

Honour The King

2Samuel 12:26-31

How many of you have ever heard the expression “You can’t see the forest for the trees.”?

It means that a person can focus so much on a particular something that he loses the ability to see the big picture.

That is one of the problems Jesus pointed out with the religious teachers of His day.

He pointed that out in their religious acts.

He said, “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*” (Matt. 23:23 ESV)

They were meticulous in outward religious duty down to the smallest thing, but missed the mark on the big stuff.

He pointed that out when it came to their study of the Scriptures.

To say that they were diligent in the study of the Bible is an understatement.

It was literally their primary task in life to know and understand the Old Testament.

They would memorize, discuss, and try to apply the Scriptures down to the finest of details, but for all their study and all their diligence Jesus essentially says to them, “You can’t see the forest for the trees.”

In John chapter five, the LORD is talking with some religious leaders about how God the Father has borne witness to His person and work.

He says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

A few verses later in the same chapter he says, “...if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.”

The One whom the whole Old Testament is about is standing right in front of them and they are rejecting Him in their hearts.

They were missing the forest for the trees.

That was a bit of a problem for Jesus’ closest followers as well.

Despite the fact that He had told them about His death and resurrection on a number of occasions, when the time came and He died they ended up confused and afraid.

Do you remember what Jesus does about that? In Luke 24 we are told that He says to them, “...everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms (a way of saying the whole OT) must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

[All of God's word points us to the glory of Christ and our text for this morning **2Samuel 12:26-31** is an excellent example of that. If we have learned anything from King David it is that he falls short of God's standard and therefore we cannot look to him as a saviour. What he can do for us, however, is he can point us to our Saviour the LORD Jesus. I believe this passage does that for us in at least three significant ways. The first lesson comes to us through David's nephew Joab. What he does in verses 26-28 shows us that...]

Point #1 – Servants seek the glory of their king. (Verses 26-28)

One of the most basic parts to working for the LORD is to see the necessity of self-denial. The most important element to self-denial is seeing the worth of the One you serve.

As we come to the end of chapter 12 the writer brings us back to a battle scene.

This is a war that started back in chapter ten and sort of hangs out in the background in chapters 11-12.

It is a fight between the Israelites, God's chosen people, under the rule of God's chosen king, David, and the Ammonites, who are related to the Israelites through Abraham's nephew Lot, under their king a man named Hanun.

Ironically Hanun's name in Hebrew means 'gracious'. It is ironic because he acted in unprovoked hostility towards David which led to a fairly lengthy war between the two nations.

For the most part David's nephew Joab had been leading the army against the Ammonites.

He had driven them back to their capital city a place called Rabbah, and he had been attacking the city to conquer it completely.

Verses 26-27 tell us how the fight is going.

The picture that is given to us in these verses is that Joab has the victory in hand.

The hardest part of the fighting is over and the city is at his mercy.

He can go in any time and take possession of it, but instead of doing that he sends King David a message informing him about the situation.

He says to the king, "I have taken the city of waters."

Commentators think that what he means by that is that he has taken control of the city's water supply.

It is likely that the city was supplied with water from either a river or a reservoir of some kind and Joab had been able to take control of whatever system the Ammonites had to bring water into the city.

Water is one of the absolute essentials to life. Opinions vary on just how long someone can go without water, but even the longest estimates are pretty short.

Joab has them at his mercy but instead of going into the city and declaring victory, he sends a message to David (**Verse 28**)

Joab is basically saying, “David you better get over here with the rest of the army and finish the job otherwise I will get the praise and honour for the victory.”

Military power in the ancient world was often a means to become the ruler of nations and Joab could have used this as a reason to challenge David for the throne, but instead he honours the king of God’s choosing.

Knowing what we know of Joab, he is far from a shining example of spiritual maturity and holiness.

What his motives were for taking this approach we only guess at, but what we can say is that what he does is the right thing to do.

He knows David is the man of God’s choosing to sit on Israel’s throne and he is a servant of the king and a true servant concerns himself/herself with seeking the glory of the kingdom rather than the glory of self.

Is David worthy of such honour? No, the last two chapters of this book show us that very clearly.

According to God’s grace though, the LORD made him king for the purpose of pointing us to another king.

Joab putting aside the glory of his own name for David is an example worthy of imitation in our service to the LORD Jesus Christ.

