

Title: Humpty Dumpty
Text: 2 Samuel 19.8b-43
Theme: The hard reality of reconciliation
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmt: True reconciliation is a long, twisted and difficult road.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Today, no really knows who or what Humpty Dumpty is about. Some think that it is a veiled reference to King Richard III of England who suffered a significant military loss in 1485. Another theory is that Humpty Dumpty is a reference to a large cannon that was used by the defenders of the king in Colchester, England during a battle with the army of Parliament in 1648. A shot from the Parliamentary army damaged the wall underneath Humpty Dumpty and when that section of the wall collapsed, the large cannon fell with it. The Cavaliers, (soldiers loyal to the crown) could not raise it back up no matter how hard they tried because it was so heavy. Then of course there are those who claim that Humpty Dumpty was pushed. But the truth is, we live in a world that is under the effects of the fall. Life is marked by sorrow, grief and loss.

Sometimes the loss is so great, the damage so deep, that what was broken cannot be fixed as it was before, or what was lost cannot be found. This is true about things, but we feel it so much deeper in relationships. How do you put things back together? Marriages start with so much love and hope. Children are born with high expectations and dreams by their parents. Churches are planted with prayer and many good gospel desires. Along the way, life happens. Accidents, tragedies, illness, sin, selfishness, conflict, pride, ugly old pride, and relationships are strained, coups are attempted, promises are broken and friends become enemies. How do people live with the strain or address the strain? In our text, we see how a king responds to rebellion? How does a king who has been betrayed by his own people respond to them when the king has the might and authority to respond? What will he do? What should you do? Better yet, what did God do?

1. **Take the initiative to reconcile.** (11-12)

There are moments in David's life where we cringe, but this is not one of them. In fact, this is, in my estimation, a David and Goliath moment. David does the unexpected. The people of Israel do not know what to do. They have rebelled against their king and their rebel leader is dead and their coup is a complete failure. Now what? If human nature and history is any teacher, then many of them should run for their lives because when the king gets back into power, he is going to crush them, and likely execute them in order to make them an example to others. But that is NOT what David does. Here is one of the reasons why this man is a man after God's heart.

We are like the people who rebelled against their king. Truth be told, if our king, Jesus responded to us the way we tend to respond, then we can understand the hesitancy to face the king. In our case, we have no excuse to justify our rebellion of God and our rejection of his rule over our lives. God would be perfectly just to condemn us for our sin. But, God, who is rich in mercy took the initiative. He came to us. He took the first step to address the chasm that lay between us. That is why this is David at his finest. He sends word to Zadok and Abiathar (the priests) to let the elders of his own tribe Judah, know that despite what they did, he wants to restore the relationship. It had to be hard on David to realize how much of Absalom's rebellion had been embraced by the people in his own tribe. Absalom proclaimed his kingship in Hebron, Amasa, a nephew of David's agreed to be the commander of the army, and quite a few people from the tribe of Judah joined in. So, on the one hand, we can understand their hesitancy to run out and bring David back. This is embarrassing. So, David takes the initiative. He extends a word of mercy. There were conversations that needed to take place. There were plenty of people who needed to confess and forgive. But someone had to make the first move to attempt to start the process. As people of the gospel, that person should be us.

We are not responsible for how other people respond. And I know that there will be plenty of times when our efforts to reconcile are rejected. But, by God's grace, and for the fame of his name, we can take the initiative and offer the opportunity for reconciliation.

Now in David's case, he was not only the king who had been rejected, but he was the king who had brought some of this upon himself. God told David that his family would suffer the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba and the attempted cover-up murder of her husband Uriah. But God had forgiven David and David knew that he was a recipient of and a debtor to mercy.

