

MONDAY, 6/3

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-7.

For several chapters, we have watched as David has built his kingdom. David has shored up his power by uniting the tribes of Israel, acquiring a fortress and capital city, defeating the nation's enemies, and bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Here in chapter 7, we encounter the dynasty God promised to give David through his settling in his palace and the rest he now enjoys. For the first time in a long time, there is peace. The interesting thing about this point in time is that it is a new season for David and one that isn't necessarily good for him. After much success and faithfulness, David settles in a little too much. Years of success seem to have gone to his head, and pride begins to appear more frequently in his life.

A good example here is that there is a break in David's typical pattern. Last week, we read about David's inquiring of the Lord at nearly every turn. When he is at rest, David doesn't turn to the Lord but rather to his own ideas. Rather than asking the Lord if he should take on the task of building a house for God, he decides to do it. Nathan, the prophet, gives him the nod until God steps in with His thoughts on the matter.

David has had a rhythm of seeking God's wisdom for his life, but in the following chapters, we will discover that more often than not, he fails to inquire of the Lord. David acts without pursuing God's will. This new pattern will lead to some grave missteps. There is a direct correlation between prayerlessness and pride. We don't pray because we would rather do our will than God's will. We don't pray because we think we know what's best. I don't know about you, but when I've done that, I was just asking for more trouble.

It's worth noting that David is well intentioned in wanting to build God a house. The optics aren't ideal given that he is in a palace when God's Ark is in a tent. The Lord, however, asks David if he is really the one to build God a house. In 1 Chronicles 28, the Lord revealed to David that he was not the one to build God's house because he was a warrior that had shed the blood of many. The task of building the Temple would fall to David's son, Solomon, whose hands were clean, so to speak.

This highlights for us the need to immerse our lives in prayer. Prayer, specifically with a spirit of submission to the Lord and inquiry into His desires, is what shapes us. When we seek the Lord, He is the One who directs us. That doesn't mean that we cannot act until we receive some major revelation from God. Much of God's will for us in regard to our daily lives has been clearly spelled out by Jesus; we don't have to pray about whether to forgive someone or if we should love our neighbor. We already have God's permission for that. We do want to seek His help. We also want to ask for direction when it comes to important decisions, both big and small. We want to become people of prayer because God has promised to be a companion with us in life. What a wonderful promise!

Praying Together:

"God, You are my constant companion. I am so thankful that You welcome my prayers. Thank You for loving me and desiring a relationship with me. I want Your will for my life. I want You to guide me like a good shepherd does his sheep. I trust You. Amen."

TUESDAY, 6/4

Read 2 Samuel 7:8-17.

Today we're looking at the second half of God's reply to David's plans to build a home for the Lord. This is a noble gesture, but it is not within the Lord's plans. In fact, what God has in mind is far more beautiful than what David can see. David's heart is to build God a house to display God's glory. God promises to do something much greater.

God's promise begins by pointing to the work that God has already done for David. The Lord has taken a young shepherd boy from the field and made him king. The Lord saw him through battles and opposition. God took a boy with no recognizable name and made his name great. God took the one who had no home, placed him in a palace, and gave him rest from his enemies. All of this is to say that God has delivered on His promise to build a kingdom for David.

In verse 11, we encounter a twist. God says, "The Lord declares to you that the Lord Himself will establish a house for you." It was first David who wanted to build a house for God. Now God promises to build a house of David's line.

God promises to raise up from David's line One whose kingdom will be established forever. This One will build a temple that will house God's glory. God will be a Father to Him and He will be God's Son. His throne will endure throughout all time. That's quite a promise.

Now the question is this: whom is God talking about? There are two answers to that question. In one sense, God is talking about Solomon, David's son, who will succeed him as king. The nation of Israel will reach unparalleled prosperity under Solomon's reign. In this sense, God is talking about Solomon, but God is also pointing beyond Solomon. He is pointing us to Jesus.

