

Like Father, Like Son?

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

September 6, 2009

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1 Kings 1:28-40, 49-53 (NRSV)

[King David, now very old and his powers failing, must attend to one last duty. He must pick a successor and see that his choice sits on the throne of Israel. So David summons Bathsheba.]

²⁸ King David answered, "Summon Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. ²⁹ The king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has saved my life from every adversity, ³⁰ as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' so will I do this day." ³¹ Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and did obeisance to the king, and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

³² King David said, "Summon to me the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came before the king, ³³ the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. ³⁴ There let the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' ³⁵ You shall go up following him. Let him enter and sit on my throne; he shall be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." ³⁶ Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so ordain. ³⁷ As the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

³⁸ So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon. ³⁹ There the priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" ⁴⁰ And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise.

[David has chosen Solomon, not his oldest son, Adonijah, who has schemed to take the throne, by hosting a coronation feast of his own. But word comes that Solomon has been proclaimed king, and Adonijah fears for his life, seeking refuge at God's altar]

⁴⁹ Then all the guests of Adonijah got up trembling and went their own ways. ⁵⁰ Adonijah, fearing Solomon, got up and went to grasp the horns of the altar. ⁵¹ Solomon was informed, "Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; see, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not kill his servant with the sword.'" ⁵² So Solomon responded, "If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die." ⁵³ Then King Solomon sent to have him brought down from the altar. He came to do obeisance to King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go home."

David has one last job to do before he dies: see that Solomon, his son by Bathsheba, succeeds him on the throne. But which example of David's will he follow? The David who used a sword to try and cover up his sin, or the David who repaid evil with good.

For nearly forty years, David has been king. Seven years as the king of the tribe of Judah and more than three decades as king of the united tribes. Israel has grown geographically, economically, and militarily. David's successor will take the reins when Israel is still in its ascendancy.

David is old. His physical powers are fading. He can't get warm in the chill of the evening. He is impotent, an ever-weaker king. His servants find a beautiful young woman to share his bed, in the hope that she might bring a restored vigor to the king. Her name is Abishag and she tends to David with great care. But as the NRSV puts it, "the king did not know her sexually." Eugene Peterson cautions us that we shouldn't see young Abishag as a mere functionary there to service the king. She is there to serve

him, to care for him, to attend to him, to be a witness to David's last days. And her name has been recorded for us in the great Book of the Kings.

For not even Israel's great king can escape death. It is simply part of our existence. It is not our end, for as Jesus was raised so shall we be raised, but it is the enemy. It is not as things should be, but it is as things are. Death severs relationships, if only for awhile. The only question is how we will handle it. How will David handle his death?

Who's next?

David has multiple wives and children by nearly all of them. Thus, his heirs are a mix of full- and half-brothers and sisters. David's oldest living son is apparently Adonijah, as Amnon and Absalom were both Adonijah's older half-brothers. As with Absalom, we're told that David had never disciplined Adonijah. I wonder how often the story of

David and his sons is used as cautionary tale about lax parenting; it certainly could be.

Following in Absalom's footsteps, Adonijah has declared, "I will be king," though is no clear tradition that it is his to claim. His rival is Solomon, the second son born to David and Bathsheba, the first having dies in infancy. The royal court has divided into two factions, with Joab, the military commander, backing Adonijah.

When Adonijah throws what amounts to a coronation ceremony and feast for himself, the prophet Nathan races to Bathsheba and urges her to act in Solomon's defense. So she hurries in to talk with David who makes it clear that his choice is Solomon, ordering a coronation ceremony for Solomon in the royal palace. The priest Zadok anoints Solomon king, blows the trumpet, and the people rally around the young man, their new king.

You can imagine what happens when Adonijah and his supporters hear what is happening around Solomon. They are terrified, knowing that the people will support David's choice and see Adonijah as a usurper. They are told that David has gone so far as to bless Solomon in the presence of all.

What will Solomon do to Adonijah? We've read enough stories from the David saga to know that Adonijah has good reason to fear for his life. In the ways of the ancient world, Solomon would be fully in his rights to have the rival and usurper killed. But he does not. Adonijah is brought before Solomon, who tells him simply, "Go home." As his father had spared Saul's life twice, so Solomon repays evil with good.

Solomon

Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba(though not the child conceived when David took Bathsheba), Solomon ascended to the throne in his late teens. His story is told in 1 Kings 1-11 and 2 Chronicles 1-9.

Solomon would take Israel to the height of its economic, political, and military power.

It was Solomon who built God's temple in Jerusalem, providing a permanent home for the ark of the covenant. Solomon's temple stood for more than four centuries until it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Solomon's reign was also remarkable for its intellectual activity. Credited with writing thousands of proverbs and songs, Solomon was renowned for his wisdom.

Solomon's fame was widespread, attracting even the Queen of far-away Sheba to make a visit.

Sadly, Solomon, through his polygamy and the many temptations of great wealth, also sowed the seeds of Israel's destruction. Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines, most of whom were foreign. His wives brought the worship of foreign gods into Israel and turned Solomon's own heart away from the LORD God and toward other gods (see 1 Kings 11). Despite the building of the temple, this abandonment of the covenant between God and his people could lead only to a bad end.

Israel would be split in two upon his death. For more on this, see the page 3 text box.

David and death

David knows that he is dying. What will be his last act, his last words? Will he be the repentant David of the psalms? The David who repaid evil with good? Or will he be the murderous David who killed to cover up his sin?

1 Kings 2 gives us David's last talk with Solomon before his death. He begins by urging his son to be strong and courageous, to keep God's teachings and to walk in God's way. Faithfulness should be Solomon's way in all things. Not surprisingly, Solomon, like David and like each of us, will find such faithfulness beyond our grasp.

