

Series: Shepherd, Poet, Fugitive, King - The Life of David  
2 Samuel 14-17 – Rebellion Against the Lord's Anointed / Ryan Patty / 5.05.24

Scripture Reading: Psalm 3:1-8 (CSB) including the description of the Psalm before verse 1.

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, we will be in 2 Samuel this morning. Last week we saw the outrageous act of Amnon raping Tamar and the subsequent murder of Amnon by Absalom. After murdering him, Absalom flees to his grandpa's territory in Geshur and remains there for 3 years. And so Absalom is gone, he is away for 3 years, and yet now that the first two who were in line for the throne are dealt with, he is the heir. He is the next in line. This is a sticky situation. And David's anger after some time seems to abate, such that we read at the end of chapter 13, verse 39 – King David longed to go to Absalom, for David had finished grieving over Amnon's death.

And so this morning we have a very large section, about 4 chapters, that we are getting through. And I'm going to highlight some important scenes but not be able to read all 4 chapters.. I encourage you to read through them this afternoon and to think on what is said this morning in the sermon. The title of this morning's sermon is "Rebellion Against the Lord's Anointed" as Absalom will pit himself against his father, David, God's chosen and anointed king. And between today and next week we will see that that is not somewhere that you want to find yourself. God's anointed will be king no matter what, and those who set themselves up against Him will find themselves judged. That's actually exactly what our main point this morning emphasizes.

Our main point this morning is straightforward: Rebellion against the Lord's anointed will be judged.  
4 scenes this morning that we will work through at a quicker pace, followed by some application points.

### 1. A Lack of Justice

Absalom, as I said, has been living in Geshur, yet David is thinking of him as we read at the end of chapter 13 and the beginning of chapter 14. And so in enters Joab, the fixer. That's what he is, a fixer that makes things happen. And Joab recognizes that it's not good for David's mind and and heart to be divided like this, and it's not good for

Israel as a nation, for the heir of the throne to be living elsewhere. David either needs to forgive him or kill him. This in between doesn't help anyone.

And as we saw last week, David should have administered justice to Absalom, this is what should be happening now. But he is going to be happy with this indecisive, squishy middle ground, that ultimately helps nor serves no one. So Joab gets the king to agree to allow Absalom to return (that's what happens in 14:1-20) such that we read in verse 21 – I hereby grant this request. Go bring back the young man Absalom.

Let's read starting in verse 23.

2 Samuel 14:23–24 23 So Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24 However, the king added, "He may return to his house, but he may not see my face." So Absalom returned to his house, but he did not see the king.

Skip down to verse 28 – 28 Absalom resided in Jerusalem two years but never saw the king. 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab was unwilling to come to him. So he sent again, a second time, but he still would not come. 30 Then Absalom said to his servants, "See, Joab has a field right next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set fire to it!" So Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

31 Then Joab came to Absalom's house and demanded, "Why did your servants set my field on fire?"

32 "Look," Absalom explained to Joab, "I sent for you and said, 'Come here. I want to send you to the king to ask: Why have I come back from Geshur? I'd be better off if I were still there.' So now, let me see the king. If I am guilty, let him kill me."

33 Joab went to the king and told him. So David summoned Absalom, who came to the king and paid homage with his face to the ground before him. Then the king kissed Absalom.

David let's Absalom return but he won't see him. Just this weird middle ground. This indecisiveness that helps no one. Such that Absalom gets tired of it and calls for Joab. Joab ignores him so he sets fire to Joab's field. He's starting to behave like a petulant child and a tyrant in one scene. But his statement in verse 32 is true. Why am I here? I didn't have to come back, if he won't even acknowledge me that let me return or kill me. Absalom actually has some wisdom here.

Joab then goes to the king and tells him. So David summons him and kisses him, thus restoring the lost son... Showing that he is forgiven. David thinks that things will be fine after this, but little does he know there is a wolf in sheep's clothing in his kingdom. But before we get to the next scene, reflect with me on a moment of David's lack of justice. He does not punish Amnon for raping Tamar, such that Absalom takes matters into his own hands and murders him his self. It is as the prophet Nathan said in his pronouncement of judgment towards David that the sword will not leave his house.. And it's only going to get worse from here.