There are parts of this promise that no earthly king can fulfill. Solomon might reign for a number of years, but his reign will come to an end. Jesus, on the other hand, will be seated on a throne beside His Father that will endure. His Kingdom will never end. He is like a son to God. He is *the Son of God*. All that God promises to David here will be fulfilled in Jesus. Elements of the promise will show up in Solomon. The fulfillment of the highest hopes of this promise, however, will be found only in Jesus.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, the people wanted David as their king, but You are the King we need. You are God's own Son, beloved by Your Father. You were disciplined, not for Your wrongdoing, but for ours. You took up residence next to Your Father and are seated there in glory

today. We honor You and praise Your wonderful name that is above every other name. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 6/5

Read 2 Samuel 7:18-24.

Here, David responds to the revelation from God that David's line would become one that would forever display God's glory. While David cannot yet understand the full truth of what God is saying, he is indeed overwhelmed at God's mercy.

What I appreciate about David's prayer is the humility he shows before the Lord. While David might be slipping into some bad habits of acting on his own before inquiring of the Lord, he is still a man after God's own heart. We can see why in this prayer.

David essentially asks the Lord, *Who am I that You would bless many through me?* That statement right there is a sign of humility. Any time we find ourselves asking God, *Why do You love someone like me*, or *Who am I that You would show me such grace*, means our heart is in a posture of humility. There is no sense of entitlement. We are fully aware that while we do not deserve God's goodness, He is good anyway; in fact, He lavishes His love upon us. What a wonderful God we have!

Also, note in verse 19 that even David recognizes that God's promise is almost too much for a "mere human" or perhaps humanity. He's on to something there. Even David sees that God must be pointing to much more than an earthly king. It is too great a thing for David to imagine One as glorious as Jesus, but he is on to the idea that God has something amazing in store.

I will close with this thought. When David prays to God, he goes into the tent he made to house the Ark of the Covenant. He doesn't just pray from his bed or from his favorite chair. He goes to a specific place to be with the Lord. This is an important practice for us as well. Do you have a space where you meet with the Lord? Do you have time carved out specifically for the Lord and no other? This kind of practice is vital for our spiritual well-being.

I want to encourage you to make time and space to be with the Lord. It is wonderful to pray to God as we go through our day. This emphasizes His companionship with us. We also want to make time to give Him all of our attention—a time when He is our complete focus. We go to meet with Him. Our mind is set on Him. This practice is essential if we want a healthy, vibrant relationship with the Lord.

Praying Together:

"Lord, I want to know You. You are so good as we see once again in this passage. You love us with a love that is beyond measure. Thank You for loving us as You do. We want to make time to be with You so that we can set our whole hearts and minds upon You. Amen."

THURSDAY, 6/6

Read 2 Samuel 7:25-29.

As we turn to the second half of David's prayer in response to God's promise, we find David laying a rather bold request before the Lord. David asks the Lord to fulfill His promise to David and to Israel.

One could easily mistake this request for arrogance, as if David is overstepping his bounds or asks out of his own pride. I don't think that is what David is doing. I believe this is boldness on his behalf. David recognizes that God has shown favor to him so that ultimately God's people will be blessed through his reign. David leans into that by praying a bold prayer because he knows that is what God wants him to do, and God has proved Himself to be faithful.

One of the great privileges we have as God's children is to pray boldly. God invites us to come to Him like a child does their parent. Just think of how bold children can be when asking their parents for something. Now, our boldness doesn't mean every answer God gives us is a "yes". Sometimes it is best that we receive a "no" or a "wait". Regardless of the answer, we can be bold in what we ask because we trust the Lord's goodness. That's why David has found the courage to pray such a prayer as seen in verse 27.

We can ask confidently while, at the same time, maintaining a spirit of humility. That means we leave the ultimate decision up to Him. We can ask, but we know our perspective is limited. We may not always know or want what's best, so we leave it to Him.

