

Introduction

People change. Don't they? People are affected by time and circumstances in ways that are almost unpredictable by us humans. To say nothing of the grace of God in the life of a believer. We will often say, to our shame it's not usually in the subject of our word's presence, that someone is hopeless. Hopeless. That is a serious word with serious ramifications. Remember in Dante's version of hell, the one part most of us know from the sign at the entrance is this, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here". The worst thing Dante could think of was that you would be without hope. Thanks be to God, that is not where we are. We serve a God who is hope. We, God's chosen people, are never without hope. There is always a light at the end of our tunnel. There is always hope for change in us and in the people around us. I know there is the propensity in many of us to give up on others and ourselves when we feel all options have been exhausted, but that is simply unbelief.

I want to remind you of where we've been before we dive into our text today. The king, David, has been ousted from Jerusalem by his very own son Absalom. Why? Well, there are many reasons, the foremost being that God, in chapter 12, has said, "Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house". Why would God do this? Because David, had not only committed adultery with Bathsheba, but he had her husband murdered. His son's Amnon and Absalom went on to be the embodiment of this word from God. They have lusted and murdered in a fashion eerily similar to that of their father. One has been murdered and the other has attempted to remove God's anointed king and place himself on the throne. He has been killed, against the king's wishes, by the very same man the king used to murder Bathsheba's husband. Are you getting all of this? People are evil. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9) The consequences of sin have unforeseen and long reaching effects. Yours as well as David's.

You may say to yourself after all of that, "uh, pastor, that's doesn't seem very hopeful". You're right, it doesn't. Here's the thing though. People also repent. God has not left us alone to rule ourselves and his grace and mercy break through to the world at many points. One of them being the repentance and turning of king David. David is a man who has been forgiven much and in turn he loves much. Therein lies our hope. Things are not perfect in David's kingdom, but he knows the God who has forgiven him and he will show us how to love others out of his gratitude to God for the forgiveness he has received.

David is in the process of returning to his throne in Jerusalem when our passage catches up with him.

Humility and Forgiveness

Look down in your Bibles at 2 Samuel, Chapter 19, in verse 24. God's word says this,

24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety.

You remember the story of Mephibosheth, don't you? Back in chapter 9 David had given his friend Jonathan's son Mephibosheth a place at the King's table, "always". Mephibosheth was stunned and his reply shows the depth of his humility. He responded to the King's gracious offer with, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" The reader should be taken back by his

comment. This is a grandson of King Saul! Surely he has more familial pride than to label himself a dead dog...but, no. This is a humble, humble man of limited physical and financial means.

That scene makes the next one, with Mephibosheth, even more mind-boggling. When Ziba, on his way out of the city, tells David that Mephibosheth's reason for not coming with him is that, "Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father." For many reasons this is odd, but we must look back at the character of the man we are supposed to believe said such a thing. The man who asked the King for NOTHING and when receiving a seat at the king's table and referred to himself as a dead dog. Does this kind of man say these kinds of things?

And now, David is back in the city and Mephibosheth has been waiting with great anticipation and perhaps a little mourning. So great is his love and affection for the King that he had stopped caring for his lame feet. Stopped trimming his beard. Stopped washing his clothes. He has died to himself in the King's absence!

Have you? Our King has gone away. Are you sure he will return? Are you waiting for his return with so much anticipation that it looks like you have given up your life in an almost maddening longing for his rescue from this fallen world? Mephibosheth has, and he goes to the King, his dearly loved King and is confronted with a question.

God's word says this in verse 25,

25 And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?"

Oh, imagine the pain in the heart of Mephibosheth. His King is not sure of his allegiance. And Mephibosheth knows from where this question comes. He is quick to respond as we thought he might.

God's word says this in verse 26

26 He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. 27 He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. 28 For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to cry to the king?"

He basically says Ziba left with all the donkeys before I could saddle one, or catch him, myself. Remember, in chapter 16, Ziba "met [David], with a couple of donkeys saddled...for the king's household to ride on". Can you hear Mephibosheth's voice quivering as he says to the king from a bowed position at his feet, "I would have run after you, but I am lame. I would have crawled, but I'd never have caught up". His spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak. Do you think David knows something of this struggle between spirit and flesh?

