

February 5, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: *The Life of David*
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from 2 Samuel 19:1-15.

1. Can you think of a modern leader who might have characteristics similar to Joab?
2. Was it right or expected that David would grieve for Absalom?
3. Was it wise for David to allow his sorrow to negatively impact the people?
4. If you were David, how would you have responded to Joab's rebuke?
5. Why did David promise to appoint Amasa to the position of leader of the army?

TRUSTING POLITICAL INTRIGUE **2 Samuel 19:1-15**

Alexander Haig served as Secretary of State under President Reagan for about a year and a half (January 22, 1981- July 5, 1982). He had also served as Chief of Staff for Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. He was an aggressive leader who had a penchant to take control, even when he shouldn't. He committed the classic faux-pa when President Reagan was shot on March 30, 1981. Immediately upon hearing the news, Haig called a press conference and boldly announced, "I am in charge here."

Not only did the man reveal his arrogant bravado, but he also revealed a gross ignorance of the Constitution. The Vice President, not the Secretary of State, is to be in charge in the absence of the President. Adding that embarrassment to about a half dozen other embarrassments, all caused by Haig's pride and arrogant promotion of self, resulted in his resignation on June 25, 1982, much to the relief of the Reagan White House.

There will always be politicians like Alexander Haig. History indicates there always have been. It's part of the sin nature. Satan, the father of sin, was quite sure that he had what it took to supplant God, his Creator. He was wrong. But he sure has caused a mess trying to carry out his futile plan.

Joab was one of those aggressive, persuasive leaders who refused to stay in his proper position. David had appointed Joab to be the commander of his army. But quite regularly, Joab found it necessary because of the leading in his soul, to advise, direct, and even demand that uncle David—the king—do what he knew was right. Sometimes he was indeed right. At other times, he was dead wrong to the hurt of many people, such as when he arranged to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem.

In this part of David's story, we discover once again that Joab felt compelled to take charge. He rebuked the king and advised the king about how to save the kingdom. David not only listened to Joab, but fell into human arrangement of events, into political intrigue, instead of inquiring of the Lord. Oh for those days when the man after God's own heart called for Abiathar the priest to inquire of the Lord for him.

Here are some good lessons for us about the danger of trusting strong political leaders more than we trust God. Sometimes they accomplish good things. Sometimes they lead people into harmful situations. Always, we the people of God should keep our eyes on our Eternal King. In a world of news, fake news, and political intrigue, let's rest confidently in the King of the ages who moves and controls all things and all people for His own glory.

Joab Took Control – Again (vv.1-8).

Absalom was dead, the coup ended, the king was safe, and a big problem developed. The king shamed the people (vv.1-4). He shamed the people when he chose not to control his public expression of sorrow. *The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"* (v.4).

Oh, but should he have not felt grief and sorrow? Of course. That is to be expected. We expect a person who lost a loved one to grieve. Even we who are confident that our loved one stepped into the presence of our Lord grieve at their departing. We do not grieve like those who have no hope in eternity, but we still grieve (1Thessalonians 4:13).

David had even more reasons for feeling grief. His son had been a rebel against all authority. His son was an unrepentant murderer. His son had rebelled against him and sought to kill him. David knew that there was no hope at all in eternity for Absalom. So let him grieve! Yes, but it does appear that David tended to wear his emotions on his sleeve. When he was happy or excited, everyone knew it. That was certainly the case when they brought the ark of God to Jerusalem. *And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod* (2 Samuel 6:14). We remember from our study of that passage what trouble and conflicts that expression of emotion caused. Now we see that when he was sad, everyone knew he was sad.

Yes, we expect him to grieve. But because David was the leader of the people, there was a time for him to control his outward expressions. Solomon taught this principle: *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1), . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance (Ecclesiastes 3:4)*. David had a hard time telling which time it was. As a result, he caused unnecessary offense. He needed to realize that the public nature of his office required that he be more controlled than others needed to be. He could grieve as a father in private. But to grieve, and grieve extremely in public, could and did give the wrong impression. The victorious soldiers and the people who risked their lives to stand with David suddenly felt like they had done something wrong by delivering their beloved king from destruction.

In this story there is a lesson for us. It is not wise or necessary for everyone else to know how you feel. Demanding that others know your most intimate feelings and respond accordingly is a sign of immaturity. It appears that a large portion of younger adults in our society are of the opinion that when they are displeased everyone should be aware of it. These expressions are no different than a little child throwing a temper tantrum. In a generation past, temper tantrums were not tolerated. A loving parent disciplined a child who threw tantrums so that the child could understand that he or she was to accept disappointment as part of life.

But many young adults did not have the privilege of being reared by parents who loved them, and, therefore, they really do expect that they should have their way. When they can't have their way, they let everyone know that someone, somewhere is a in a lot of trouble for preventing them from getting what they want. That is a very sad condition that will result in the complete and final destruction of a culture if it is allowed to fester and grow.