[One of the clearest and best examples of this is seen in the life of John the Baptist. He was Jesus’ cousin and his preaching ministry preceded the LORD’s. People came from all over to hear John teach God’s word, but when Jesus began his ministry people started going to hear him instead. Some of John’s disciples came and said to him everyone is going to him. Remember what John says in reply?²⁷ *John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven."*²⁸ *You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'*²⁹ *The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.*³⁰ *He must increase, but I must decrease."*
(Jn. 3:27-30 ESV)]

I confess that is one of my biggest struggle in pastoral ministry.

I was really convicted of that a few years ago when I took a break from pastoring to do construction for a few months.

I remember coming to church on Sunday and everything was carrying on just fine without me and I remember feeling a bit disappointed.

Shouldn’t everything fall apart when I’m not here?

That is so wrong. The ministry of God's Word does not depend on the skill and intellect of an insignificant human being, it depends on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit Who is passionately seeking to bring glory to Jesus' Name.

That applies to every area of life.

[Who are we concerned about at work? Our glory or Jesus' glory? What are we concerned about at home? Is it that the LORD would be honoured or that we would get what we want? Is church about exalting the name of Jesus or celebrating ourselves? We can't have it both ways and when we consider what happens next in this text we will see that the seeking the glory of Jesus is the only thing that really makes sense, because...]

Point #2 – Honour will go to the king of God's choosing. (Verses 29-30)

The LORD has determined that the one He has appointed to rule and reign will be esteemed among the nations.

David clearly gets the implications of Joab's message and so he does what his nephew suggests. (Verse 29).

The impression the text gives us is that the battle is fairly short and it is a clear win for the King of Israel.

Given that the length of the conflict was likely more than a year it is safe to say that the Ammonites fought to the very end, but their efforts fall short and their capital city is taken captive.

When the battle is over something very significant happens. **(Verse 30)**

A crown is one of the most common and recognizable symbols of a king.

It is one of the central objects in the coronation of most kings and queens.

A coronation is a public celebration where a king or queen is officially named king or queen and that happens by taking a crown and placing it on the person's head.

That is what is happening here. The crown is removed from the king of the Ammonites and it is placed on David's head.

It is almost certain that this took place in front of as many people as possible.

It is a way of saying, "The guy that is having the crown removed is no longer king and the guy that is having the crown placed on his head is now the ruler of this land."

We are also told some very interesting information about this crown.

It says here that the crown was made from a 'talent' of gold.

In my bible near the back there is a table that puts the measurements and weights of the ancient world into modern equivalents.

I was a bit surprised when I looked up the weight of this crown. A talent of gold weighed roughly 75lbs.

Can you imagine walking around with a 75lb hat on your head?

Out of curiosity I looked up the price of gold and the other day it was at a little over \$2700 USD an ounce, which means just the cost of the gold to make this crown today would be just about 3.25 million dollars.

On top of that it says the crown had a precious jewel in it.

You don't make a crown like that for practical reasons. This was not every day functional wear.

You make a crown like that to show off your wealth and power.

It is a way of saying, "Look at how great our king is!"

That honour is taken from the Ammonite king and given to the king of God's choosing, David.

[How many times do we see people seemingly on top of the world and then make a complete disaster of their life. Baseball fans will likely remember the name Pete Rose. According to google, he won three World Series, three batting titles, one Most Valuable Player Award, two Gold Glove Awards, and the Rookie of the Year Award. He made 17 All-Star appearances in an unequaled five positions (second baseman, left fielder, right fielder, third baseman, and first baseman) and had the most all-time hits at 4256. Arguable the greatest baseball player ever and he is not in the hall of fame because he decided to gamble on baseball. All that honour taken away. Lots of other names in the hall of fame lots of others honoured but not him. He is essentially labelled an embarrassment to baseball.]

Hanun here opposes David loses his glory and it is given to Israel's king instead.

Think about how this points us to Jesus.

The number of kingdoms and rulers that have been opposed to the LORD are many.

It feels like they are great in number today, but we should bear in mind the promise of Christ.

He says in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

The image the LORD intends there is the armies of heaven attacking the kingdom of darkness and winning.

The outcome of that will be eternal honour and glory to King Jesus.

Revelation 21 talks about the eternal reign of Jesus upon the new earth. It says the kings and nations of the earth will bring their glory to the throne of Christ.