He does defend himself in verse 27, but the defense is immediately followed by his praise of the king as "like and angel of God" and his trust the king will do exactly the right thing in this situation. He has put his life in the hands of the kings. For he knows the king is trustworthy. How does he know this, because

of the king's actions in the past. Mephibosheth's father's house, the house of David's dear friend Jonathan, was doomed to death, but had been given a place at the king's table. Do you trust The King with all of your life? You would be doomed to death if not for his actions on the cross. Do you trust what he did to save you and give you a seat at The King's table?

David responds as a man who knows what it like to be misrepresented. The whole scene ends in the way we would have imagined from the beginning. God's word says this in verses 29 and 30,

29 And the king said to him, "Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land." 30 And Mephibosheth said to the king, "Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home."

David again is reaching in wisdom to repair any and all schisms that may be left over from the rebellion. He does not seek to punish Ziba for what looks like bearing false witness against his neighbor, but with a forgiving heart, takes away only half of what he never received. And we are left at the end of the scene with Mephibosheth's words ringing in our ears. Words that further our surety that he has told the truth, "Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home." Is that you? Is this the heart of our body here at Clearcreek Chapel. Would you give up everything you own and deny yourself all, knowing that your King will return safely someday? That is all that matters! Our angel of God will return. How are you waiting?

Contentment and Blessing

Let's move on to verse 31 and 32. God's word says this,

31 Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim, and he went on with the king to the Jordan, to escort him over the Jordan. 32 Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. He had provided the king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man.

Let me refresh your memory about the man Barzillai. He is old. He is rich, and we see he "provided the king with food", this is what it says in chapter 17, "When David came to Mahanaim...Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat". David had just lead his followers out of the Jerusalem and they were, no doubt, in some need. This Barzillai is one of the men to bring aid. And he has come to escort the king back over the Jordan to his rightful land.

God's word says this in verse 33,

33 And the king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me, and I will provide for you with me in Jerusalem." 34 But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years have I still to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? 35 I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? 36 Your servant will go a little way over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay

me with such a reward? 37 Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother.

We see what the king is doing don't we. You, Brazillai, provided for me in my time of need and now I would like to provide for you. Brazillai, we are told, is old and we can hear it in his begging off of David's offer. I'm not long for this world. I'm beyond the pleasures of a young man. Food is no longer the joy it once was. I can't hear very well and beyond all of that, I would just be a burden. I'll walk with you, but no need to repay my kindness. Notice the respect he gives the, twenty or so years his junior, King. All of this is in the form of questions. These are not complaints, but merely facts of life for Brazillai. And perhaps knowing that all David would want at the end of this horrible rebellion is familiar surroundings, he humbly requests the same. Rich, old and yet longing for, not more glory or riches, or fame. He is content with what is his and who he is and would simply like to go home and be buried near his family plot. His giving to the king and his people in chapter 17 was not looking ahead for reward, but based on his love for the king and the need that was there. Is this you, brother and sister? Do you give without expectation of something in return? Are you content with seeing others do well and be taken care of? Requesting only one thing from The King, that in the end you might be allowed to go home? I pray that is us.

There's more here. Lest we think Brazillai only gives to the great and mighty. God's word says in the last part of 37 through 38,

But here is your servant Chimham. Let him go over with my lord the king, and do for him whatever seems good to you." 38 And the king answered, "Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you, and all that you desire of me I will do for you."

Always on the lookout for the good of others we see Brazillai offer what has traditionally been assumed to be his son, Chimham. And notice what our king, full of gratitude for all the God has done through Brazillai, does when he responds. I won't do all that seems good to me, but what seems good to YOU. The king is an example of kindness and giving that the people should not forget. He is willing to do whatever Brazillai desires of him. Effectively taking on the role of the servant king. Gratitude and trust in the God you serve will free you to give yourself and all you have to others. Knowing that the one who provides all you need, is actually all you need. Is that you brother and sister? Are you confident in your Creator to provide all his creation needs? Let it be so. And learn from these to men who are having a duel of kindness with one another how to act. Make Clearcreek Chapel a place where we are always seeking to "outdo one another in showing honor" (Rom 12:10).

Our scene ends here in verse 39 where God's word says this,

39 Then all the people went over the Jordan, and the king went over. And the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own home. 40 The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. All the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way.

Brazillai is given the honor of accompanying the king over the Jordan where we see he and David part ways with a kiss and a blessing before returning home. His son departs from his side to follow the king who has just a few more miles to travel from Gilgal before arriving home in Jerusalem.