David's public grief was driving the people way, so someone made sure that Joab was aware of the problem. Victory viewed as mourning can be politically disastrous. *So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son." And the people stole into the city that day as people steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle* (vv.2-3). David's lack of self-control caused the people to mourn when they should have been rejoicing. The messengers were correct when they attributed David's delivery from death to the LORD. David robbed God of the glory He deserved at this time.

As a result, the people slunk away in shame like your little dog did when you walked into the room and caught him tearing up your slippers. The nation was already standing on the precipice of disaster because of Absalom's attempted coup. David's response could push the people over the edge so that they all would abandon him for a different king.

This was a job for Super-Joab. Joab would correct the problem *It was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom"* (v.1). Someone told Joab because he always took charge and always seemed to know what to do. Joab was different from David in that he apparently had no emotions or at least did not

express them. In this case, Joab would have been especially concerned because if David was not king, he would be out of a job.

Joab took control (vv.5-8). Joab went about to prove that the rebuke of a friend is valuable. David knew this and had at some time in the past written, *“Let a righteous man strike me – it is a kindness; let him rebuke me – it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it. Yet my prayer is continually against their evil deeds”* (Psalm 141:5). His son Solomon affirmed the same truth several times. *A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool* (Proverbs 17:10). *Better is open rebuke than hidden love* (Proverbs 27:5). *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy* (Proverbs 27:6).

Joab might not have been David’s best friend, but he rebuked him, which was necessary. *Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, “You have today covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who have this day saved your life and the lives of your sons and your daughters and the lives of your wives and your concubines, because you love those who hate you and hate those who love you. For you have made it clear today that commanders and servants are nothing to you, for today I know that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased* (vv.5-6).

David did indeed shame the very people who risked their lives to save him and his family (v.5). His extreme grief for Absalom did make it look like he loved the ones who hated him and hated the ones who loved him (v.6). While Joab’s accusation that David would have preferred for Absalom to live and all who helped save him to have died was extreme, it was necessary to help David see how damaging his attitude was.

Many of us have learned this lesson. A friend’s rebuke is never pleasant but sometimes it is necessary. Sometimes it is necessary because we are acting unrighteously, know we are acting unrighteously, and don’t care. At such times, we will be well served if a friend is bold enough to point out our unrighteousness. Sometimes we act unrighteously and are not aware of it. Again, a friend’s rebuke at such times is a blessing. But what should we do when a friend rebukes us and we are genuinely certain that we are not wrong? We should respond by going to the Lord and asking Him to

reveal the truth about us. If we are still convinced we are right, we explain our conclusion to the friend, and still remain friends.

There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors. And sometimes there is wisdom in one counselor. Joab counseled David to change his attitude and actions immediately. *“Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now”* (v.7). The strong man advised his king to go out and thank the servants who just saved his life. If not, he would probably lose the kingdom and face the worst consequences he could imagine.

David wisely consented. *Then the king arose and took his seat in the gate. And the people were all told, “Behold, the king is sitting in the gate.” And all the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled every man to his own home* (v.8). This was to admit that he had been wrong. No doubt David still wanted to grieve and let everyone know how sorrowful he was. But expediency, salvaging the kingdom, took precedence over his feelings.

No one likes to admit error. But humiliation precedes honor in God’s plan. In God’s plan, *the fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor* (Proverbs 15:33). According to God, *the reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life* (Proverbs 22:4). Some people who profess to know and love Christ dread rebuke of any kind. They attempt to control situations and circumstances to avoid humility at all costs. They are argumentative even when it is not at all necessary. They are cutting themselves off from blessing that God longs to give them.

For all his faults, at least David conceded to Joab’s rebuke and counsel. But was it heartfelt repentance because he knew he had been wrong? Or was this simply a matter of political expediency? A child who obeys his parent or a student who concedes to a teacher may very well do so because it is expedient, not because they are repentant. Obedience can be driven by fear of punishment, not a rightness of heart.

At this point, it looks like David dodged a bullet by conceding to Joab’s rebuke. But notice that he has not inquired of the LORD in all of this trouble. That seems to be an activity of the past. Not to inquire of the LORD is to lay a faulty, crumbling foundation. Political

savvy will never be a wiser choice than submission to God's revealed will.

David Made A Bad Decision (vv.9-15).

Absalom was gone and the people began to debate who the king should be (vv.9-10). On one hand, David had been a successful king. *And all the people were arguing 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" (v.9).*

A review of the facts clearly indicated that David had been a good king. Based on that evidence, arguments ensued. The Hebrew word here often refers to legal disputes. We know the leaders of Israel (probably they are the ones arguing) had made a covenant with David to be king. *So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel (2 Samuel 5:3).* Some would argue that they were obligated to keep that covenant. Yes, but did the leaders of the northern tribe make a covenant with Absalom when the "anointed him" as king in Hebron? Some no doubt argued that the agreement with Absalom superceded the agreement with David.