Another point to explore is that David's request for blessing isn't just for himself. David's desire is that God would bless the nation through him. One reason David can be confident in his prayer is that he knows that God desires to bless the people through him. Desiring the very thing God wants is a sure way to feel empowered to be bold. In John 14:13, Jesus says to His disciples, "And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." When we ask Jesus for anything that brings God glory, we can be confident that He will do it.

I wonder how this can help shape your prayer life. What does it look like for you to align yourself with God's desires so that you can be bolder in prayer?

A good place for us to begin as a church is asking God to help us fulfill the mission Jesus has given us. We know that Jesus wants our church to fulfill His command to make disciples and reach those who might be far from Him. Together, let's call on Jesus to do amazing things through us as we seek to bless others. Since our hearts are aligned with His heart, we can expect to see Him move in miraculous ways.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, You have called Your church to make disciples and reach those who have yet to believe in You. As we take up this work, move in mighty ways through us. We ask in

Your name that our ministry would grow and reach people for the Father's glory. We want to see lives in our communities transformed through Your mighty work. Amen."

FRIDAY, 6/7

Read 2 Samuel 8:1-6.

Prepare yourselves for war--well, at least, to read about war. 2 Samuel 8 is all about the victories that David wins over his enemies. In the previous chapters, we watched David consolidate his power within his kingdom. Now, he seeks to consolidate his power in and around his kingdom.

The following years of David's reign as king will be comprised of many fights against those who threatened his nation. In verses 1-6, David has notable victories over the Philistines and Moabites. While Israel often fought against the Philistines, this is the first time they fought an offensive battle against them rather than a defensive battle. This shows how over time the tables have turned for Israel.

While I doubt many of us will claim any verses in 2 Samuel 8 as their favorites, there is a message for us. In the past few years especially, it has felt like the church has been in a defensive position. With COVID, disaffiliation on its heels, less financial resources, and missing a vital staff position, it felt at times like we were trying to do our best with what was in front of us.

Looking back on that time, I see that the Lord was preparing us for a new season. With COVID and disaffiliation in the rearview mirror, a boost in financial resources, and Josh serving our youth, we've turned a corner. God has positioned us to seek ministry opportunities that we previously didn't have the resources to pursue. In a season where many churches are having to pull back, we are moving forward. We're going out into our community more than ever before. We are stretching our reach further than ever before so that we can bless those who haven't come to faith in Jesus yet.

God has been with us through all of this. He had readied us for a new season of ministry. I hope you're as excited as I am. God has some amazing things in store for us as we continue our work together. Thank you for doing your part so that we can be the faithful and faith-filled church Jesus is calling us to be.

Praying Together:

"Lord, You are so good. Thank You for using seasons of challenge to prepare us for seasons of greater fruitfulness. We have seen evidence of Your powerful presence at work in our church through every season, and we are thrilled about what is to come. Lead us. Reveal Your will. We want to join You in the work You are doing. We are ready. Amen."

SATURDAY, 6/8

Read 2 Samuel 8:7-14.

More battles. More victories. Israel is ascending toward the pinnacle of its prosperity and influence. Life is good.

Now, if you keep reading past 2 Samuel, some of these enemies David defeats here will regroup and come back for their pound of flesh. As the saying goes, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". The pendulum is swinging in Israel's favor here, but it will come back in their future. However, for now, the good times are rolling.

For the second time in the chapter, the author tells us, "The Lord gave David victory wherever he went." While David's name becomes famous, it is the Lord who delivers David's success. David would do well to keep that in mind. Unfortunately, it seems as though he does not.

As David's fame grows, so eventually does his pride. David will pray less often. Rather than going out to battle, he lets others fight for him. He enjoys rather than leads. At times, he is more concerned with his own glory than the Lord's glory.

