

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Absalom's Rebellion

Readings: 2 Samuel 12:24-25; 1 Chronicles 3:4c-9; 2 Samuel 13:1-39; 14:1-24; Also See: 2 Samuel 5:13-16; 1 Chronicles 14:3-7

Reflections:

- The birth of Solomon shows the incredible grace of God. David has sinned greatly in committing adultery and murder. Yet, God still chooses to bless David and Bathsheba and choose them as a couple through whom the Messianic line would come. Solomon as the next true king and again one of the great kings of Israel is born to them as one deeply loved by God. He is even given a special name by God that will remind him for the rest of his life that he is deeply loved by God. This is a good reminder that we should be careful when dealing with people who have sinned in big ways that God can still use them in very significant and powerful ways. His love and grace is that BIG! Even when people continue to struggle with the aftermath of sin, God can still use them and bring blessing through their lives.
- The story of David though continues now and moves in a very painful direction. The terrible prophecy of Nathan unfolds. Nathan had prophesied, “Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight.” (2 Samuel 12:11-12) The story of Absalom and his rebellion fulfills this very sad prophecy.
- Ammon's rape of Tamar his own sister is meant to stir a deep disgust with his sin. It is manipulative, selfish and brutal. His sick indulgence ends with what often happens. He ends up despising her after he rapes her. Like gorging on a huge meal, the food he longed for he now loathes. He shows her no compassion from start to finish. While David's emotions are obvious as he is filled with fury, Absalom's anger goes underground. He internalizes it and awaits the time to take revenge.
- Two years later his opportunity comes. He has Ammon murdered as his revenge and then he flees. David at first hears that all of his sons have been killed and his mourning is overwhelming. He later hears that it is just Ammon. His sons join David and now they all mourn for Ammon. It is interesting to me that after this terrible thing Ammon did, still

David and his sons mourn Ammon. Sin does not change a person's worth and the love of a father. This is shown true as we now see David long for Absalom even though this commitment to justice means that Absalom must be banished.

- Joab one of David's close friends by this point can see David's longing for Absalom and yet he also recognizes that David is firmly committed to maintaining the ban on Absalom. Joab calls in a wise woman who works with him to play a role for David similar to how God used Nathan. She tells a story that sets David up to realize his own situation. She states a truth that will resonate over the centuries and will ultimately culminate in the coming of the Messiah who will die for the sin of all people: "God does not take away life; instead he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him." "For God so love the whole world he sent his son..." "God showed his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." What a powerful truth that gives every person on the planet hope and confidence to approach God through Jesus!
- David relents from his banishment on Absalom but his relationship with Absalom is still not restored as David will not meet with him.
- Possibly here in this season when Absalom feels that he did what was just and right does his heart turn against David. In any case, the sense of deep injustice Absalom feels will soon turn to a rebellious anger as often is the case with the human heart.
- Personal thoughts: God's grace is awesome even though the human heart is so messed up. I love how this text again reveals God's heart for grace, through Solomon's birth and this wise woman's statement. God is amazing!
- Why does David do nothing in response to the rape of his daughter? Yes, in this story line it seems David doesn't react as you would think he would. At other times he is ruthless and yet somehow he is unwilling to confront what seems like the most obvious of sins. You can see how Absalom begins to turn on David with vengeance and with cruel rebellious hate.
- When we look at David, we need to see him as a man after God's heart, one that is willing at times to do things that are very difficult and demanding and yet at other times is soft and weak. Remember the overarching theme is to show us that ultimately no person, no matter how gifted or humble can ultimately replace God as the leader of our life. David is great in some ways and in other ways he is soft and disengaged. Even when he is challenged by Joab to bring Absalom back he still does not do the hard work to work it through with him. He allows the distance to remain and in time this will prove to be deadly.
- What is encouraging about Scripture is that it seems to tell it like it is. No putting positive spins on things. If you mess up, then there it is.