

2 SAMUEL

IN SEARCH OF A KING PART II



Sermon 6 – 2 Samuel 15 “How the mighty have fallen”

Introduction

- i. Did anything stand out for you from the passage or message?
- ii. How is ‘greatness’ typically measured and recognised in society?

1. Back-slapping/back stabbing

Absalom had been in exile since killing Amnon. He had plotted to have himself accepted back into the city, but spent a further two years out of favour with the King.

- a. David and Absalom met – but it was no reconciliation. Why was Absalom so keen to return to the city and to his status as prince of the King?
- b. What tactics did Absalom employ to win the favour of the populous? Did you discern any parallels to the ploys of political leaders today?
- c. What does v6 reveal about the way the narrator views what had happened?
- d. What was driving Absalom?
- e. “No so with you” – how does Absalom’s behaviour contrast with what Jesus put before his disciples – see Matthew 20:20-28.
- f. A friend from church is keen to serve. How would you encourage them to begin?
- g. How can we encourage one another to reject the world’s view of greatness and follow instead after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, who gave up his life in our service?

2. David wept

Absalom had the numbers. David had to pack and leave the city – see v14. He crosses the Kidron Valley and climbs the Mount of Olives. It was David’s darkest day. V23 – the whole countryside wept. Even his closest advisor, turned on him and went over to support Absalom (see Psalm 41:9).

- a. Can we begin to imagine how David felt that day?

Mark and Gary pointed to the parallels between David’s experience and that of the Lord Jesus.

- b. First – see Luke 19:41-44 – and discuss Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. What was breaking his heart that day?

Second parallel – Jesus is praying in the Garden on the Mount – Matt 26:30. One who shared his bread had turned against him. He cried great tears as he wrestled with the Father had in mind for him to take.

- c. What was the difference between David’s sufferings and those of the Lord Jesus?
- d. Things must have looked bleak – not only for David, but the promises God had made to David. In what way does Jesus’ death make possible the very fulfilment of the promises to David about the future Kingdom?
- e. Read the last two paragraphs of the sermon and discuss how you react to this news.

What will be your personal take from this passage or study? Pray for one another that we will have servant hearts and that we will fully appreciate what Jesus has done for us because he laid down his life for us.

Date: 9 September 2018
Services: 730, 930, 930 Peregrin (via Gary)
Series: In search of a King II
Passage: 2 Samuel 15
Title: How the mighty have fallen
Outline

1. **Back-slapping/back stabbing**
2. **David wept**

INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever wanted to be great?
- Not necessarily famous – but considered a truly great one – perhaps in your chosen field of expertise...
- To be recognised for your **contribution**
- Respected for your **knowledge**
- Revered for your **insight** and **wisdom**
- To be consulted for your **expertise?** //
- Do you remember the Thredbo disaster when the guest home went down in a landslide and there were people trapped underneath?
- A guy from my church at the time was phoned at 3 in the morning and asked if he would help.
- He was a geologist and they wanted him to determine the stability of the surrounds.
- He agreed – and was told there would be a helicopter landing just down the road from him at first light and to be ready!
- Man – that would make you feel **great** wouldn't it!!? //
- Have you ever wanted to be a **great?** //
- It's true isn't that we often associate **greatness** with displays of **pomp** and **fame** and **fortune?** – with **privileges** and **benefits?**
- Yet we need to understand that the pursuit of worldly greatness is **profoundly inconsistent** with faith in Jesus Christ!
- So listen to Jesus' words from Luke 22 *You are not to be like that.... I am among you as one who serves!*
- In the Kingdom of God, greatness does not belong to those who seek power, fame and privilege for themselves – but to those who are **childlike** in their **powerlessness** and **dependence**.
- This is not easily learned...!
- ... and even in the church many leaders have no idea about leading with a servant heart and not for selfish gain or for the kudos of the role or for attention.
- What about David's kingdom – how did **that** measure up?
- For a while – it reflected something of the greatness of the Kingdom of God. David had been a king who served (for TEXT ONLY not FOR PREACHING – see 2 Am 2:6; 8:15; 9:1, 7; 10:2). And for a long time, he actually refused to take power... even after he had been anointed by Samuel.
- But things had changed
- David had *taken* Bathsheba, and *taken* her husband's life.
- And even though as we have seen in the past couple of weeks that remarkably God had '*put away*' David's sin (12:13b), there were still consequences. //