And so the evidence was presented that David had brought the nation success. Therefore, it made sense to many of the leaders for the nation to go back and honor the first agreement. This debate might cause us to wonder how we are supposed to know which argument is right in such cases. Solomon's wisdom is found correct in this matter. *The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him (Proverbs 18:17).* The answer to the dilemma? It is the work of politicians to hammer out compromises. It is the work of God's people to stay on their knees before the Lord asking, "What would You have us to do? Show us Your way, O Lord." There is no indication that anyone was doing that in Israel.

A review of the facts indicated that the people had been wrong. "The king had saved us and delivered us, but now he has fled because of Absalom." Notice that the king was gone "Not because of us," but because of Absalom. When will they acknowledge that they had been

wrong? It is unlikely we will arrive at the right conclusion until we admit we have made a wrong conclusion.

Okay, they did. Notice that the "people" admitted they had made a bad choice. Absalom, the wrong choice, was no longer a choice. *But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?"(v.10).* They had to conclude that the "king" had delivered them, but the guy they anointed to replace the king was dead. The fact that these leaders kept referring to David as king indicates that they knew they had made a wrong choice and now needed to correct it. They had rejected the rightful king and needed to come to grips with it. They needed to right the wrong and ask the rightful king to come home and rule over them.

This is such a good picture of salvation. Jesus Christ is our Creator and by virtue of that action, He is our rightful king. But because we are born with the sin and rebellion of our forefather Adam flowing in our veins, we have rejected the rightful king. By nature we exalt ourselves as king. The sad reality is that we are all as dead spiritually as Absalom was dead physically. We are trying to serve a dead king when we put ourselves on the throne of life. We need to be humbled before God, acknowledge that we are rebels against Him, and ask Him to forgive us. We need to accept the blood of Christ by faith as the covering for our sins and acknowledge Him as king of our lives.

The people of Israel were more interested in political maneuvers at this point than they were in simply being right with God. So was David. He planned to get the people of Judah on board by shaming them (vv.11-12). To that end, he instructed the priests to tell the leaders of Judah something that may not be altogether true. *And King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Say to the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house, when the word of all Israel has come to the king? You are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king?'" (vv.11-12).*

At this point we are right to question if "the word of all Israel" was really the word of all Israel? It appears that the matter was still being debated. And we know from subsequent evidence (20:1ff) that everyone was not on this band wagon.

However, David intended for the words “all Israel” to be convincing to the leaders of Judah. David ordered the priests who were in Jerusalem, men on his side, to tell the leaders of Judah that they were slack compared to Israel. Pitting diverse groups of a nation against each other is not wise. Instead of comparing one group against the other, David should have been working for unity. Eventually this kind of competition led to civil war and finally the complete break of the nation.

We do well to remember that traveling words are not always dependable words. In this case, *the word of all Israel had come to the king*. Again, we know that there were people in Israel who were still opposed to David. Fake news is not dependable and should never be the basis of our decision making. But in politics, fake news can be used as “evidence.” David hoped that so-called evidence was enough to get Judah on board.

Second, David planned to get Israel on board by making an unwise promise (vv.13-15). He promised the leader of the opposing army the chief position in his army. “*And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab’*” (v.13). The priests were to tell Amasa that he was going to be Joab’s replacement. He was David’s nephew just like Joab was. But if he was so qualified for this job, why didn’t David give it to him years earlier?

This is evidence of vengeance. We know that David had repeated conflicts with Joab because Joab was such a headstrong leader. Joab had disobeyed David and killed Absalom. Joab had just shamed David into meeting with the people. David had a lot of personal grievances against Joab and this was a decision generated by those grievances. Because this was such a major decision, it would have been wise for David to inquire of the LORD. He chose political maneuvering instead.

As usual David’s plan was a smashing success – to a point. Just as he planned, he swayed the heart of the people in Judah. *And he swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent word to the king, “Return, both you and all your servants”* (v.14). David’s promises and pressure strongly influenced the hearts of the people. He put pressure on them to turn, to stretch them in a particular direction. Picture the gardener who ties a wire to a tree and pulls it in

a certain direction to effect its growth. And all the people of Judah jumped on the bandwagon.

Everyone was happy to acknowledge him as king again. *So the king came back to the Jordan, and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and to bring the king over the Jordan* (v.15). David headed for home. All the plans, pressure, promises worked and David was once again the king. Or did they? How would Joab take being replaced? We will see.

In the early years of David’s life, he was characterized as one who inquired of the Lord. He and the priests had a tight relationship because they often inquired about the Lord’s will for him. However, in these later years, it appears that David had relegated the priests to political advisors and mere cabinet members. How easy it is for us to cruise through life learning how to handle stress, problems, or ordinary decisions without ever concerning ourselves with God’s will. Let’s leave politics to the politicians and follow instead the advice of a righteous statesman who said, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15).