab tried to do this with Ahimaaz and tried to do this with David. Ahimaaz did not listen, but David did. He went to the gate and the people came to him. The day was rescued thanks to Joab. It was hard to say and hard to hear. It always is, but these are the kinds of relationships that we need in our lives. We need to invite people into our lives who are willing to help us see ourselves better. If you don't invite people to do it and if you don't really want to hear what they have to say, don't ask. But if you don't ask, you won't grow. But don't ask unless you really want to know and if they are gut-level honest with you, don't punish them.

Let's say that you keep running into the same wall. It may be an issue of a relationship, a habit, a frustration, etc. You just can't seem to get past it. Have you considered asking someone for honest input? Now, if someone asks for that, they may not really want it. So, if you are asked, you may need to make sure they really want to know? E.g., How much do you really want to know? I am willing to answer that, but you need to really be willing to hear the answer. So, are you able to still be my friend if I tell you honestly what I think? But what happens if someone

tells you the truth and you begin to realize that you are not nearly as far down the road as you thought?

5. **Facing the truth about ourselves is the only way we can enjoy grace.**

(chart 2)

We are the broken, needy, lost lamb that the good Shepherd has come to rescue. Pretending that we are anything other than that is futile, but facing that is hard. Those who face the truth about themselves without the hope of the gospel will tend toward humiliation, depression, despondency, shame, and anger. But when you face and embrace the truth about yourself, you are now, finally in a position to embrace and enjoy the grace of God through Christ!