Pride is sneaky. It starts off small and builds up slowly--so slowly that we often miss it. Only those who spend time in prayerful reflection on the condition of their hearts will detect pride before it begins to pop up on the surface, and it shows up all right. Pride will rear its ugly head in our relationships. It skews the way we see ourselves and others. It compels us to justify our actions even when deep down we know we've done wrong. Pride will wreak havoc on our lives, and from our vantage point, it's everyone else's fault, but not ours.

Pride is destructive. If you don't believe me, just watch what it will do to David in the latter half of his life. God opposes pride because it will ruin us. It will ruin you too if you're not careful.

So, how do we deal with pride? You first have to expose it. Psalm 139:23-24 offers us a great prayer to pray. It reads, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." We must ask God to reveal any pride in our hearts. We need His help to see that to which we might otherwise be blind.

Once pride becomes known to us, we then have to admit that we suffer from it. The word for this is confession. We admit before God and ourselves what is going on in us. Since confession makes us deal with our sin, many see it in a negative light. Confession, however, is freeing because we can finally be honest with God and ourselves about what we are. We give up the need to pretend, which is the real burden on us.

The other reason it is freeing is because once we confess our sin, we know that God forgives and heals us. Grace and mercy are waiting for us on the other side of confession. It is then that we can experience once again the refreshing and transformative love of Christ.

Will you pray with me?

Praying Together:

“God, search me and know me. Look deeply into my soul. See if there is anything in me that is not of You. Open my eyes to it so that I can turn it over to You. Your love is better than life. I want the freedom of being set free from pride and sin. I trust in Your grace. Amen.”

SUNDAY, 6/9

Read 2 Samuel 8:15-17.

Second Samuel 8 closes with a list of David's officials. More importantly, it describes the reign of David as his “doing what was just and right for all his people.” In case you aren't aware, that isn't how most leaders today are described. It feels like the norm is to do just what they want for *their* people.

David was just in his actions, which was high on God's expectations for leaders. It still is today. While there are many ideas about justice today, Biblical justice is rooted in the character of God Himself. God is a God of justice. His justice is evident in that He punishes those who do evil and restores those who have been wronged. God shows justice by often flipping the world's script by making the powerless powerful and stripping the powerful of their positions.

Pastor Tim Keller names the four themes around God's justice in the Bible as generosity, equality, advocacy, and responsibility. Let's take a quick look at these.

God is generous and calls His people to exercise generosity. We see this in the Acts 2 church as they willingly sold some of their possessions to meet the needs of others. That was a just action.

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us how the Father loves all, both Jew and Gentile. He causes the rain to fall on both. While the love God has for those who are in Him is unique, God loves and finds inherent value in all persons. This is why James will tell us “not to show favoritism” toward those who are like us or who might benefit us. We are to reflect God's heart in this way, caring for all people as God does, regardless of any restrictions the world might encourage.

By advocacy, the Bible speaks specifically to advocacy to the poor. While I haven't personally counted them, some say there are more 2,000 Bible verses about caring for the poor. If that is off, it isn't by much. Those with resources are responsible for caring for those without. We are not to despise the poor, but serve them and shatter social barriers that keep those without from enjoying life with those with. What it looks like to help the poor is a more difficult question to answer because not all poverty is the same. For some, it is merely a lack of resources, which is more easily fixed. For those trapped in a poverty of spirit, no amount of resources will help. Regardless of what it looks like, we, as Christians, must have a heart for the poor.

Responsibility is both corporate and personal. We each are responsible for our actions. The Bible also provides evidence that we are responsible for the actions of the

corporate body. While we may not be held to account for everything a greater group does, we do bear some responsibility.

This is obviously a quick glance at a much larger topic on justice in the Bible. It's important that we allow the Word to shape our understanding of what it means to be just.

Praying Together:

"God, You are a God of justice. You show love to all. You are generous and equitable. You have a heart for the poor. Give us hearts for them as well and wisdom to show how we can best serve the poor. Help us to take up the responsibilities You have laid on us. We want to be right and just in all we do, and thus bring You glory. Amen."