But David, as the King, should have administered justice. He should have punished Amnon and he should have, even though one could be sympathetic to Absalom, he should have administered justice against him as well. But David doesn't... chalk it up to older age, a soft spot for his children, a whole host of things it could be, he fails to do what he is supposed to do as the king, and that will have lasting consequences. And these lasting consequences we see in the very next scene, scene number 2:

## 2. Sweet Words that Sway

Let's see how many of these you recognize:

**"It's morning again in America."** – "A Kinder, Gentler Nation." – "For people, for a change." – "Building a bridge to the 21st Century." – "Compassionate Conservatism." – "A safer world and a more hopeful America." – "Change we can believe in." – "Forward." – "Make America Great Again." – "Build Back Better"

Each of these are the campaign slogans for the winning presidential nominee from 1984 until now. Politicians make promises don't they? They seek to sway the people, to get enough people to follow them, to believe in them, to vote for them.

It doesn't matter anymore if what you are saying about the other side is true or not, you are after the mass of the people. You are after winning!

Well look with me back at our text as we see Absalom start to campaign for the people, using sweet words and seeking to sway them to his side. But before we read of his campaign, notice in chapter 14, verse 25 what the writer of 2 Samuel has to say about Absalom: 25 No man in all Israel was as handsome and highly praised as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the top of his head, he did not have a single flaw. 26 When he shaved his head—he

shaved it at the end of every year because his hair got so heavy for him that he had to shave it off—he would weigh the hair from his head and it would be five pounds according to the royal standard. - 2 Samuel 14:25–26

Now I have no idea what hair like this would be like, but notice real quick, does this description of being handsome or impressive remind us of anyone? Saul. He was described in a similar manner in 1 Samuel 9. The writer of 2 Samuel is comparing these two figures and wanting us to see their similarities. Absalom is another Saul-like-figure that David will have to go against.

Absalom has been brought back to the kingdom, been received by the king, and now he starts his work. Chapter 15 starting in verse 1.

After this, Absalom got himself a chariot, horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone had a grievance to bring before the king for settlement, Absalom called out to him and asked, “What city are you from?” If he replied, “Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel,” 3 Absalom said to him, “Look, your claims are good and right, but the king does not have anyone to listen to you.” 4 He added, “If only someone would appoint me judge in the land. Then anyone who had a grievance or dispute could come to me, and I would make sure he received justice.” 5 When a person approached to pay homage to him, Absalom reached out his hand, took hold of him, and kissed him. 6 Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to the king for a settlement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

7 When four years had passed, Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I made to the Lord. 8 For your servant made a vow when I lived in Geshur of Aram, saying, ‘If the Lord really brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the Lord in Hebron.’”

9 “Go in peace,” the king said to him. So he went to Hebron.

10 Then Absalom sent agents throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: “When you hear the sound of the ram’s horn, you are to say, ‘Absalom has become king in Hebron!’”

Falling in line with the presidential slogans I read a moment ago, Absalom’s campaign slogan could be “a man for the people.” Who needs that high and mighty king who no longer comes out? One can imagine Absalom kissing the foreheads of babies, of posing for a picture near a farm with some cowboy boots that are just muddy enough to

communicate a little bit of work being done, of shaking hands not with the nobility but the commoners, the ones whose complaints don't always reach the ear of the king...

It's political intrigue at its finest. Standing at the gate and saying, "I'm sure your claim is legitimate, but the king doesn't have anyone to listen.... If only someone would appoint *me* judge in the land... then I would make sure he received justice..."

Four years of this! Four years of planting those seeds, of watering them, of inserting this bit of gossip here and there, of subtly undermining the King, his father. Absalom is a man with a plan. A plan to rebel against the king and become king himself. And you know what? This part of the plan works. Such that we read in v. 6 that Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. Many like him, many are willing to follow him.

Sweet words, vain words, flattering words can all have an effect on. Combine that with a sympathetic ear and you have this story of Absalom. Such that it is time after 4 years to spring his plan. It is time for the rebellion to begin. So he asks David if he can go and worship the Lord in Hebron (using his faith as a mask for what he really intends) and he goes and then instructs his people to cry out, "Absalom has become king in Hebron."

The foolish thing about Absalom, and just like it was with Saul, is that he might scheme and plan, he might think he is blessed and the people might even truly love him, but the grave mistake both made is that they set themselves up against the Lord's anointed. They set themselves up against God's chosen king, and that is not something he will allow. Scene number 3

### 3. Fear and Cowardice

David is a man after God's own heart. David is a man who also sins and struggles. And while demonstrating so much faith throughout his life, of seeing God deliver him time and time again, of trusting in the Lord although he is surrounded by enemies, he is still but a man. And here upon news that Absalom is seeking to take the kingdom, we don't find the David of old coming out. We find one who is fearful.. A fear that will show itself through cowardice.

