

**10.15.23 – 1 Kings 11 & 12 –
“Jeroboam & Rehoboam: The Problem of Legacy and the Gift of Counsel”**

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From the series, Succession: Good News from Bad Kings

I've been thinking about preaching this week knowing I'd be doing so in a sling- and as an Italian-American, this is going to be a real challenge for me. Since I won't be able to use my hands as much to help me express myself. So, if it's not quite the same today, you'll know why. This fall we have returned to the Old Testament which we often do during this season of the year – we have explored the life and times of King Solomon, the glorious monarch who ruled over the most glorious and majestic period of ancient Israel's history.

However, last week, TJ led us through Solomon's downfall... His success, his glory, led him to sin by taking on all of these foreign wives and concubines which in turn opened himself and Israel to the idols and gods of others... The damning verse in ch. 11 – *“For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.”*

Now, when something like this happens with the Lord's anointed... there is always a response from God... In some way, God will answer this rebellion, this turning away... and today, we are going to see the results... devastating results that changed Ancient Israel forever... And that have had a lasting impact on the world since.

Today, I want to talk about legacy and counsel... Two subjects that are present all over this passage today, but two timeless subjects that have historic consequences... but also take shape in our own lives today... *How are we as Christians to think about legacy and the shadows it leaves in our lives, and how do we to take and consider counsel?* When we hear counsel from others whether it is sought, or just given. How do we receive it and put it to use?

We're going to see this today from the wake left from Solomon's life that his legacy unfortunately, leads to disunity. For us, the legacy of the gospel is one of unity in the body of Christ.

So, let's look at three points today –

1. The shadows of Legacy, 2. The confusion of Counsel, and 3. The gift of Unity.

When you look back at the end of Solomon's life... It's pretty alarming what he was up to... Of course we know and hear often about the wives and concubines, the outlandish numbers... but we're also told... that he even built shrines and altars in the high places where people would worship and make sacrifices to other gods... now, whether he was doing this to appease other people from the influence of his foreign wives, or whether he himself was drawn to it, we could probably presume both... But, look at what the great Solomon has become...

So, the LORD acts... the Lord is angry and said to Solomon... I'm gonna rip this all away from you... I'm gonna tear it away... BUT... because of your father, DAVID... it's not going to be in your lifetime... I'm gonna tear it out of the hands of your son... BUT, I will not tear it all away... there will be a kingdom, but it will be very small... one tribe will remain, because of my covenant promise to David.

At this point, the Lord began to raise up adversaries to Solomon... threats and rebels that he had to deal... including one in particular... a man named Jeroboam. Jeroboam was a younger guy that actually caught Solomon's eye because he was like a foreman for Solomon... When Solomon set out to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he eventually put Jeroboam in charge of the workforce... We're told Jeroboam was strong, with great abilities... very hard working.

And one day when Jerry is out of town... he's met by a prophet, Ahijah... And these two men are alone out in the open country... Ahijah has a brand new garment on, and he begins to tear it apart... into 12 different pieces.

And he tells Jeroboam, the LORD is going to give you ten of these pieces... The Lord is tearing the kingdom apart, ripping it from Solomon's sons. Because of the idolatry... You'll only get the 10 though... because God is going to remain faithful to David and his covenant with him... This very key verse in ch. 11 from the mouth of Ahijah, v. 36 –
"Yet to his son, I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name."

And, then, the word of the LORD comes to Jeroboam just like it has for so many leaders before him, and will for so many kings after him... *"Jeroboam, if you will listen..." "If you walk in my ways... keep my commandments... as David did... I will be with you and build you a sure house..."* We will see how that goes shortly.

Because of all this, Solomon seeks to kill Jeroboam... This all should sound familiar... a word from God that a kingdom will be taken away... a tearing of the garment... this is what happened between Saul and David... and now here it's happening again... the glorious period of Israel's monarchy is only lasting a generation or two...

And so Jeroboam flees to where? Egypt... And there he waits... A young, very able, strong, valiant warrior... *Jeroboam has all the makings of a royal figure.*

Solomon then, comes to the end of his days... his reign of 40 years, ends with his death... and his Son, Rehoboam is set to take his place as king... The death of Solomon is the end of an era... a glorious era for Israel... but that glory, leaves a legacy... a legacy with many shadows, and the shadows begin to creep in very quickly.

Chapter 12 begins with this new era preparing for a coronation... Except, oddly... instead of this taking place in Jerusalem, the Lord's city... it's happening in Shechem... which has a checkered past to say the least in the history of Ancient Israel... again, these are signs that these leaders have lost sight of what's important...

Shechem was the place in which during the times of the judges, Abimilech crowned himself king of Israel—but he was a violent man... an oppressive and foolish leader... being crowned in Shechem is not the kind of associate Rehoboam should want...

Now, Jeroboam who's in Egypt, he's been waiting and hiding out from Solomon's wrath... he hears of this coronation, and instead of waiting for the LORD to fulfill what he said to him... Jeroboam can't wait... and he comes... And now, a man who a prophet has said will receive 10 of the tribes, is in the same place where the rightful son of Solomon is to be crowned king. WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

This is the legacy of Solomon's doing... His shadow, hangs over this situation... and what will happen here. And... we might wonder... what did Solomon foresee with his future kingdom? Was he concerned about it? His legacy? The way he lived his life, the glory, the women, the riches...

