

MONDAY, 6/24

Read 2 Samuel 13.

We have quite the week of reading ahead of us. To say that David's story takes a turn following 2 Samuel 11 is an understatement. Of course, you already got a taste of that after reading chapter 13 today.

In chapter 13, we see that David's sin against Bathsheba and Uriah is mirrored by the actions of his two sons, Amnon and Absalom. Amnon, obsessed with his half-sister Tamar, deceives and rapes her. In a moment, he goes from loving her to being disgusted by her. What actually disgusts him is himself. After he has done the terrible thing to Tamar, all he sees in her now is his own sin. He is disgusted by what he has become.

Tamar's brother, Absalom takes note of what Amnon, his half-brother, has done. When David offers little to no punishment to Amnon, Absalom waits for an opportunity, then kills Amnon. David's sons imitate the worst of their father's behavior. This is a lesson for us in the example that we set for those over whom we have influence.

We also encounter here the problems David created for himself that he must now face. He would not have to have worried about a son falling in love with a half-sister if he had only remained married to Michal only. The political infighting and rivalry between David's children will cause him much grief for the rest of his life.

By the close of chapter 13, David has a daughter whom has been harmed as well as two lost sons, one who has fled and the other who had been killed. David is left to grieve. It's a gruesome chapter in many ways. It's a worse-case scenario for David.

This chapter is a reminder to us that God's commands exist for a reason. God didn't want this kind of pain in David's life. God had tried to spare David heartache, but he refused to obey. David went his own way, and a lot of people will now pay for it.

Praying Together:

"God, give me wisdom to learn not only what to do but also what not to do. Give me a discerning mind that I may seek Your will in all things. Keep me accountable to living a life that blesses rather than harms others. Amen."

TUESDAY, 6/25

Read 2 Samuel 14.

David's heart is broken. He misses his son Absalom, wants to forgive him for killing Amnon and move on, but it was complicated. The Law demanded that Absalom be put to death for the murder of his half-brother. The king needed to be cautious.

Joab, David's commanding officer, takes note of the situation and intervenes. He secures the efforts of a wise woman to make a presentation to King David regarding his situation. She tells a story that serves a similar purpose to the story the prophet Nathan tells David so that David might see his situation in a different light. It seems that Joab is scared to go to the king directly with his plans.

David decides to have Absalom brought back home. David, who is referred to only as "the king" in this chapter, confines Absalom to his home and refuses to see him. Absalom remains in Jerusalem for two whole years without seeing his father.

We are given a unique description of Absalom in verses 25-27. Apparently, he would have been a good spokesperson for Head and Shoulders shampoo. While this seems random here, you will understand why we are given this information in a couple of chapters.

Absalom, who is related to Joab, wants him to go to David on his behalf. He gets Joab's attention by burning his field. Joab takes a message to David on behalf of Absalom asking what he was doing in Jerusalem if the king would not see him. David then decides to bring Absalom to the palace where they meet for the first time since Amnon's murder. Absalom bows down to his father, and David kisses him.

There is a word here for us about the importance of reconciliation. David and Absalom have had something come between them. This happens in relationships. Sometimes it happens in the closest of relationships. Something comes between you and another, and you have to make the choice about whether or not to allow that thing to be a barrier to relationship. Fear keeps David from reconciling with Absalom. I wonder what keeps you from trying to reconcile with those in your life.

David and Absalom's meeting makes for a sweet scene and a welcome one given the turns in the last chapter. It, however, will not last. In the next chapter, Absalom will go after his father's throne, and more heartache will ensue for David.

Praying Together:

"Lord, by Your blood we have been reconciled to our Heavenly Father. You saw to it that no obstacle would remain between us and You. Give us hearts that we too would desire reconciliation in our lives. Give us courage to not allow fear or stubbornness or pride interfere with the kind of relationships we can have. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 6/26

Read 2 Samuel 15.

I hope your seatbelt is still buckled. Things go from bad to worse for David.

Absalom, David's son, was a man of ambition. "In the course of time," he sees an opportunity to take his father's throne. He begins by seeking to win the hearts of the people of Israel.

Absalom does indeed capture the affections of the people, although not in the same manner of his father. David won hearts by defeating Israel's enemies. Absalom does so by both sowing doubts about his father's reign and brown-nosing. While it was a pathetic plan in some ways, it worked.

When Absalom feels the tide of the people's support shifting away from David, Absalom asks for his father's permission to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow to the Lord. He sends a messenger to instruct the tribes to declare that Absalom is now king. These were relationships that Absalom had cultivated during his time in Geshur.

If the name Hebron sounds familiar to you, it is because that is where David was first declared king. David had set up a stronghold there and reigned before he became king over the entire nation. In many ways, Absalom is trying to hijack David's story.

