

David Lost His Son
August 3, 2008
2 Samuel 13-18

My last sermon was about King David, a man after God's own heart. A man who was the greatest King Israel ever had because he wanted to follow God's will. And when he sinned, he confessed. People loved him because of his faith in God. But even David had family problems.

David had many children by several wives. That meant that there were many brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, some of them full brothers and sisters, some of the half brothers and sisters, some of them step brothers and sisters. One of the brothers Amnon, was attracted to one of the half sisters Tamar. He pretended to be sick, and when Tamar came with food, he grabbed her and forced her to have intercourse with him. Afterward, he lost his lust for her and pushed her away, refusing to care for her as a wife. She had to live in shame with her full brother Absalom. Their father David was angry, but didn't do anything to punish Amnon. Two years passed, and Absalom devised revenge and had his half brother Amnon killed. Absalom went away and David mourned the loss of his son Amnon.

In a while, Absalom came back to Jerusalem and wanted to meet with David to work out their differences but David refused to see him. Joab, David's friend and military captain sent a wise woman to remind David that God does not take away life, he works out ways to get the exile back. This convinced David to let Absalom come and live in the palace again, but was not to meet him face to face.

Years passed and Absalom got to be very popular. Handsome, strong. He would judge people's cases and help them in business, like a King. And many decided he should be king rather than David. So Absalom went to Hebron, another city down south, and declared himself King and raised an army. It was so great David had to escape Jerusalem and go live across the Jordan River to save his life. He got his followers and his army together to get his Kingdom back from his usurper son Absalom.

Joab and Abishai and Ittai led David's Army out against Absalom's army. But as they were going, David ordered "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom".

The battle took place in the Forest of Ephraim. Absalom's army was badly beaten. thousands were killed by the sword and by the rough terrain of the forest. David's soldiers spotted Absalom riding away on his mule and chased him. The mule ran under the branches of a low hanging tree, like the one in our parking lot. Absalom's head was caught in the branches, the mule ran out from under him and he was left hanging between heaven and earth. A soldier spotted him but didn't kill him because he knew what David had commanded. He told Joab, the captain of the soldiers, who promptly went and thrust him through with knives and killed Absalom.

Messengers went to tell David that his Army had defeated Absalom's army. Was he happy about it?

Read 2 Sam. 18: 31-33

The victory turned into mourning. The army and the people who felt great relief that they had won the battle, turned their rejoicing into mourning along with David, because he had lost his son. His son was dead.

Even after David Repented and found forgiveness for his own sin, there were still consequences in his own family. After he did not correct his sons when they raped and killed, the consequences came back with pain in his own family. A harvest of wild oats. Untended weeds in the family field.

Elmo Zumwalt III died of cancer. He contracted it from working with agent orange in the Vietnam War. It was his father, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt who ordered the use of agent orange in that war. There are consequences to a father's actions.

Our children need to become independent of us. They go through a time in their life when they choose to do things differently than their parents. They may choose clothes their parents don't like, or music their parents don't listen to. They may choose friends, church, recreation activities that are different, just to set their own identity, just to be different, just to be their own person. To parents, this looks like rebellion. It feels like rejection. It's what teenagers and young adults do to show themselves and others that they have their own identity.

This separation doesn't have to break up the family, like it did with David and Absalom. Jesus tells of the prodigal son who returns after his separation. He remembered the good, loving parent he had.

David missed opportunities for correction of his sons as they were growing up, and he lost them. This tells us who are parents how important correction is. Our children need it from us. They need to know there are consequences to wrong behavior. If they don't learn it, they, and we, will suffer in the future.

We parents need to be an example of purity and honor. We need to show that right behavior is so important, that discipline is needed when a child strays.

I see families broken by anger and resentment. Children and parents who are so hurt they aren't speaking to each other, won't even attend each others weddings and funerals. That does not have to be us.

We are not in charge of the way our children turn out. They make their own decisions. But they need to know we expect right behavior. And when forgiveness is necessary, we are able to give it and return them to a right place in the family.

There are awful consequences if we don't.

Sing "Someone Give Me a Stone"