

Title: Last Words
Text: 2 Samuel 23.1-7
Theme: What really matters
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmt: In the end, David looked forward to the future.

Peter Kreeft is explaining the writings and perspective of the French mathematician and physicist, Blaise Pascal when Peter writes, *“If you are typically modern, your life is like a mansion with a terrifying hole right in the middle of the living-room floor. So you paper over the hole with a very busy wallpaper pattern to distract yourself. You find a rhinoceros in the middle of your house. The rhinoceros is wretchedness and death. How in the world can you hide a rhinoceros? Easy: cover it with a million mice. Multiple diversions.”*

Peter is spot on, uncomfortably so. Oh beloved, you do not know how to live, until you are prepared to die. Only by coming to grips with your mortality and the expiration date stamped on this perishable flesh, are you able to live with the perspective that you need to enjoy this life for what it is. Our text this morning are last words of David. I pray that the finality of life and the eternality of his hope of the future will be a twin gift to you.

Read Text:

These last words of David, are like, so many of David’s words, in the form of a song or poem. I see 3 parts in this poem: 1) Get ready to listen 2) God has spoken. 3) God has promised.

The long song of David in chapter 22 and this short oracle of David in the beginning of chapter 23 are the focal point of the last section of this book. This text is introduced with these sobering words: “Now these are the last words of David.” Every day you are one day closer to your end and your end is coming. It may be 80 years away, or 8 days, but it is coming and you cannot stop it even if you try to ignore it. Some of you are not prepared. I have a good friend who pastors in a senior’s community in Florida. People move there to live out their last years in warmth and comfort. It is baffling to him how so many are completely unprepared for the end. Do you really think that in spite of the fact that your strength fails, your sight fails, your hearing fails, your walking fails, your skin breaks down, your heart weakens, your bones become brittle, that you are going to live forever? And yet do you have a will and testament? Do you have end of life medical papers written? Do you have your house in order? If not, why not? I suspect that many do not prepare for death because they are living in a land of make-believe. Avoiding the subject does not change it. This text and therefore, this topic is a good gift to us from our good God.

I am not sure why the Lord has seen fit to keep my mother alive in body, while so much of her as a person has already, it seemed, passed away. Often times, I leave here and visit her and feed her dinner. I am very familiar with death, having presided over countless funerals in the 40 years that I have been in the ministry. I am also very familiar with dying, even incrementally so. As I feed my mom I wonder if I am seeing a preview of my own future before the Lord calls me home. Her lot, is not one that I would choose, as it is not one my mother has either. But the end

comes and whether it is in a moment, or slowly, like a dimming bulb that fades until it finally, burns out, it comes. Everyone comes to the end. Everyone has last words. Not all of them are worth listening to. What impression will you leave, if any? These are the last public words of David. This is what he wants his kingdom to hear and to know. Therefore, these words carry a sense of urgency and importance.

1. **Get ready to listen.** (1)

David begins by telling us that what he is about to say is important to hear. Twice he uses the word “oracle” which refers to a message from God that is usually a declaration as is the case here. As we will see in a minute, the declaration itself is a summary of David’s reign even as it is a challenge and a promise to all who are put into positions of authority. David reviews his humble beginnings in 4 phrases, which serve to underscore why we need to pay attention to this. Notice them:

“The oracle of David, the son of Jesse.”

Jesse was in the line of Judah and Judah was the tribe that God had chosen for the royal line. Saul’s line was never going to last. But in the last words of Jacob (Genesis 49.10), God had promised that the line of kings would come through the tribe of Judah. The history of God’s election is more often than not marked with a, “You sure about that?” response. If we were to pick any of the sons of Jacob that the royal line would come through, it would be Joseph, right? But God chose Judah. “You sure about that?” Judah was the one who dealt with the grief of his wife’s death by having sex with a prostitute, who was, in reality his former daughter-in-law who disguised herself as such. Why Judah? In Genesis 43 and 44, Judah offers his life for his brother and offers to take the blame forever should something evil happen. That, I am convinced is why God chose Judah to be the line for Christ, because he would offer his life for us and take our blame. David was the son of Jesse.