When news of Absalom's plan to take his throne reaches David, he decides to flee Jerusalem. He gathers his household and officials and makes his way out of the city.

David's flight from Jerusalem is a pitiful sight. The people are grieved to see the family leave. David is weeping along with his family. While two of his faithful priests offer to bring the Ark along, David encourages them to take the Ark back to Jerusalem and remain there with it. He also instructs one of them to frustrate the advice Absalom receives from his advisors.

These events are not ideal for David. However, they are not without purpose. Throughout his journey of being displaced, we begin to see some signs of the old David again. Perhaps, David is humbled by the events and returns to trusting the Lord. David shows us this pattern in his life. When he was complacent, he turned *from* God. When he was in crisis, he turned *to* the Lord. Perhaps saying that he turned from God is a strong statement, but he certainly turned from God's ways.

The good news for us is that the Lord uses the less-than-ideal events of our lives for our good and the good of others. God teaches us in them and shapes us through them. These moments of crisis often serve as a reset for us. While that may not mean that we like them, we can be thankful that the Lord uses them to grow us.

I wonder what the Lord has done through some crisis moments in your life.

Praying Together:

"Father, You love us too much to waste any events in our lives. You use even our crises to teach us and reveal Your goodness to us. Thank You for making the most of out of these seasons. Amen."

THURSDAY, 6/27

Read 2 Samuel 16:1-14.

Chapter 16 opens with further disappointment for David. He is fleeing Jerusalem for fear of having to confront his son, who is seeking the throne.

David has just crested the Mount of Olives, a hill overlooking Jerusalem, when he encounters Ziba, the former servant of Saul. Ziba had earlier helped David find Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. Ziba has resources for David along with some news. When David inquires as to the whereabouts of Mephibosheth, who was a part of David's household, Ziba tells him that he has remained in Jerusalem. Ziba says that Mephibosheth believed that throne might now belong to him and his line. This would have been a blow to David, who had shown such kindness and mercy to Mephibosheth. It is more likely that Ziba is fibbing to gain favor with the king. Mephibosheth didn't have any resources to contend for the throne.

In verse 5, David is retreating when a man named Shimei goes out to meet them. Shimei was from the tribe of Benjamin, the same tribe as Saul. Shimei uses the opportunity to curse David, saying that he was getting what he deserved for the bloodshed against Saul's house. While David wasn't directly responsible for the deaths of Saul's family, many were a result of the fighting between the households. He relishes what David is going through. He hurls rocks and curses upon David and his company.

Abishai asks David if he can end the charade by ending Shimei. David shows mercy upon Shimei, much like he did with Saul in spite of all the troubles he brought on David. He trusts that the Lord will deal with Shimei as He sees fit. David leaves the justice in God's hands. We see a glimpse of the David we have known in the past. He is careful to act justly and quick to trust the Lord.

By the time they finish their journey, they are exhausted. It has been a brutal day for David on so many levels. He is grieved at the betrayal of his son. He is scared for the well-being of his household. He is wondering whom he can trust and where he can go. He knows that there will be no happy ending to the events that have transpired.

I wonder if you have found yourself in a similar place. It's hard when it feels like life is crumbling all around us--when we have far more questions about our future than we do answers. It is for these seasons that faith is born. These are the times when we must lean into God rather than question Him. God has remained with David through his sin. He will continue to be with him even as the tragic consequences of David's sin continue to catch up with him.

God is faithful. He is near to us in our seasons of joy and nearer in our seasons of despair. When we find ourselves on a journey we did not and would not choose, may we seek God's face. May we trust that He is for us even when our circumstances feel like they are against us.

Praying Together:

"God, You are faithful. You are the One who stays by our side even when others might abandon us. You will never fail us. When we find ourselves exhausted by life's circumstances, be so very near to us. Your presence alone brings us hope and healing. Amen."

FRIDAY, 6/28

Read 2 Samuel 16:15-17:23.

Here the attention turns to the events in Jerusalem with Absalom on the throne. Hushai, David's friend whom he left behind to seek intel, goes to Absalom to seek his favor. He argues that he can serve Absalom just as he served his father David. Hushai and David agree that he would try to confuse Absalom's plans. Now that he has an in with the king, he will be able to influence Absalom's decisions.

Absalom's counsel, Ahithophel, instructs Absalom to do something that would show that he stands against his father. He tells Absalom to take the ten concubines that David left behind and sleep with them in front of the people. Absalom sets up a tent on top of the palace and sleeps with David's concubines, or secondary wives, before all of Jerusalem. This would fulfill what God said would happen to David for taking so many wives. God told David that "his wives would go to someone close to him and he will sleep with them in broad daylight". What David did in secret would now be done to him in public.

Ahithophel also advised Absalom to take up an army of 12,000 to pursue his father. They would strike David, and only David, when his company was most weary, thus avoiding unnecessary bloodshed.

