

Redemptive Failure | Fall and Rise of the House of David

David Had a Craving

Second Samuel 23.1-7 and 13-17

10.16.22

Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, The man who was raised on high declares, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel, ² "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. ³ "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God, ⁴ Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, When the tender grass springs out of the earth, Through sunshine after rain.' ⁵ "Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and secured; For all my salvation and all my desire, Will He not indeed make it grow? ⁶ "But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns, Because they cannot be taken in hand; ⁷ But the man who touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they will be completely burned with fire in their place."

Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. ¹⁵ David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" ¹⁶ So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD; ¹⁷ and he said, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

We're just a few episodes away from the end of our study in the life of King David – the second human king of ancient Israel (c. 1000BC). He's old now and the writer sees this last phase of life as an occasion to reminisce ... as old people are wont to do.

Sometimes reminiscing can go wrong as people may sort of glorify the past or exaggerate certain details. I remember the first time I was able to visit the neighborhood where I grew up on Long Island, NY with Missy (my first wife). One of the wonders of St James, NY I didn't want Missy to miss was Jefferson Hill – a steep and dangerous precipice where we'd ride our bikes in elementary school. It was rollercoaster-like drop and we'd reach insane speeds as we approached the base.

When we drove through the neighborhood, I couldn't locate Jefferson Hill and then I sadly realized we were already AT the base. It was more like a Florida hill... Even to call it a slope would be an exaggeration... maybe the right word would be a subtle dip.

It's NOT how I remembered Jefferson Hill.

And often when we look back on earlier life, we find that we've idealized the past. It reminds us of the saying, "You can never go home again!" YOU change, the old place changes and the experience often, I dare say, always disappoints. Sometimes the "good ol' days" weren't so good as we remember.

In the course of listing some of David's top soldiers and their exploits, the writer recalls (accurately) how these fighters were devoted to David – risked their lives for him repeatedly – they believed he was God's man and David was a tremendous leader...magnetic and godly.

The writer takes us back to David's early days when he'd been anointed king, but Saul was the reigning king. And while on the run from Saul, David learns that his own hometown was occupied by his arch enemies, the Philistines. David is hiding from Saul, the mad king, in an enormous cave and he expresses homesickness for the place where he was born, the little town of Bethlehem.

That's what I want to explore together today – the craving or longing for home, why we really can't go back and cultivating a holy homesickness for the home where we've never been. So that's it – 1) Homesickness, 2) No Going Back and 3) The Home Where We've Never Been.

David writes this last poem (his final written words) and IN it he looks back on his life as king. He sees that he was chosen by God. This is the "X-Factor" – thĒ reason for his special life. When David remembered his being chosen and "raised on high," his life went well (still a lot of trouble) but trouble faced with an inward sense of peace. BUT when David forgot that he was the last and near-forgotten eighth son (red-headed last child 1 Sam 16.12) and that God had chosen to display God's greatness in this least-likely benchwarmer and what MADE David special was the Special (unique) God who'd chosen David – when David saw that clearly, David was able to serve and lead with the lowest humility and the highest confidence.

Again, as we saw two weeks ago, David's life was based on and fueled by God's grace...and God's choosing. God initiated an everlasting covenant with David (based NOT on David's competencies or qualifications but on God's desire to reveal His grace and mercy to the world). David was to be God's trophy of God's grace.

And looking back at the beginning, the writer remembers the overwhelming frustration David faced as he was forced to hide from Saul, the people's choice, and in the Cave of Adullam. And gathered around David a whole horde of least-likelies described (in 1 Sam. 22) as *"Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to David (in the Cave of Adullam); and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him."*

And that mob of misfits became so impressed by David's unique leadership that they became willing to do anything for him. And when they saw him, heard him lamenting over his childhood home, now

occupied by these child-sacrificing barbarians and David, unable to come to the defense of his fair Bethlehem...when he said the words, *"I wish I could go home! I wish it was now as it had been when I was a lowly shepherd, and I could go and drink from the well of Bethlehem – I was FREE and Bethlehem was FREE...but I can't help because I'm stuck in this cave, running from Saul and in the company of the riffraff of Israel... I wish I could go home."*

Well, they were moved. And three of the very best soldiers seeing and feeling the homesickness plaguing David, the longing for simpler days (shepherd days) they had to mobilize and get him a taste of that water...from the Well of Bethlehem.

And they DID. They risked life and limb to address this sad yearning for the uncluttered days of childhood. They got past the Philistine defenses and drew water from the well of David's youth... the fountain of youth.

I think the older we get, the more susceptible we are to nostalgia. That word is defined as "a wistful desire to return in thought or in fact to a former time in one's life, to one's home or homeland, or to one's family and friends; a sentimental yearning for the happiness of a former place or time."

We look back to when we had no debt. We had no chaos (meaning no kids!) We had free time. We thought we were busy in Middle School, High School, College but we're way busier NOW. Life is so much more cluttered now, so many responsibilities and obligations and bills and burdens. The world seems more dangerous – I remember we didn't even lock our doors. Gas was so cheap. We used to get breakfast at the diner for \$2.50.

And life had gotten difficult for David. He was chosen by God which is indescribably wonderful but it's also a calling and a mission that's often hard... and complicated and it's all good... I wouldn't have it any other way... but sometimes I do wish for simpler days, safer days, the comforts of home and hearth and...just being where I belong... home.

But ... you know what they say: "You can't go home again!" Jefferson Hill is NOT the roller coaster you remember. Your mother has died. Your High School is not open to you taking a tour ("I'm sorry we no longer allow adults on the campus"). Your home church is now a hipster bar or maybe it's still a church but they play that rock-music.