But David was the youngest son, the 8th son, the “uh, uh, uh, what’s your name again, who are you, what are you doing here, son.” I have a friend who told me that his dad could never remember his name and always called him by his brother’s name. David was so overlooked that he was sent out to watch the sheep and was completely forgotten about. You get the sense that if he never came back to the house in Bethlehem, it may have been a few weeks before anyone noticed. God sent Samuel to Jesse’s house to anoint the next king and God chose David, the youngest, the smallest, the overlooked and forgotten. You sure about this?

“the oracle of the man who was raised on high.”

Why should you listen to this oracle? This is an oracle from God through the man who was raised on high. I was not born into this position. I did not aspire to this position. I was raised by God for this. I was chosen by God. This was his doing. David talks about his election by God for king, in the same way that we see our salvation. God did this. God came to us. God sent Christ. God pursued us. God saved us. God redeemed us. God gave us the faith to believe and the eyes

to see. God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us and glorified us. What do we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8.29-31) Look at us. We ain't much, are we? Imagine a conversation with God and a few of the angels about his plan to save you and make you one of his own. I promise you that if my name and case study came up before any angel, that they would have said, "you sure about this?" And that is true for you too, isn't it? But God. This was God's doing, therefore, we should listen. In fact, he was ...

"the anointed of the God of Jacob"

David's anointing by Samuel at the command of God was an act designed to mark him and set him apart as the leader of the people of God. It would be many years from the moment that oil was poured on his head, before a crown would set there. Even this was a preview of Christ, who would be marked by the Spirit of God and the confirming voice of the Father, at the baptism of Christ. This was his public anointing as the one who was to come as the full and final leader of the people of God. Like David, the path to the throne would come through trials and in the case of Christ, through death. The fourth way David describes himself is as...

"the sweet psalmist of Israel."

David wrote almost half of the Psalms, which is the hymnbook of the people of God. David wrote songs because his heart was at many times full of God, which means he was responding to God. He praised God. He cried out to God. He confessed to God. He rejoiced in God. He questioned God. He trusted God. All of these responses are in the Psalms and they reveal the heart of an imperfect man who sought to walk with and commune deeply with God. This king, warrior, leader, strong-man, was at his heart a passionate worshiper of God. You may or may not be gifted in writing songs, but do not miss the obvious point. God chose as a leader for his people, a man who led them in praise and was rightfully deeply moved by God and was driven to express that. The people of God are fed well and led well, when they are influenced by leaders who are unreserved in their worship of God and express that in full throttle praise, or confession, or adoration, or trust, or intercession.

All of this prepares us to listen to what David is about to say. And beginning in v.2 David now focuses upon the ultimate source of the oracle. While David is the instrument or the mouthpiece, it is God who is the source. Therefore,

2. **God has spoken.** (2-4)

Here is one of the reasons why we hold to these Scriptures as being the very words of God. There were these times when men, like David and some of the other prophets, knew that "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue." David is explaining what we call the doctrine of inspiration. Over the course of about 2,000 years, God spoke his word through about 40 men who recorded it. The claims of authority are underscored by the incredible unity and consistency of the Bible. David is telling us why that is the case. The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me. Now, David is not claiming that everything that he said was the word of God.

David is telling us that there were times when he knew that he was the instrument that God had chosen to reveal his word and this is one of those times. God spoke to David at the end of his life and David knew it. David wrote it down. This is what God says about David and to us through David.

“When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.”

David was far from perfect. He had some spectacular failures. But he was, for the most part, a good king who led well and look at what happened. The people of God were protected, they were provided for, they prospered, they grew, they attracted others, and they rejoiced in God. So, God speaks to David in order for David to say this, not only to the kings who would follow him, but for us. This is what God wants from leaders because God loves his people. This is what leaders of God’s people should aspire to, this is what we should expect from our leaders and this is what Christ is, perfectly and eternally.