2. **Be ready with mercy.** (13-15)

In order to demonstrate his public commitment to reconciling the nation, David offers the position of army commander to Amasa. Amasa was the leader of the army of the rebellion. That meant that he was the leader of much of Israel's army, at least for a time. The battle that he fought against David, did not go well for him, since Absalom was killed. But there is much that we do not know. But we know this much: Amasa was a nephew of David, like Joab was. Amasa and Joab were cousins. Amasa had been a leader in the rebellion, and Joab had publicly disobeyed (rebelled) David's explicit command, and killed Absalom. David decides to demote Joab as a consequence for his disobedience, and elevate Amasa as an olive branch to the rest of the army. In that one action, David was demonstrating both justice and mercy.

application

And look, it was effective. David's offer of mercy was received by faith. (14) He swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent word to the king" and called for him to return. (Read v.15

3. Reconciliation is difficult and messy. (16-30)

One of the reasons why reconciliation is difficult and messy is because we all contribute (or are perceived to have contributed) in some way. David was a good king, but he was not perfect. Shimei pounced on what he perceived to be David's flaws and when David was running for his life from Jerusalem, Shimei cursed him, threw stones and dirt at him and his entourage and did everything he could to heap as much shame and abuse on David as possible. Ziba was the servant of Mephibosheth who was the son of Jonathan and was lame in both feet. When David became king, he assigned Ziba and his sons to take care of Mephibosheth's land and provide for Mephibosheth. When David was running for his life, Ziba met David with a donkey loaded with provisions and told David that Mephibosheth was glad for the rebellion by Absalom and in fact was hoping that it would place him in power. That seemed to us at the time to be a bizarre statement on the part of Mephibosheth, but David believed it and, in that moment, told Ziba that all of the land that he had given to Mephibosheth could now be his. Shimei, Ziba and Mephibosheth now meet David as he is returning.

But now, the king is returning. It's like the old joke that asks, what happens when you play a country song backwards? You get your dog back, your truck back, your job back and your wife back. Shimei is in deep weeds, so he shows up at the Jordan and 1,000 men from Benjamin only to run into Ziba and his 15 sons and 20 servants who are now stepping over each other in order to help David and his entourage back over the Jordan. Shimei is eating all of his words now. He is apologizing profusely and is pretending to repent. We are right to be suspicious of his motives, but do we really know? You have an employer who goes off on you one day and walks out, leaving you in a bit of a mess. He feels large and in charge at the moment, and storms off because he can do way better than what you have given him. Well after reality sets in, he comes back and apologizes and realizes things weren't so bad and is wondering if he could have his old job back. Is he really sorry, or is just hungry? How do you know?

Is Shimei really sorry for what he has done, or is he trying to save his own neck? Abishai, one of David's army commanders, isn't buying it all. He wants to execute Shimei right there. But David, being David, is merciful and pardons Shimei. 3,000 years later, we all think that David was being scammed, right? He doesn't mean it! He's trying to save his bacon. But there are two things I want you to consider: 1) Does it hurt David if he pardons Shimei? No. David is trying to reunite his fractured country. He has been humbled by this coup. He needs to build loyalty and fear is not a very sticky way to build loyalty. Everyone knows that David could and "should" execute Shimei for how he treated David. For David to pardon Shimei, puts Shimei in his debt and basically removes him as an adversary. 2) David was and is a recipient of mercy. He knows that he is the king. He is responding as one who has received this as a chastening from the Lord and is humble by it. So, while our initial response may be karma, David points us to Christ by responding with mercy.

Ziba is a bit more complicated. Ziba came to meet David with food when David needed it. Now he is once again meeting David in order to help him out, but this time Mephibosheth is there. Now, Ziba's story is being challenged by Mephibosheth (24-30).

Based on the information that we have; we don't know who to believe. I am inclined to believe Mephibosheth over Ziba. Mephibosheth's appearance supports his story. David gave Ziba all of Mephibosheth's land, but now changes his mind and only gives him half of it. Is it because David didn't believe either one of them completely? That is certainly possible, but there is another factor that I think is at play. Ziba did help David out at a critical time. It may have been driven by selfish motives, but he was helpful. If Mephibosheth is right and Ziba threw him under the bus, and David gives all the land back to Mephibosheth, how is that going to work between Ziba and Mephibosheth? It won't. What Ziba did just broke that relationship of trust pretty badly. So, I think while it is not perfect justice on the part of David, it is perhaps the best he can do given the circumstance.