- ... David's kingdom would never be the same again.
- Through the prophet Nathan, the Lord had told David, *'I will raise up evil against you out of your own house'* (12:11). And so the evil we saw last week (Amon's rape of his sister Tamar and Absalom's subsequent killing of Amnon) must be seen as the consequences of David's crimes.
- ...so... David seemed unable to curb his sons...
- And he understood (as numerous Psalms show) that the Lord's hand was behind his many troubles – just as Nathan had said (TXT only – see Psalm 61:1; 10:1; 13:1; 22:1; 38:2). //
- We'll only have time to explore ch 15 today... but chs 14-18 tell the story of how all this became the greatest threat to the Kingdom of David had ever experienced!
- David had (somewhat reluctantly) welcomed Absalom back into the city from exile after he had killed Amnon... but he uses his new found place back in the city to **overthrow David** from his **throne**!
- There are **huge** lessons here about the **power** and **greatness** we humans too often **desire** and **admire**..
- So we'll follow Absalom's **rise** to **worldly greatness**, but at the same time, we'll see the continual weakening of the Kingdom of David...
- So – here's where we are heading...

1. **Back-slapping/back stabbing**
2. **David wept**

- So **first**:

1. **BACK-SLAPPING/BACK STABBING**

- Mmmm... seems relevant to our times doesn't it??
- Absalom has returned to the city... but he wasn't allowed to see the King for two years... and then at the end of ch 14 – an awkward and formal meeting took place...
- But Absalom only wanted to use his reinstated status with the King to his own advantage... and he was smooth... did you notice at the beginning of the chapter...? he would talk people up and say how hard it was that there weren't enough judges in the court and wouldn't be a good idea if he was appointed... and he would see that justice was done...
- Like being in opposition – you can make all the promises you like... and never have to follow through.... In fact he didn't have to bother listening to what the people's claims were – he just declared them to be in the right... he was on their side... **EVERYONE's** side!!
- Now the insincerity of such words is all too familiar to us!
- No candidate for office ever tells members of the public they are wrong or he doesn't agree with them!
- Now look with me at v5 - *Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. 6 Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the people of Israel.*
- Instead of people bowing to him as the prince – which they ought to have done... he was a man of the **people** instead – he would kiss them instead... - and so – at the end there – **he stole the hearts of the people...**
- Absalom-style politics **worked!!**
- He worked on all Israel to arouse the affection and support of the people.

- But the narrator wants to make clear to us the reader that he '*stole* their hearts'. That is – it was a **deception!**
- Politics Absalom-style can **succeed** – but those who **fall** for it have in fact been **duped!**
- His campaign to '**steal**' hearts – went on for **4 years**.
- He had already shown himself as a man who could wait for the right time to carry out his long-harboured intentions. 2 years he had waited for the right time to murder his brother. 3 years in exile. 2 years back in the city without talking to the king... and 4 years since his reinstatement as royal prince!
- What was it all **about**?
- What was his **plan**?
- Vv7-9 – he comes to the King with an innocent sounding request... he wanted to go and worship at Hebron
- But v10 – have a look with me - *then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'*
- Note in v12 – how is all this described? As a conspiracy. End of v12 - *And so the **conspiracy** gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing.*
- Back-**slapping** Absalom **became** (or was at **one and the same time**) back-**stabbing** Absalom.
- Again - sounds a bit all too familiar doesn't it??
- We watch the ways of Absalom – beautiful, charming, grand, popular, pleasing, clever, deceiving and ruthless – and we see his success in plotting to overthrow King David, and we must hear again the words of the Lord Jesus – ***you are not to be like that or not so with you!***
- Not like everyone else who is only in it for their own gain – not like everyone who seeks the power, the influence, the recognition – all for their own sake... /
- What a **contrast** with the true and ultimate King who came not to be **served**, but to be **serve**...
- Who did not consider **equality** with God something to **cling on to** for his own advantage – but made himself **nothing**... and being found in human form – **humbled** himself – even to obedience on a **cross**...
- Friends – **that is true greatness... laying down** your life in the **service** of **others**... //
- Do you want to be **great**?
- Don't tell me you want to be great in the world... and that you'll sacrifice everything to get there... with all your smooth talking and fancy promises... back-slapping and back-stabbing along the way to make it happen – to what **end**??
- No - look for ways you can **serve** the world... not have **the world** serve **you!**
- **That's** the way of the **Lord Jesus!** //
- And in the **church**??
- Don't tell me you want a **job** in the church with a **title** and **recognition**... and **status**... don't tell me how **qualified** you are for this and that – and how you want to be **recognised** for your **gifts** etc... start by **doing** the dishes... or the **vacuuming**... show me your **servant heart** – **that's the way of the Lord Jesus!** //
- Now let's look **secondly** at:

2. **DAVID** WEPT

- It was clear **Absalom** had the **numbers**.
- David had to pack his **bag** and **leave** the **city**.