By saying this, God is making it very clear, that He establishes leaders for his people. We all know that there are plenty of examples of bad leaders and bad authority. But as Jonathan Leeman says repeatedly, the solution is not, no leadership, but good leadership. If you suffered under abusive or apathetic leadership, you may hesitate to step up and grab the reins of influence when the Lord opens that door, but your experience of bad leadership only means that you need to learn from that and be a good leader. Lead justly. Be fair. That means, do not play favorites. The same rules apply to all. And what will keep you fair to those under you, is your consistent acknowledgement that your influence is to be conducted in the fear of God. God will hold you accountable if you are unfair. Being fair will upset those who want you to play favorites and who want a good old boys club, or special favors. But, when you are consistent and you are fair, your people will feel like the sun has risen on them like it does on a cloudless day. It will feel so refreshing like the gentle rains on thirsty crops waiting to bring forth bounty for the people.

Do you see it now? God wants his people to be blessed. He wants his people to be provided for. He wants his people to be protected. He wants leaders who put him on display by leading like this, because this is the kind of leader that Christ will be and therefore, this is what life will be like living under the reign of Christ.

When you live under corrupt, angry, abusive, or complacent leadership, it feels dark. It is depressing, because you are vulnerable either to the power over you (corruption) or the powers around you (enemies). You don’t have someone that you trust who cares for you and who can be trusted to be honest and fair. You feel helpless to the system. And there are countless examples of leaders locally and nationally who rig the system because they are corrupt and it is maddening. But, when there is someone who is fair, who is honest, who is caring, who is loving, who is faithful, then it is a like a breath of fresh air and you are free to flourish.

This is so good for elders in the church and for dads in the home. If you want to know what Godly leadership looks like and feels like, here it is. Be consistent. Be fair. Rule. Exercise your leadership, yes, but do it in the fear of God. Be the kind of leader that God expects of you. So, the question that I have to ask myself as a husband and an elder is this: Is my wife and my flock flourishing. Do they feel loved, provided for, protected, and valued? And what do I need to do in order to help create that?

The old covenant people of God were ruled by a king in Israel. The new covenant people of God are led by elders in local churches, but the mandate is really the same. Acts 20.28 is directed to the elders of a local church and says, *“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”*

Ok, quick review. We were basically told to get ready to listen because what God said through David was and remains extremely important to know and embrace. Then we were told what God said about how leaders are chosen by God in order to be a reflection of God by leading justly and when they do that, their people will flourish. This is the heart of this text. This song concludes with a promise.

3. **God has promised.** (5-7)

God has promised that from David’s line there will be an eternal kingdom because God has made with David an everlasting covenant. Do you remember what God told David in 2 Samuel 7.16? *“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”* Look at that middle phrase in v.5. The covenant that God established with David is ordered in all things and secure. Now, there are two things that I want us to consider. 1) Can you imagine the peace that David could have as he comes to the end of his life and reign? What is going to happen to my kingdom? What is going to happen to my people? Will anything that I have done and accomplished matter? And of course, the answer is, yes. Yes, it does matter, it will matter and it will matter forever. V. 5 ends with the confidence that God will do what he promised and David can die at rest. 2) You are going to die. It may be sudden, or your life may leak out of your body slowly and miserably. I hope that is not the case for you, but we don’t always have a say in that, do we? But, when I remind you that you are going to die, do you recoil? Do you wince? Or do you embrace this reality as a gift to you so that you can get your house in order? You can die in a panic, or in defiance because you are trying to mask the panic, or you can die in peace. In order to die at peace, you need to know and embrace the promises of God. God made a promise to David and David believed God. God fulfilled that promise by sending Christ and you need to believe Christ and rest in his reign.

But, until that day comes, evil rulers will rule. There will be days when it will seem as if they will win. They won’t. It may get darker. The nights where evil and corruption reigns and where intimidation and even persecution of the people of God may be long. But they will not last. God has also promised that evil, and therefore, evil leaders, will not win. The enemies of God and the enemies of God’s people will not stand before the real King. If your life is bound up by the

King and you therefore seek first his kingdom, you can die at peace. Your God reigns, and you will reign with him, his kingdom is forever. And in that day, there will be no night. There will be no death. There will be no evil.