Remember the guy who came back and wanted his job back? There are plenty of situations where we do not really know what really happened, or what is the true motivation? Let's stop and consider the impact that sin has had on all of us. Even as believers, Paul said that we all see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor. 13.12). We do not see ourselves as we should and we don't see others as we should and others do not see us as they should. That is why it is so important that apply a generous amount of gospel grease to our lives daily so that we are not the cause or the recipient of unnecessary friction. In other words, we need to adjust our expectations. You probably do not repent perfectly. You probably do not forgive perfectly. In this life, no marriage is going to be perfect. No parent is going to be perfect. No pastor is going to be perfect. No friend is going to be perfect. Therefore, when things go wrong, and they do, even reconciliation is not always going to be neat and tidy. But, pursuing it is right and it puts the character of Christ on display.

4. **Our reconciliation is often limited.** (41-43)

By nature, we are prideful. Therefore, we look for ways elevate ourselves and devalue others. Therefore, we try to find reasons why people who are similar to us are better than others. You may have seen this or experienced this in your teens. You were excluded from a group because you were too smart, or too rich, or too poor, or from the city, or from the suburbs, or from the country, or were musical, or not musical, or academic, or not academic. Perhaps the deepest sense of division comes from your family identity. I am not talking just about your nationality, but about your identity within that. The history of Israel is an expose on the human race. Israel was a nation of slaves who could not save themselves. God rescued them from Egypt and gave them their own land. The land was apportioned to them based on their tribes. Israel could not keep it together. They repeatedly fought each other, tribe against tribe (book of Judges). At one point they almost completely destroyed the tribe of Benjamin. Each tribe had a tendency to be threatened by the others (and these are supposed to be the people of God). Now that David was from Judah, the other tribes were suspicious of Judah as if Judah was getting preferential treatment. Judah makes the first move, finally in recalling David as king. The other tribes get fired up about it and accuse Judah of trying to "steal" David. The chapter ends with the men of Judah getting really fired up about it and you get the sense that it almost became violent. This

sense of distrust is pervasive. Therefore, reconciliation is often limited. Here, the kingdom never quite got put back like it needed to.

The seeds of division within the nation are already there. Eventually Israel will divide into two nations: Judah and Israel. The northern kingdom of Israel will be wiped out. Only Judah will remain. That is why they are referred to as Jews. They are from Judah. Judah survived and Judah stood in for Israel. You already see the cracks in the foundation even in this text. Judah vs. Israel. They are the same people, the same nation and they have the same fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And yet, they find reasons to distrust one another. It is true of every nation and people group. Your family doesn't get along. Your coworkers don't get along. Teammates fight. It is the age-old story of the human race. Satan loves to exploit that for his purposes and we have to be mindful of that and intentionally fight against it so that we are not being played.

A happy, faithful, long-term marriage is a gift and a minor miracle, right? If it is a minor miracle that two people can love each other for 40-50 years, what are the chances of a church family this size staying together for 5 minutes, much less all these years? It's an amazing grace of God! Really! As sinners, we are naturally born as prideful people who treat one another as threats and enemies. So, when naturally born enemies, love one another, serve one another, pray for one another, sacrifice for one another, and keep doing it and doing it, it is nothing less than supernatural. Our church family will only grow sweet if we faithfully and personally applying the grease of the gospel to ourselves so that we are humble, considerate of others and amazed that our sins are forgiven. (explain)

5. **A true mercy of God.** (31-40)

I saved verses 31-40 for the end. This entire chapter has some really challenging people like Joab, Abishai, Shimei, Ziba and then the tribe of Judah and the other tribes of Israel. There is a lot here to be discouraged about. But then we read about Barzillai the old man from Gilead. He met David in chapter 17, when David was running for his life and he provided all sorts of food and beds and basins and a lot of things to help David out. Now, he comes back to help David get back home. The guy doesn't want anything from David. He just wants to serve his king. He loves his king. David is so grateful. He offers Barzillai the opportunity to come and stay with him in his palace and Barzillai is like, no, thanks anyway. I'm good. What a mercy of God to have someone in your life who just loves you, who just wants good for you, is not trying to play you or manipulate you.

This is a good friend. This is what a believer should look like. This is what Christ is to us.