In Philippians two we are told, “...*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

[There is no crown or honour that will be withheld from Jesus. There is no city, or nation, or ruler that is opposed to Christ that will prevail. That is good news for those who love Christ and rejoice in His glory. I hope that is you today. I hope you can see the joy in serving the king. He has an offer of peace for you and you have to decide whether or not you will accept it. Sadly, not everyone does. We are reminded of that as the writer of 2Samuel brings chapter twelve to a close. What happens to the Ammonites teaches us that...]

Point #3 – Showing contempt for grace leads to ruin. (Verse 31)

When God’s king makes an offering of peace and people despise it they will suffer the consequences.

The picture of the crown being placed on David’s head means that he has ruling authority over the Ammonites.

Look at how he exercises it in **verse 31**.

Commentators are a bit divided over how to understand this verse.

Some think it means that David put all the Ammonites to death using the various things listed here and others think that he put them to forced labour.

I believe the case for understanding this as forced labour is stronger.

Typically when people are put to death the sword is mentioned rather than tools commonly used for building things.

The tools mentioned here are all significant for building towns and cities which would provide strength and protection for the nation.

Either way, though, we can all agree that things did not work out too well for the Ammonites.

To get the full picture of this we have to go back to the beginning of chapter 10.

We are told there that at that time David had a peaceful relationship with the king of the Ammonites, a man named Nahash.

Nahash, however, comes to the end of his life and his son Hanun takes the throne.

When David hears of the king’s death he sends messengers to offer his condolences.

The impression of the text that David is genuine in his sympathies which strongly suggests that he was looking to continue the peaceful relationship he had with Nahash.

The new king’s counselors though see it another way.

The say David sent the messengers as spies so he would learn their defenses so that he could attack and overthrow the city.

Now, Hanun, could have just said, "I'm not sure I trust you guys so thanks for the message but you should head on back to Jerusalem."

Instead, he orders the messengers to be taken and have their garments cut off at the hips and have their beards half shaved off and sends them back in complete humiliation.

Before there is any indication that David would send the army in response to the insult, the Ammonites get ready for war.

He could have sent some messengers back to David and said, "I acted rashly there please forgive me!"

Instead he presses forward in hardness of heart completely despising the King's offer of peace.

[David had experienced something like that before. After God had made it clear that David was the king of his choosing, Saul (the king before David) did everything he could to kill David. More than once though the tables were turned and David had multiple opportunities to take Saul's life. David, however, entrusted himself to the LORD, he was in no rush to take the throne by force and showed himself time and again willing to serve and submit to Saul. Saul had opportunity after opportunity to accept the grace of God through David but instead he despised it and that eventually led to his ruin.]

Again that should turn our minds towards the LORD Jesus.

There is no other King who makes such a glorious offer of grace and peace to people.

What has any human being ever done to deserve God the Father sending God the Son into the world on a rescue mission?

Nothing. In fact we have done the exact opposite.

The way people have acted towards God since Adam and Eve disobeyed the LORD deserves condemnation and eternal punishment.

And yet Jesus steps into the world not to condemn but to forgive. Not to put to death, but to offer life.

How is this offer made you might ask? It was made with the shed blood of Christ on the cross.

Instead of giving us what we deserve to took what we deserve upon Himself.

He died for us so that we might be forgiven.

He rose from the dead so that we too might be raised to new life.

Amazing grace is the best I can do to describe it, but that hardly seems to do it justice.

That is the offer to all who believe, but sadly many people act just like Hanun king of the Ammonites.

Sadly, many people show contempt for the grace of God and it leads them to eternal ruin.

Hell is a far worse fate than being put to manual labor but it is necessary for the justice of God to be maintained.

Is it any wonder it says this in Hebrews

10:28-29a.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God

In as much as David is the king of God's choosing his life is intended to direct our minds to the LORD Jesus.

If the servants of David understood the importance of seeking the glory of their king, how much more should we die to ourselves and live for Jesus' sake?

If God honoured David, a fallen man far from perfect, because He chose Him to sit on the throne of Israel, how much more will the Father honour the King of kings and Lord of lords chosen to redeem His people before the foundation of the world?

If showing contempt for the grace David showed led to the ruin of the Ammonites, how much more will despising the grace of God in Christ lead to ruin?

Considering these things, it seems to me there is only one fitting response and that is to honour the King.