It may seem that perhaps he wasn't as concerned... Certainly later in life when he was led astray by idols... He had largely forgot his relationship with the LORD... he had let any and every kind of worldly idol come into his life and the results are a legacy that will heap problem after problem upon his sons and ancestors...

Perhaps he thought his kingdom was untouchable... that he had built something so great and wonderful that nothing could destroy it... Perhaps he began to think that it was his doing that brought about his success... But as we read throughout the scriptures... no matter what may be happening in the pages of scripture... the LORD is in control and directing all things... And here we are... just after Solomon's death... and everything is about to change.

I think it's safe to say, that we are a culture that is obsessed with legacy... Which I think is both good, and perhaps, not so good... It is good to care about what we leave behind for those coming after us... It is kind to do so, thoughtful... important. We want to make sure that our family is left in a good place... our church is left in a good place, when we're gone... You hear many people caution others to "consider their legacy" when they make a decision...

Some people, and I wonder if it might be, like Solomon, the UBER successful that are most concerned with legacy... leaving a name for themselves... an impact on history and the world... whereas the less successful in the eyes of the world might be forced to not look too far ahead...

But legacy is also about the results of our lives... the result of a full-life lived... and our full-lives are full of sin, and we all have to deal with the consequences of our sins and actions... we will live with him here in this life... and those consequences whether we want to admit it or not, will affect our children and their children... And this is the case of Solomon's legacy and its shadow.

I also wonder if part of our obsession with legacy today is the result of a culture that has lost its focus on eternity... In other words, is our focus, particularly as Christians, more trained on here, after we're gone? Or on the fact that no matter what happens here, we will be in the presence of God's kingdom for all eternity?

You see, the shadows of legacy can creep up on us all if we think the legacy of safety, and wealth, and a good reputation on earth is more important than the legacy that every Christian has....

If you are a Christian... if you have been adopted into the family of God, you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven... than your legacy is Jesus Christ. Your legacy... is secure in Christ... Your legacy is never in jeopardy of being lost... Yes, your name, and your riches, and your accomplishments, and your idols, and your sins, will be forgotten to history most likely... but your legacy will never be forgotten in the LORD, because your legacy is Jesus Christ. And THAT friends, changes everything about how we live our lives here and now...

2. The Confusion of Counsel – ch. 12

At this Summit... Jeroboam, and essentially all these representatives of the northern tribes of Israel, show up... and Jeroboam says, before all this gets going... we have a request to make of Rehoboam... And the request is this...

Solomon's glorious kingdom, while glorious... took a LOT out of the people... the taxes were outrageous, the military responsibilities, the load that the people were asked to bare was immense... and so Jeroboam says, *"Lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you."*

This is the request... it seems like a reasonable request... But it is a condition... and you do not approach kings with conditions attached to your support... so while the request seems reasonable... it is also a sign that revolt is in the air...

Rehoboam responds to Jeroboam by saying.... "let me think about it." One would be king, to another would be king. Let me think about it for three days. He then gathers counselors around him... and the counselors he gathers are his father's men... the old guard. Those that have been through the trenches with Solomon, experienced and wise in rule.

And he asks them what they think he should do... And there response is, v. 7 of ch. 12 – *"If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever."* They're saying, *"Young Reh, this is a time to be merciful and lenient... to change the overreach of your father... and if you do so these people will be yours, they will serve you gladly."*

But he sends them away... apparently unmoved... And he gathers HIS guys... he gathers the young guys, his boys, the guys he came up with, loyal to him... ready to make their mark on the world... Now, we should say, we're told Rehoboam is 41 years of age here... so, in some ways this is about the folly of youth... but I think it has a little less to do with age, and more to do with pride and lack of wisdom.

His boys say, and this is incredible... *"Tell the people, that my little finger is thicker than my father's thighs... you think my father's demands were heavy... wait til you see the heavy yoke I put on you..."*

Three days pass and all the people gather together again, and Rehoboam says exactly what his young guys tell him to say.... This is bravado, brashness, arrogance, a lack of awareness, this is the stuff of tyrants... this is the stuff of Pharaoh's. The counsel that Rehoboam chooses to here... he hears the counsel of the elders... and then the council of his guys... the confusion of counsel sets in and it leads him to make a horrific decision, that shows his true colors... that reaps the rewards of Solomon's legacy....

Now, as I said just a moment ago... I think this is a situation of youth vs. age... Young bucks who are eager to be ambitious, vs. wise and seasoned elders and counselors... It is true that to say, that young people can be dumb and arrogant... and foolish... And if Rehoboam was 41, I'm 42, I'm going to include myself in this young category today...

There is no question that the counsel from young people can be very problematic... because of lack of experience... lack of exposure to the events of life... their ambition to make something of themselves... their distrust of authority... all of that factors in.