Before we leave this portion of our text tonight, notice what it says in the last sentence of verse 40. "All the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way." Do you see it? All, and half. All of Judah. Half of Israel. Doesn't seem like a big deal does it? It might if you recall what happened in chapter 19 when David secured the support of his own tribe, Judah, by naming Amasa the commander of his army. Judah was worried about their place with the king and now we see that the division has carried on.

God's word says this in verses 42,

Pride and Contention

41 Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, "Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away and brought the king and his household over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?"

After seeing David forgive Shimei, give Ziba half of Saul's land, return Mephibosheth to the king's table and bless Chimham through Brazillai...this is what the men on Israel have found most noteworthy?! Why didn't WE get to take part in the move over the Jordan. Which is, in fact, an exaggeration. Half of them were there! They have not paid attention to the intention of their king, but have looked at all that could be restored after such a horrible rebellion where the king's own son has been killed and chosen to focus on the tiny bit of respect they didn't get. Pride like this could split a nation in two and they are not concerned.

How will the men of Judah react to this exaggeration of the facts? God's word says this in verse 42,

42 All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is our close relative. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?"

A short while ago they were not sure if they wanted king David to come back and now he is a "close relative" and they are astonished at the accusation of special treatment. No humility here. "He belongs to us!", they say. How can you be mad that some of you didn't get to participate in the victory march of our king over the river? Has he given us food or any gifts? Like participating in the march was no big deal at all. They, in their pride, have belittled the concerns of the men of Israel. How do you think they will respond? Well?

God's word tells us in verse 43,

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" But the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

We see them retort with a numbers game. "We have ten shares", "in David also we have more" You owed us more than half of our people participating in the march over the Jordan. We had the RIGHT to be there. And by not fulfilling our expectations you have "despised" us. You, you held us in contempt. We see how you feel about us! Can you see the cracks in the pavement of the 12 tribes? Remember all those earthquake movies you've seen and the road starts out with a small crack that continues to pull

apart until you can't see the bottom? Men are grabbing the women and children, pulling them back from the edge to safety.

That part, the men pulling the women and children back from the brink, is not happening. For we see in the sentence of our chapter that the words of the men of Judah were fiercer. It's not just that they disagreed and were working on a plan. They both, Israel and Judah, had crept up closer and closer to the precipice and are staring one another down when all should recall Shimei's repentance, Mephibosheth's humility, Brazillai's contentment . They should recall the kings gratitude. His forgiveness. His wisdom and his blessings. Yet here they stand, squared up, and ready to fight. Forgetting all the lessons they should have seen, not to mention the 20,000 fathers, brothers and sons whom they have just lost.

All is not well in the kingdom and the cracks of trouble are just starting to reveal themselves. We'll take a deeper look into the fissure next week.

Conclusion

In conclusion we'll look back on our passage and recall some of the questions it has brought to mind. As we reflect on the hope given to us at the cross, how will we respond to life in this world.

Are you, like Mephibosheth, willing to give up everything as you trust The King for all that you need? Do you wait for your King's return in a way that looks like you have died to yourself?

Are you, like Brazillai, content to serve The King by whatever means he has given you, always enjoying the reward of his blessing until he brings you safely home?

Are you, like David, ready and willing to forgive those who did not stand with you? Ready to bless those who have come alongside in any way they wish? Always searching for wisdom, given by God, to handle every delicate situation?

Or are you like Israel and Judah, standing toe to toe in pride, always searching for and commandeering what is "yours".

Well, my friends I bring you hope. There is one who can save you from all that you are not, and all that you are that is at odds with God. Jesus is our example for all of the above and two thousand years ago he gave up his life for God to give you a way to know Him. He has and will always do the Father's will and waits, even now, for the word to come back to this fallen world and gather up his sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. He knows you have not stood with him and he offers up his righteousness in place of yours that God might look down at you in your despicable condition and see only the righteousness of Christ. He knows you are full of pride and treachery, yet even when you were dead in your trespasses, you were made us alive together with Christ. People change beloved, but they only change when by the miracle of God they believe in the great King of the Universe, the Lord Jesus Christ! Won't you believe and come to him for the first time and if you already know him, won't you believe and be transformed more into his likeness today. Give it all up and cling to the hope that is the Lord Jesus Christ!