Look with me at chapter 15:13–14

13 Then an informer came to David and reported, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.”

14 David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, “Get up. We have to flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! Leave quickly, or he will overtake us quickly, heap disaster on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

From my understanding of this passage, and even from the numbers of those who fled with him or showed him support, David didn’t have to flee at all. Jerusalem would have been well protected with his people, but the fear is clouding his judgment and he cannot help to think that this is it, Absalom will destroy me. So in the rest of chapter 15 some flee with him, and David directs others to stay behind and function as spies. And one of these men is named Hushai, and he is important as we will see. He is to go against the advice of Ahithophel. And so David is sort of building up a spy network here.

But yet in the midst of that, there is not a complete trust in the Lord. Notice here more cowardice starting in v. 5 of chapter 16.

5 When King David got to Bahurim, a man belonging to the family of the house of Saul was just coming out. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he was yelling curses as he approached. 6 He threw stones at David and at all the royal servants, the people and the warriors on David’s right and left. 7 Shimei said as he cursed, “Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, you wicked man! 8 The Lord has paid you back for all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you became king, and the Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. Look, you are in trouble because you’re a man of bloodshed!”

9 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and remove his head!”

10 The king replied, “Sons of Zeruiah, do we agree on anything? He curses me this way because the Lord told him, ‘Curse David!’ Therefore, who can say, ‘Why did you do that?’” 11 Then David said to Abishai and all his servants, “Look, my own son, my own flesh and blood, intends to take my life—how much more now this Benjaminite! Leave him alone and let him curse me; the Lord has told him to. 12 Perhaps the Lord will see my affliction and restore goodness to me instead of Shimei’s curses today.” 13 So David and his men proceeded along the road as Shimei

was going along the ridge of the hill opposite him. As Shimei went, he cursed David, threw stones at him, and kicked up dust. 14 Finally, the king and all the people with him arrived exhausted, so they rested there.

Fear, cowardice, indifference even? David is saying the right things theologically, but he is not behaving as a strong king. He's not showing a strong trust that God will deliver him and he will still be king. So he is responsible, yes. And at the same time, God is sovereignly fulfilling the words of Nathan's prophecy.

So the man cursing him is saying things that aren't true about David and Saul relationship. Such that even one of his mighty men can be like, what in the world, let me go remove his head! (Don't take that advice for people who annoy you). Yet David sees the cursing as coming from God. He is exiled from his kingdom and is once more a king in the wilderness. As chapter 16 rounds out, Ahithophel, who you might remember as Bathsheeba's grandfather (all of this is intertwined from that sin) is now advising Absalom. And again, fulfilling Nathan's prophecy, Ahithophel advises him to sleep with his father's concubines, and he does so in public. All of Israel knows what has taken place now, and this is not what is to be happening amongst the people of God. We expect this in the book of Judges, not under the reign of David. But it happens. Prophecy fulfilled and Absalom is now firmly against his father.

And yet as this story moves along, we need to be reminded that God is acting and in control of all things despite sinful people and their choices. Which brings us to our last scene.

#### 4. God's Sovereign Will

After reading of Absalom sleeping with his father's concubines, let me read the last verse of chapter 16.

23 Now the advice Ahithophel gave in those days was like someone asking about a word from God—such was the regard that both David and Absalom had for Ahithophel's advice.

We read this, and then the next 13 verses of chapter 17 are a choice between two courses of action. On one hand you have Ahithophel's. Take 12,000 men, pursue David, wipe him and him alone out, then the people will follow you. And that seemed like a good idea. And then there is Hushai's advice. David instructed Hushai to try and go against the advice of Ahithophel and he does just that. He waxes eloquently for many words and says that you know David is a valiant warrior, you can't just chase him because if he defeats you then that will sway the men of Israel and they

will be afraid. Rather you must amass a big army, prepare for a large battle, then go against him. Then you can wipe out all of them. Hushai appeals to Absalom's pride... he paints a bigger and better picture. You yourself will lead the army rather than Ahithophel taking these men and going to do it himself. He appeals to this handsome man in just the right way... and it works.

- Now, Ahithophel's advice was clearly better, but we read this amazing verse in verse 14 of chapter 17.

14 Since the Lord had decreed that Ahithophel's good advice be undermined in order to bring about Absalom's ruin, Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than Ahithophel's advice."

Divine sovereignty and human responsibility going hand in hand here. It can be easy to read these stories and see action after action and think, this is just a story of human affairs. This is just a story pertaining to Israel and their history. But no, as verse 14 and many other passages make clear, this story, and all of history, is a story guided by God and under his rule and his sovereignty. That is the God we serve. A big God. An even bigger God than we often think of. A God who oversees all the affairs of our lives and yet is high and lifted up above all. Is that the God you serve? Because it's the God of the Bible.