David then warns Solomon about the murderous Joab. He tells Solomon to rely on his wisdom but not to let Joab die in peace. He is to get rid of the treacherous commander. David then urges Solomon to be loyal to a couple of those who supported David during Absalom's rebellion. And, finally, we come to David's last words. Solomon is to see to the execution of Shimei, a man who opposed David during the rebellion and whom

Solomon and the Kingdom of Israel

The united kingdom had three successive kings: Saul, David, and finally, Solomon. The united Israel always struggled under the threat of rebellion and tribal warfare. Toward the end of Solomon's reign, Jeroboam, a leader among the northern tribes, led a rebellion against Solomon. Though Jeroboam was unsuccessful at the time, upon Solomon's death and some unwise decisions by his son and successor, Rehoboam, Jeroboam was able to split the kingdom in two.

The ten northern tribes followed Jeroboam, who became the first king of the northern kingdom, Israel. The largest Israelite tribe was that of Judah which, with the tribe of Benjamin, constituted the southern kingdom, Judah. Rehoboam was the first king of Judah (see 1 Kings 11).

From 1 Kings 11 forward, the book of Kings traces the history of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The successive kings of each kingdom are named and most get a report card from God! Most of the kings got a failing grade – they did what was evil in the sight of God (e.g., see 1 Kings 15:25). Only a few did what was right in God's sight.

Though the kingdoms would enjoy periods of peace and prosperity, both were on a path toward destruction and death after the death of Solomon. The northern kingdom, called Israel, lasted until 722BC, when it was swept away by the Assyrians. The Babylonians finished off the southern kingdom, Judah, in 586BC.

David had refused to put to death. But, as it turns out, it was only a delayed execution . . . Solomon is to finish the job.

That's it . . . the next thing we are told is that David died (euphemistically, "he slept with his ancestors") and was buried in Jerusalem. The year is 970 BC.

The last words from David's lips recorded in the Book of the Kings are words of revenge. Even if we acknowledge the threat that Joab poses to Solomon's rule, Shimei certainly poses no threat. The death of Shimei will be nothing but vengeance. For how long, we wonder, has David nurtured this desire. Where is the David of the psalms, we ask? Hasn't he learned anything? We want David to follow the example of his own son and spare Shimei as Solomon spared Adonijah. But he does not.

So we are left with the ever-complicated and ambiguous David. The man after God's heart. The man who murders. The repentant heart. The vengeful heart.

Perhaps it can all be a reminder that our own walk with God will never be easy nor straightforward, that we will struggle with sin in all that we do. But also that we worship a loving God, who is creating in us a new heart, for God's steadfast love endures forever.

Epilogue

Adonijah concocts another scheme to seize the throne and is executed. Solomon spares Shimei, sentencing him to house arrest. When Shimei violates his sentence, reneging on his promise to Solomon, he too is executed. . . It was a harsh world.

Encounter begins this Wednesday

a time for fellowship, worship, and learning

Are you ready for a life with God that makes a real difference? Would you like to develop a passion for Scripture? Would you like to make new friends in a casual, Christian setting? The time has come . . . **Encounter** is coming to St. Andrew, beginning **THIS WEDNESDAY EVENING at 6:45 in Wesley Hall.**

Featuring the music of Jodi Wright, the teaching of Scott Engle, and the pastoral leadership of Rev. Steve Robertson, **Encounter** will be a Wednesday evening time for connecting with God, his word, and one another. Each week, we'll worship together with fresh and engaging music. We'll encounter God's word in an innovative time of teaching and preaching, beginning with the Gospel of Mark. We'll make new friends and share our joys and concerns. Each week . . . Every week.

We'll be offering a children's program, as well as childcare for the littlest ones. We are even going to make meals available at 5:30 in Youth Common, much like last fall's popular "Soup for the Soul."

Whatever you think this is . . . well, it is probably a bit different. You'll have to come see for yourself!

Uniquely You

Your personality, your talents, and your spiritual gifts

A six-week series beginning next Sunday, Sept 13, in Scott's 11:00 class

God has created each of us to be unique humans made in his image. He has given all people widely varying personalities and talents. In addition, God's Spirit has given believers certain gifts for the good of the body of Christ. In this six-week series, we'll examine the Spirit's work in our lives and the gifts given to each of us. We'll take both a personality test and a spiritual gifts inventory, as we seek to understand the differences between them and the unique way in which God hopes we will put these gifts to work for God's kingdom.

Cost of the assessment materials: \$10

Scott is a certified instructor in both of the assessments we'll be using

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

I'm not surprised that Adonijah schemes to grab his father's throne. We've seen enough of David's family to expect the worst. I'm not even surprised that Solomon allowed Adonijah to return home for there is much in David that Solomon would do well to emulate. But I'm very much surprised that David's last wish is for vengeance. Shimei's crime was to curse David and throw rocks at him as he fled Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion. Shimei was angry that heirs of Saul had been killed as potential rivals to the throne.

Clearly, David felt wronged and insulted by Shimei and he harbored vengeance against the man for long after. Why are we so inclined to nurture vengeance? How can we find our way to genuine forgiveness, especially when we feel most hurt or wronged? What do you think the harboring of vengeance does to our heart? Who is harmed by it?

Daily Bible Readings

Continuing with the saga of David from the books of Samuel and Kings:

Monday, 2 Samuel 18:19:43 David learns of Absalom's death and returns to Jerusalem

Tuesday, 2 Samuel 20 The story of Sheba's revolt

Wednesday, 2 Samuel 21 David gives Saul's heirs to the Gibeonites

Thursday, 2 Samuel 22:1 – 23:7 David's psalm of praise and his last words

Friday, 2 Samuel 23:8 – 24:25 David's heroes and the story of David's census

Saturday, 1 Kings 1:1 – 2:10 – Succession struggles and David's death