And we may have places where we FEEL at home... where we have a sense of belonging and security. It could be at work...or at home... or at church (Ps. 84: *"The bird also has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God."*) I hope you feel at home and accepted here – the church is meant to be an oasis.

And we have our "resorts", places to which we resort or retreat to feel rest and refreshment. Maybe you have hideaways on this planet you return to again and again, a vacation place of rest and

refreshment. Maybe you get homesick for THAT haven ... You try to get back there as often as possible.

But I trust that we've all had that feeling that the place where we "vacate" our minds, vacation places and little sanctuaries where we regroup... and all the places we love... I hope you've felt a sense of redemptive disappointment, that these temporary shelters from the storm are... temporary. They remind us of home but they're not the real thing...they're NOT the permanent place where we finally belong and will be received and embraced.

David wants a reminder of shalom and they bring it to him...water from the well of his youth...but it's only a token. He really wants water from a deeper well.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. (We) feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." (*Mere Christianity*; p.120)

All these little stop-overs and oases and places to which we resort to find some sense of security and warmth and acceptance, these partial and temporary answers; they are redemptive disappointments but they testify to a deeper desire, a persistent craving instilled in us by our Creator since He banished us from the Garden.

These whispers of Home remind us that we want to get back to the Garden... back to the Gardener. (John 15.1)

We want water from a deeper Well – a city whose builder and architect are God for we are looking for the city which has foundations (i.e., permanent) whose architect and builder is God. (Heb. 11.10)

When David received this water... he realized that his men were so devoted to him that they'd risked their lives to satisfy his craving. He felt embarrassed and unworthy. This water was like a human sacrifice, so he poured it out as a libation an offering to God.

But, of course, 1000 years later Another King would be born in Bethlehem who was himself poured out... a human sacrifice. But the latter Human sacrifice whose blood was poured out and soaked into the earth on a hill outside Jerusalem -- this time we MUST drink that Blood and eat His Flesh. Jesus Christ said, "*unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*" (John 6.53-54)

Like His ancestor David, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem (בֵּית לֶחֶם) “the house of bread” and immediately after His birth, Jesus Christ was placed on a platter, a feeding trough because He was born to be food, the Bread of Life who gives life to the world.

Later He would attend a national celebration and would shout out loud, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” (Jn. 7.37-38) And He is to be the permanent Dwelling Place of everyone who trusts or “abides” in Him by faith (John 15). Where we belong.

He, Jesus Christ, IS the Home we’ve been craving. He is the dwelling, the Tabernacle of God among human beings. And the Bible ends with the great invitation *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”* (Rev. 21.3-4)

As David hid in the Cave of Adullam with his gang, so Jesus Christ, after His crucifixion is placed in a cave, *“His grave was assigned with wicked men, and He was with a rich man in His death”* (Isa. 53.9) That Cave, where death died, stands for all time an exposé of *this world where we never feel QUITE at home*, where there are hints and whispers of home but all are destined to disappoint. The Cave where Jesus rose transforms our graves into portals, doorways to our true home where none of us has yet been.

And so we stand on Jordan’s Stormy Banks, gazing past the valley of the shadow of death, casting a wistful eye toward our True Home, a permanent City, the Jerusalem above who’s our mother (Gal. 4.26) And sometimes we feel like a motherless child but we’re NOT...we’re just a long way from Home.

And between now and when we pull into that enduring Harbor, we live exiled in this broken world. But we reminisce, we remind each other week by week of the Home where we’ve never been.

We remind one another that God is our permanent Home and that Jesus Christ took Eden’s flaming sword of justice so all who trust in Him might come Home. Jesus Christ will transform this fallen world and make all things new... We recall the Holy Spirit who is changing our desires and cultivating a craving in all believers for Water from a Deeper Well... He’s urging us inwardly to both invest ourselves in our present city serving the lives of others (not too spiritually minded to be any earthly good) but also NOT TOO AT HOME here (*“Remember Lot’s wife.”* – Luke 17.32).

We’re careful not to make good things into ultimate things... and we pray for an increase of that craving for True Life and for Water from the New Heavens and New Earth and the river flowing from the Throne in the New Jerusalem which is coming down from above. (Rev 21.2,10)

If you're not certain that you're headed to this Home please come and talk with me or any of the men and women you'll find up here after the service. Don't miss out on this – it's the meaning of life (to meet God and come to dwell in Him permanently). Come talk.

And let's pray and help one another to make good life investments as we journey toward Home; to serve people who are eternal beings...all with an eternal destiny. Let's do all we can to help one another in the journey Home.

The sun burned hot, it burned my eyes
 Burned so hot I thought I'd died
 Thought I'd died and gone to hell
 Lookin' for the water from a deeper well

I went to the river but the river was dry
 I fell to my knees and I looked to the sky
 I looked to the sky and the spring rain fell
 I saw the water from a deeper well

— Emmylou Harris and Daniel Lanois, "Deeper Well"
 from the 1995 Emmylou Harris album *Wrecking Ball*

You can't go back home to your family, back home to your childhood...back home to a young man's dreams of glory and of fame...back home to places in the country, back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time – back home to the escapes of Time and Memory.

— Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*, (novel, 1940)

Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

— C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), p.120

Like Adam, we have all lost Paradise; and yet we carry Paradise around inside of us in the form of a longing for, almost a memory of, a blessedness that is no more, or the dream of a blessedness that may someday be again.

— Frederick Buechner, *The Magnificent Defeat* (1985)