Ahithophel, after hearing the news that Absalom has chosen Hushai's advice, sets his affairs in order and then hangs himself. **And at first reading, you can think, man this guy is prideful.** Absalom doesn't listen to him one time and that's enough of an offense for him to take his own life. Well, that could be part of it, but I think Ahithophel is wise and cunning and he knows that Hushai's advice is bad. He knows that David will win. And when he does, he knows that judgment will come knocking at his door. And so closing out the point, remember this. God is sovereignly at work in the affairs of this world and the minute details of our lives. He knows the beginning from the end, and He is to be praised and worshiped as the God who is in control.

Now, we have moved through these 4 scenes and have looked at this rebellion of Absalom. How it starts with indecision and an injustice on David's part, how Absalom stokes the ember of rebellion with sweet words that sway the people, how David flees Jerusalem in cowardice and yet still tries to make plans and give orders that will go against this uprising, and how God is sovereignly overseeing it all so that the rebellion will be crushed (we will see



that specifically next week with the battle and Abaslom's defeat). And so as we take this broad survey of these 4 chapters how should we apply these points and these truths that we have seen?

I offer us 6 brief points this morning. The Holy Spirit is always at work applying God's Word to us, and I'm sure there are others, but my prayer is that these would serve you as you reflect and meditate on chapters 14-17. 6 points.

### **Application:**

#### 1. Sin has far reaching consequences

Keeping in perspective what I said at the beginning, all of this is downstream from what David did with Bathsheeba. All of it is tied back to the judgment that comes from it. And so often we can think that our sin only affects us, that it's just something we have to deal with on our own, that this is a me, myself, and God problem. And in one sense, yes! Psalm 51 makes it clear that our sin is an affront to our holy God and if we are found outside of Christ then we definitely have a God problem. That is true.

But our sins also affect one another, they affect those we live with and those we come into contact with, they even can affect the church at large. How many of the NT letters are addressing sins that need to be dealt with among the church's members? And so that's the lie that sin wants you to buy... that quick moment of gratification, that quick word behind someone's back, that quick second look, **that it doesn't really affect others. But it's just that; a lie.** Our flesh and satan wants us to think that it doesn't affect anyone else, but that is not true. Because those "little sins", if allowed to take root or acted upon, will affect our marriages, our relationship with our children, and our relationship to one another. Our sins never only just affect us, they affect others as well. Let's not flirt with sin and let's not play with it. Jesus uses serious language, as you know) in teaching us to deal with our sin **(remember the right eye or the right hand? Pluck it out, throw it away... cut it off, throw it away – not literally, but take it seriously!)** Take the fight against sin seriously, it has far reaching consequences. It affects more than just you.

#### 2. Indecisiveness and passivity help no one

Regarding indecisiveness, There is a fear I have noticed amongst the younger generations coming up, and that is that they are scared to make decisions concerning life. They want to live in the status quo. They don't want to choose option A for fear of missing out on option B. First it was a fear of missing out (that plagued my generation),

and now it is a fear of something better. Scared of commitment, so they never commit. Scared of failing, so they won't try. And dare I say that affects all of us at different stages. David wanted to bring Absalom back, and yet not let him see his face. He wanted to live in the middle ground. He didn't want to execute justice or show forgiveness out of fear of what either choice would mean...

And that ultimately helps no one. **Now I'm not talking here about silly decisions like where to go eat... my wife is indecisive about that.** No, I'm talking about making decisions that affect your family and your life. Men, part of you leading your home means you make decisions. You prayerfully steer the ship. The spiritual leadership of the house is on your shoulders. You lead when it comes to getting the family to church. You lead when it comes to reading the Bible, you lead when it comes to praying with your spouse and kids. You lead in the mission of your home, you lead in the atmosphere of your home. Be decisive in how you lead, unlike David here. Don't let there be confusion in your house about what the direction of your household is.

- And this leads to the second part, passivity. David, in these last few chapters, was a passive father. He didn't step in with Amnon and Tamar and he didn't deliver justice with Absalom. He had a blind spot when it came to his children. May that not be true of us. A part of Christian parenting is disciplining as appropriate, and that doesn't just go away in the teenage years. It should look different than in the younger years, but let us not overlook things because we don't want to deal with them. That's a failure to lead and parent well.

And for those plagued by indecision or passivity, pray for boldness, pray for clarity, ask that you would trust the Spirit's leading, talk to others (seek wisdom and counsel), and then make a decision. Let your yes be yes, your no be no, and go on following the Lord. Indecisiveness and passivity help no one.