And it is true to say, that older people often carry with them wisdom. Elders and counselors with experience are less swayed by things because they've been there done that... It's obvious that Rehoboam was attracted to this younger group's approach to the world.

Today, it's very interesting to me... because, in many ways it seems as if we are a culture obsessed with youth, and young people... and wanting to stay young... But then, we have one of, if not the oldest by age serving congress in our country's history. I read the AVERAGE age of a US Senator right now is 64 years old. So, in some ways, we're obsessed with youth, and in others it seems we're youth averse... But I think we could say comfortably, that the amount of wisdom coming from the US Senate is not always something to behold...

So, yes... this is an issue of age in some ways... but more than anything I believe, the counseling confusion that sets in on Israel is *because of their wandering away from the Lord... it is their pride... their independence that leads to this confusion...*

For you and me, if our legacy is Christ... If that is our secure legacy... then the great gift we have been given is the very Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life, to do what? To counsel you... In fact, he is often called The Counselor... And the counsel of the Holy Spirit is the opposite of confusion...

Jesus himself promised - *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, ---* And the Holy Spirit is the giver of wisdom...

James 3:17 *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*

The gift you and I have been given-- The counselor—is something we experience personally, but it’s also something we experience together... A people, a church, who the Spirit is indwelling... are able to care for one another, counseling one another, not from a place of brashness or bravado... but from the Holy Spirit... gentle, peaceable, open to reason, and full of mercy... And this is for the young AND old among us...

Sadly, for Rehoboam... such wisdom was beyond him or his pals... And the shadows of his father’s legacy, and the confusion of counsel, results in the complete division and tearing apart of God’s people.

3. The Gift of Unity –

The people hear that the King has not listened to them... and they cry out...

“What portion do we have with David?... Look to your own tents Israel... take care of your own house David.”—what they’re crying out is cries of revolution... of revolt... Why are we even associate with Judah and David... let’s go rule ourselves... Let the south worry about Rehoboam...

And this is the division... The people of the northern ten tribes... remember Ahijah’s garment? Torn into 12 pieces?? they make Jeroboam their king... Rehoboam quickly tries to raise his armies to go after Jeroboam and the northern tribes... but another prophet comes forward and stops him and says that the LORD, *“You shall not go up and fight against your relatives the people of Israel. Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me.”*

Did you catch that last line? The LORD says, this division, this thing, is from me... Sure it’s Jeroboam and Rehoboam’s folly and arrogance... but this is my work... this division is the result of my hand.

This is so bad for God’s people... think about the ten tribes saying they want nothing to do with David! Essentially, they are saying, we want nothing to do with God’s promised covenant with David! It is an absolute rejection of Yahweh. – and from this point... The text says, *“v. 19 – So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.”*

What happened in Israel... is what happens when idolatry takes root in the hearts of a people. It breeds division... When idolatry grips our hearts... almost always the fruit of that idolatry is some kind of division... It could be division in a family, in a marriage, in a church... But when something other than the Lord himself, begins to draw our attention, command our worship... division is sure to come.

October is the month in which we in our tradition of the Church, think about our heritage in the Protestant Reformation... We’re doing that with our All-Church Sunday School class... You could say that the Reformation is a response to the idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages and Renaissance... Reformers like Luther and Calvin, and many others... saw the idolatry that was taking place within the church... created things being worshipped alongside the creator... a cheapening of grace and forgiveness ... and the polytheistic syncretism that had snuck into the church’s worship... It led to division... it led to the fracturing of the Church....

You know it was never the Reformers desire to break away from the Church... they were Reformers, not separatists... Luther hated that some people were calling themselves Lutherans... But things became so bad... that division was the only way forward... Bad legacies... have consequences.... Poor counsel... leads to breakdowns and disunity....

This past week not far from Ancient Shechem, which is in the West Bank today... we continue to see bloodshed and violence in the Holy land... it has been this way for millennia... the legacies of the past... the poor counsel of leaders... division upon division... and continual cries for peace, peace, where there is no peace...

What is the answer to our division? To the divisions of the world? The history of Israel is a history of sacrifice... a holy people torn in two... Yet, YET... as Peter Leithart says... *That sacrifice is fulfilled in a new Israel.*

This was His doing, the Lord says... His plan was that Jesus, the true Israel, brings about a reunification of the nations in himself? How? By offering himself up to be torn in two... By entrusting himself to His father, to be broken and risen from the dead... so that God's plan for salvation is fulfilled in Jesus....

We now, can actually experience the GIFT of UNITY in a world of DISUNITY because we are IN Christ... the true Israel... We are gathered at his table as the BODY of Christ, UNITED to him and UNITED to one another as brothers and sisters.

Friends... our legacies are tied up with Christ's legacy... And our counsel, should come from his Holy Spirit... that dwells in us... That does not lead to power or brashness or arrogance... but service, and love for one another... And the gift of all of this... is our unity in the body of Christ... We are a part of an eternal family, knit together from every culture and language... those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus and experience the gifts of unity... This is how Jesus answers and becomes for us exactly what we need... and this has always been the plan of the Lord. Let's Pray.