- He left Jerusalem, accompanied by those who were still loyal to him... crossed the Kidron Valley and climbed the Mount of Olives.
- It was **David's darkest day**.
- The dark and dangerous clouds which had led to David's departure from Jerusalem had been gathering from some time... right back to David **taking Bathsheba**... to David **taking Uriah** - AND back to Amnon **taking Tamar** - right back to **Absalom** taking **Amnon**
- And now through deceptive means, Absalom **taking** the **throne**.
- David sees the writing on the wall – see v14 - *“Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin on us and put the city to the sword.”*
- **Remaining** would be dangerous, given the support Absalom had garnered.
- What now would become of David and his Kingdom? What was happening to God's promises?? Had David's sin and its consequences **destroyed** what God had **promised**?
- How different from the day David had taken the city!
- How different from the day David had joyfully brought the ark up into the city! /
- v23 - *The whole countryside **wept** aloud as all the people passed by.*
- Everyone knew that something **terrible** was happening. David's **extraordinary kingdom** was **crumbling**! The great **king** had become a **fugitive** again.
- It was a like the crossing of the **Jordan** in **reverse**
- It was like the **Exodus** in **reverse**
- Now v30 – look with me - *David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up.*
- Tears flowed that day as the king and his people climbed the Mount of Olives on the other side of the Kidron valley.
- David himself led the expressions of sorrow, despair, shame and humiliation.
- Even his closest advisor turned on him and went over to support Absalom... David prayed that his wisdom might turn into **foolishness**... Psalm 41:9 – *David wrote – even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*
- Yes, **David's darkest day**. /////

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- There was another one who - from the Mount of Olives... looked over Jerusalem... and **wept**...! (Luke 19:41-44) - *As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes*
 - And he was weeping, not so much over **his** rejection as over the **doom** of those who have rejected **him**.
 - He was the rightful King – in the line of King David... but the perfect King...
 - But there are also **other** echoes of David's march that day in the account of the king of Kings!
 - It was well into the night – probably the small hours of the morning... Jesus went out from the city of Jerusalem, crossed the brook Kidron and climbed to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives...
 - This wasn't **David's** darkest day... and not just **Jesus'** darkest day – it was the **darkest day in the history of the world**... !! - as symbolised **later** by the three hours of **darkness** in the **middle** of the **day**. //

- Each of the gospels recounts this short but excruciating walk from the city to the mountain (TXT only – Matt 26:30, Mark 14:26, Luke 22:39, John 18:1)... and into the garden... where Jesus prayed with great tears... *“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”*
- The dark and dangerous clouds of deadly opposition to Jesus had been gathering from some time.
- Jesus had spoken to his disciples repeatedly about the violent death he would soon suffer at the hands of those who hated him, if only they had ears to hear.
- And a betrayer – one who shared Jesus’ bread – one of his closest 12 advisors – would turn on him...
- It was a day of humiliation and shame for Jesus and devastating disillusionment for those who had followed him.
- What of God’s **promises**...?
- Wasn’t he the one to **redeem Israel**?
- Wasn’t he the **long promised** son of **David** whose kingdom would be the **kingdom of God**?
- King **David** you see – in his momentous short walk across the Kidron valley, had **anticipated** the footsteps of Jesus about 1,000 years later.
- As Jesus led his disciples out of the city and across to the Mount of Olives, **he was following in the footsteps of King David!**
- The sufferings of **David**, **anticipated** and **illuminated** the sufferings of the **SON of David**.
- Jesus’ path that day would be the fulfillment of what was **anticipated** in **David’s story!**
- BUT – let’s be clear – **Jesus’** sufferings (unlike David’s) had **nothing** to do with his **own** sin and **everything** to do with **ours**.
- He understood that he came to **serve** by laying down his **life**... and that life laid down would be a **ransom** which would rescue **many**...
- And he also understood that the way of the **cross** would be the very means by which he would finally **overcome evil**... and usher in the Kingdom promised to David... /
- ... by **dying** for us... // ...while we were still **sinners**...

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- **Let me close...**
 - You want to be **great**?
 - **Follow** in the way of Jesus... **sacrifice**... **abandoning rights**... putting the **needs of others first**... being a **servant**... laying down your **life** to **serve others**... then you **will be great**...! //
 - And David’s **weeping** here?? – weeping for the kingdom **lost**...?
 - ...points forward to **Jesus’** weeping.. weeping for those who have **rejected** him...
 - **Weeping** as he counted the **cost of obedience** to his Father’s **will**...
 - Yet, *because* he wept and wrestled that day... *because* he chose **submission** and **obedience** that day... *because* he willingly **laid down his life that day**...
 - ... our **ransom** is **paid**... our **sin** is **taken**... our **rescue complete**... our slate **wiped clean**... and we are welcomed into **God’s everlasting Kingdom** for **ever**!