### 3. Look to the promises that last

We looked at those political promises that Absalom made "if only there was someone, like me, to judge you and listen to you... then all your problems would be fixed..." Who doesn't want their problems fixed?! That's what Absalom was preying on... the need for something to be done. But Friends, the lies of Absalom have gone nowhere, they just come to us through different means. "Buy this and you'll be happier, do this and you'll find satisfaction.. Go on another vacation and it'll bring you joy... this is the job that you'll find fulfillment in.. this is the hobby that will bring more to your life." So many things bombard us, so many promises.. But a Christian is one who looks to the promises

that last. Looks in faith like Abraham to the city whose architect and builder is God. Looks to the things that are eternal.

- **And so in living in the here and now**, we are called to live in the world but not be of it. To be salt and light. So I'm not saying don't buy anything (or go live in a commune), I'm not saying don't pursue a better job, and even with the campaign slogans I read earlier I'm not saying don't vote and don't recognize the importance of politics. It is important and the Christian must vote in line with their Christian beliefs...
- What I am saying is *guard your affections* from being so swayed by and caught up in those things that you subtly find yourself clinging more to those promises than to the promises of God. Until the Lord returns, there will always be another Absalom promising you something if you vote for him. But look to the promises of your king, look to the one to whom all the rulers of the earth will bend the knee to, look to Christ the risen Lord and trust in what he says, not what fallen humans say.

#### 4. Faith in God, not fear of circumstances

In many ways this defines so much of the Christian life, doesn't it? That we are called to walk by faith and not by sight. Not seeing the beginning from the end, not seeing how God will make all things right, not seeing how he can deliver us in the midst of our hardship, in the midst of that plaguing sin, and yet we trust that he will. That he did. That the cross accomplished exactly what God said it would. David receives news and rather than turn to God in prayer, to trust that he will be protected in Jerusalem, his first reaction is "up! Let us flee!" **The same mighty king David who had killed the lion, who had killed the bear, who had killed Goliath... and now is fleeing from his son...** He was fearful of what would come. Let us pray that God would give us greater faith. Let us pray that for ourselves and for our church. That we would be a people marked by a rock solid faith in God, in who He is and what he has done for us. This side of the cross, we in faith look to the Son of God, we look to Christ our crucified and risen Lord who is seated at the right hand of God and will one day return to judge the living and the dead.

- Circumstances come and go. There are deep valleys we go through and long nights of suffering. But the person of faith clings to Christ. They are not overcome by their circumstances but day by day they look to Jesus, and in faith trust that he is enough. We walk by faith and not by sight. Let us have faith in God, not fear of our circumstances.

## 5. Rest in God's sovereignty

Verse 14 of chapter 17 comes just at the right time, doesn't it? When it looks like everything is going so well for Absalom, we read that God had decreed that Absalom would be ruined. God reminds us that in the midst of all this scheming and planning, He is at work overseeing all of it. We need the reminder this morning to rest in God's sovereignty. We need that reminder because we often want to rest in so many other things instead. **We need the reminder that His plan is being worked out.** And so when we rest in God's sovereignty, that doesn't mean fearful inaction. Don't hear me saying well just chill all the time. No, resting as a disciple of Jesus means we look to him in all things and we trust that our salvation is secure from beginning to end, and we trust that God is in control of all things. And yet, since he is in control, we still have work to do. Rather than fearful inaction, It leads us to God-ordained righteous action. It leads us to in faith do what we are supposed to. We need to pray for a bigger view of God and that we would rest in Him more and more.

## 6. Embrace the Lord's anointed

Going through this morning's sermon and stopping at the end of chapter 17 kind of leaves us on a cliffhanger. We don't see the resolution until next week. But what we have been seeing time and time again throughout 1 and 2 Samuel is that the Lord's anointed will be king, and those who go against him will be judged. Friends, David was a good king, a great king even, but he is not our capital K-King. This side of the cross you and I are called to embrace God's chosen messiah, His Son Jesus Christ, who is the King over all. **And the good news about this king is that rather than you fix yourself up to serve him, rather than you do any number of things to satisfy him, he comes and he dies for you.** He lays down his life so that you and I might have a new life. This King is the Lord's anointed, and the one we are called to embrace. And to receive this new life you must die to yourself. You must repent of your sins and by faith trust in the Son of God. You must come to see the rebellion against him in your own heart and pray that he would give you a new heart. I pray that God by His Spirit would enable you to do just that this morning. That you would embrace His anointed as your only means of salvation. That you would see that you have no hope apart from Him.

Friends, may we once again praise God for his grace to us in Christ Jesus, our true king. Look to him this morning. Trust in him. Rest in him.