

David: The Problem of Family

2 Samuel 18:28-33

There is a Parent whose name appears in the Bible more than any other name. That parent is David. He was a man of great accomplishment although burdened with a lot of problems. He was a leader. He was a lover. He was a man after God's own heart. I want us to catch a glimpse of the life of this great king of the Old Testament about which more is written than any other character in the Bible. All of I Samuel, all of II Samuel, most of Chronicles and throughout the New Testament you hear his name called, King David.

I. DAVID IS A MAN OF GREAT POTENTIAL

When it came time for Samuel to anoint a new king from the sons of Jesse, David, the youngest of the boys, didn't even get invited. He was out in the fields tending sheep. He spent his time writing songs and slinging rocks, hardly the boot camp expected for a warrior king.

After Samuel had interviewed the elder sons of Jesse, he says to Jesse, "Don't you have any more sons?" Jesse replies, "Well, there is one-he's the youngest of the clan. He's back home, taking care of the sheep." Samuel said, "Go get him." When he arrives on the scene, just a kid out of the fields, the Lord speaks, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."

Potential is not always perceivable. Potential is a matter of the heart. God looks at the heart.

In unlikely places, David had been preparing to lead a nation. In the desert he learned how to fight a bear and kill a giant. As a shepherd he learned how to play the harp. With time on his hands out in the fields, he put thoughts into words; words like "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters." Those were David's words and those words have brought peace and comfort and help for people century after century. Never underestimate what God can do for the shepherd boy who has time to reach his potential.

We struggle with the tendency toward mediocrity. We park our lives in moth balls, smother our impulses with activities and drown our passions with conformity until we gradually retire from life neatly wrapped in plastic and cellophane. That's not the way it was meant to be. If David could go from leading sheep to leading a nation, by the grace of God you can become all you were made to be.

II. A MAN WITH MANY PROBLEMS

This man, after God's own heart, had his problems. His family was a source of constant sorrow.

David had multiple wives and numerous concubines. The Bible says he had 19 sons and one daughter. I have one husband, a son and daughter, daughter-in-law, son-in-law and three grandchildren with a fourth on the way. That's enough problems. I can't imagine what it's like to have numerous spouses and dozens of children to deal with. No wonder David had problems.

Everybody knows the sordid story of that moonlit night when David spots Bathsheba bathing naked in the courtyard pool. She was beautiful. David sent for her. A one-night-thing produces an unwanted pregnancy. To make matters worse Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, is off to war. So in a cover up, David has Uriah killed in battle. Many of David's problems were his own darn fault.

Robert Burney says dysfunctional families are the product of an emotionally dishonest, shame-based patriarchal society based on beliefs that do not support loving yourself and others. Whatever the diagnosis, David had problems with his kids. His son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister, Tamar. Absalom leads a civil war against his father. That's the little excerpt we read today. Absalom, in his rebellion, leads a fight against the kingdom. And just outside of Jerusalem the final battle takes place and Absalom is killed.

News comes: We've won the battle! That's not what's on David's mind. How is Absalom? The first messenger can't bear to tell him. The second messenger comes. Good news! Good news! We've won the war! David says, "How's Absalom? How is my boy? Rebellious as he is, how is my son?" They break the news to him, that Absalom was killed. This lament in Samuel 18 can only be understood by a parent who has lost a son or a daughter. In the Scripture read for today, David laments the death of his son. "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son!" He was a man of sorrow.

III. DAVID: A MAN OF DEEP PRAYER

David knew how to say, "I was wrong; I am sorry." It's been said that those are the six hardest words in the English language. They stick in an average person's throat; they cause people to blush. "I was wrong. I am sorry." Do you know those words? Do they ever come to your lips?

You know the story; you know the setting. God's not going to let David off the hook; he is a man after God's own heart. So, Nathan the prophet confronts David the king with one of the most remarkable parables that you can find in the Bible. Nathan says, 'Let me tell you a story about a rich man who had all kinds of livestock and cattle and sheep, everything you could imagine. He had an abundance of them. There was a poor man who had a tiny little pet lamb. The lamb lived in the house; they held it at night.'

Then Nathan lowers the bomb. 'The rich man had some company come to town. Instead of picking a sheep out of his huge flock he goes over and takes that little pet lamb from the poor man and cooks it for supper.' David says, "Nobody should be able to do that. Whoever that is, I'll bring him to justice." Nathan lowered his eyes and said, "Oh David, you are the man."

David could have denied it. He had the power to get out of this. But that's not what he did. If you read carefully in II Samuel 12:13 you will discover what David said. "I have sinned against the Lord. I was wrong; I am sorry." Do you know how to say those words to your family, friends, co-workers? I was wrong; I am sorry.

David knew how to pray. He knew how to say, "Lord, have mercy on me. Psalm 51 is considered to be David's prayer of confession. Listen to its words. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;. . . blot out my transgressions.. . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.... Restore to me the joy of your salvation. "

God will hear a prayer like that. I don't care what you've done, how far you've missed the mark, how great is the failure, how embarrassing is the sin, God will honor a prayer like that.

Through our joys, through our sorrows, through our triumphs, through our defeats there are those who watch our steps. May we walk wisely and follow closely to our Lord. Amen.