Absalom asks for Hushai's advice. Hushai calls on the king to take a much different approach and one that is more friendly to David. He asks Absalom to recruit forces from all over Israel, which would take some time, allowing David to regroup. Hushai suggests a grandiose plan where Absalom confronts his father on the battlefield to win a great victory that would garner much respect from the people.

Absalom takes the bait. He decides to assemble the people and lead them in a fight against his father. David receives word of Absalom's plans and is able to prepare for the impending battle.

What transpires in these verses is part of God's provision to fulfill His promise to David. God has promised to establish David's line. The throne would not be taken by anyone, but handed

down. The throne wasn't to be won by bloodshed. It was a gift from God. He would make the plans, not any man.

God is a God of promises. He will fulfill everything He promises. This is something for us to hold on to, especially when things look bleak. It is easy to imagine that David is genuinely concerned about his future. The Lord will continue to work through David, even in spite of his foolishness, to accomplish His great purposes.

Praying Together:

"Lord, thank You for keeping Your promises. Even when we are walking in our worst moments, You are at work in us. We trust You wholeheartedly. You and Your plans are so very good. Amen."

SATURDAY, 6/29

Read 2 Samuel 17:24-18:18.

David likely knew that when Absalom contested him for the throne that there was only one likely outcome. Maybe he didn't want to acknowledge it. The betrayal meant that when the dust finally settles, only one man would be left standing, David or Absalom.

In the end, it is David who remains. With time to gather his wits and resources, David prepares for the battle. Allies come to his side, and he is able to assemble a force to fight against Absalom's army. David agrees to hang back from the fight and allow his army to fight for him. Before they set out, David gives a very public order to protect Absalom. David's words, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake," show David's affection for his son. Even though Absalom has betrayed his father, David still loves him. He doesn't want to see any harm befall another one of his sons.

Unfortunately, that would not be the case. When the fight breaks out, David's men overcome Absalom's army. When David's men close in on Absalom, he flees. Well, he tried to flee. His hair gets stuck in a tree. His flowing locks put him in a bind.

David's men decide to leave Absalom hanging there in the tree given David's command. Joab, David's most trusted commander, takes matters into his own hands. He plunges three javelins into Absalom's heart and then ten of his armor-bearers strike him as well. It's fair to say that Absalom didn't make it. The men then bury Absalom's body in a pit.

Joab takes matters into his own hands here. He disobeys David's orders and his men follow suit. We will see several instances where Joab's influence over the army exceeds that of David. This is due to David's refusing to go out to battle with his armies. David's short sightedness really catches up with him in the latter part of his life.

This is a good warning to us: we must take into account the consequences of our choices. David refused to acknowledge God and seek accountability in one area in his life. The end result caused David much suffering and hardship. While God will forgive our sin if we truly repent, we are still left to face the consequences of our actions. We cannot expect God to clean up the messes we make. God can redeem some of our circumstances and teach us from them, but He will not fix them for us. God has given us agency. It can be a blessing if we use wisdom and it can be a curse if we act foolishly. Use your agency wisely.

Praying Together:

“Holy Spirit, guide me in my life. I want to learn from David, both what he does right and from what he does wrong. Open my eyes to the ramifications of my actions. Keep me from falling prey to temptations that will bring hardship on others and myself. Amen.”

SUNDAY, 6/30

Read 2 Samuel 18:19-19:8.

This passage creates a stark image in our minds. Here is a father awaiting news about his son only to find that he, like his brother Amnon, has been killed. David is once again filled with grief and despair, wishing that he had died rather than his son.

In spite of the fact that David's army had won a great victory, they take the posture of the king as their celebration turns to mourning.

Joab goes to David with a message. He is angry with David for what he believes is behavior insulting to those who had stayed by his side and fought for him. While Joab knows that Absalom is David's son, he sees him as an enemy. Joab feels David is faced with a choice: grieve your son while alienating your supporters, or cover up your grief and rejoice about what you have left.

For those who have been in the cultches of grief, this feels eerily familiar. How often we find ourselves caught between the despair we feel and the need to cover it up and pretend as if we have it all together! It seems as though people around us have only so much patience for the broken-hearted. There is an unspoken expectation that you need to move on more quickly than, honestly, is possible given the gravity of some loss we sustain.

If you've been there, you can sympathize with David. For us, we need those friends who are willing to sit with us in our pain, those who don't feel threatened by prolonged tears and grief.

We also find comfort in the Lord, who remains steadfast. Psalm 34:18 reads, “The Lord is very near to the broken-hearted and He saves those crushed in spirit.” Like with Job, God shows up in the whirlwind of our grief. He is Emmanuel, “God with us”.

Praying Together:

“Lord, You are so faithful. You know the despair that wreaks havoc on our hearts. You are the One who comes alongside us and comforts us. Continue to minister to our hurts. Amen.”