

Humility

2Samuel 16:1-14

When I think of the life of a man who is one the most well-known people in the Bible I think about his life being a series of ups and downs.

When he was born his life was in danger simply because he was a boy on account of an evil king who gave an evil order to try and keep the population of his slaves from growing.

His parents though made the choice to do what they could to keep him alive.

His mother hid him for three months and when she could no longer keep him hidden she put him in a basket, coated that basket with something to waterproof it, and put him in the Nile River among the reeds by the river bank.

It was there that the daughter of the king came and spotted the basket.

The princess had a servant retrieve the basket and when she opened it she discovered a beautiful baby boy who she decided to adopt as her own son.

Because she “drew him out of the water” she gave him the name Moses.

Born a slave and raised a prince.

Many years later he was out among the Hebrew slaves and saw an Egyptian beating one of them.

When he thought no one was looking he intervened, killed the Egyptian, and buried the body in the sand.

Again the next day he went out among the slaves and saw two of them fighting with each other.

When he tried to reason with them one of them said, “Who made you judge? Are you going to kill me like you did the Egyptian?”

When Moses realized what he had done was public knowledge he ran for his life to a place called Midian and became a shepherd.

After being a shepherd for a long time he met the LORD and God called him to go back to Egypt to command the King in the name of the LORD to let the Israelites go.

From slave to prince to outcast to shepherd to prophet of the living God.

After some hesitation he obeys God and goes to Egypt.

After witnesses God do many miracles and bring significant judgement against Egypt the Israelites are freed and Moses leads them out of the land of their slavery.

As the people are camping by the Red Sea the king changes his mind and chases them down, but again God does an incredible miracle.

He parts the waters, the Israelites walk through and dry ground, and the Egyptians are destroyed.

Shortly after just three days they ran short on water and the people grumbled against Moses.

God graciously did a miracle.

A little over a month later they ran short of food and grumbled against Moses.

Shortly after that they need water again and they fought with Moses about it.

Again God does a miracle.

After that they came to Mount Sinai, saw amazing things, and even heard the voice of the LORD, but when Moses is up on the mountain they make an idol of a golden calf and worship it.

Do you know what Moses does? He prays for them that God would forgive them and the LORD again shows grace to the people.

God commands the people to go to the Promised Land and they refuse and have to wander in the wilderness for forty years.

During that time it is one complaint after another.

We don't have food, we don't have water, we don't like the food, we don't like Moses, someone else should be in charge, and on and on it went.

It is on one of the occasions when they are complaining about water that Moses loses his cool, doesn't listen to God, and as a consequence he is not allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

I have to say I feel for the guy.

How did he put up with all the complaining and disrespect for forty years?

I would have tapped out really early on.

[How did he do it? I think the bible gives us the answer in Numbers 12:3. It says, "*Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.*" Wow, that is a powerful statement. How do you put up with an enormous group of people complaining and criticizing for forty years? Humility! That is a character trait every single Christian should desire. The Bible commands us in 1Peter 5:5, it says, "*Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*" I can't imagine anyone here this morning wanting the LORD to be against you. I'm sure we would all rather have His grace instead. If that is what we want then we need to be concerned about humility. That is what our text this morning **2Samuel 16:1-14** points us to. It points us to humility and I believe it shows us what humility is. In these verses we meet King David fleeing for his life and showing signs of humility. The first thing he shows us is that...]

Point #1 – Being in need should move us towards humility. (Verses 1-4)

Part of the fallen nature of humanity is to live in the delusion that we are self-sufficient, that we don't need our Creator. Moments of crisis though point us to the truth that we need the LORD.

As chapter sixteen opens we find David in need.

He along with his household and his servants are fleeing Jerusalem for their lives because David's son Absalom is looking to take over the kingdom.

He has gone out of the city to the east, crossed the Kidron Valley, and gone up the Mount of Olives.

That is where we pick up the scene here in **verse 1**.

To get the full picture here we need to keep in mind the background of this man named Ziba.

Ziba had been a servant of King Saul, who was king before David.

After Saul's death and after David had been firmly established as king over all Israel he wanted to show kindness to anyone who remained of the house of Saul.

He wanted to do that because of the covenant of friendship with Saul's son Jonathan.

To find out if there was anyone left, David summoned Ziba and asked him if any remained.

Ziba told David that Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, a man lame from the time he was five years old, was still alive and where he was living.

David called Mephibosheth gave him all the lands of Saul and gave him Ziba, his sons (he had 15), and his servants (20) to work the land for Mephibosheth.

On top of that David had the son of Jonathan eat at his table like one of his own sons.

Remembering those things reminds us that David for many years had been the one meeting the needs of others, but now he finds himself in need. (**Verse 2**)

At the moment David no longer has command of the resources of the palace.

He has escaped the city with little in the way of provisions and a servant comes to help meet the need of the king.

That is a humbling situation for sure.

There is also more going on here in terms of need than getting some stuff for the journey. (**Verses 3-4**)

Commentators are somewhat divided on whether or not Ziba is telling the truth.

When you stop and think about it, how likely is it that a lame man is going to be able to compete with the strong and good looking young prince who has proclaimed himself king?
 On the other hand, how many times do people have unrealistic expectations?

What is clear is that whether or not Ziba is being completely honest here, it would seem somebody is trying to take advantage of the situation for personal gain?

It is a reminder to us that the king is a man in need of true friendship and loyalty.

We know he has that. We can see that in chapter 15 in people like Ittai, Abiathar, Zadok, and Hushai.

He has that, but when people are acting out of self-interest towards him it is a reminder of how much he really needs the friends he has.

Absalom's rebellion has put the king in a place of great need and being in need is often a humbling experience.

[Several years ago I was driving to Cambridge in our 2002 Honda Civic. It was a good car but it was also a decade old and so no surprisingly some things failed on occasion. I was about halfway between Chatham and London and headlights started going dim as well as the dash and shortly after that the car died because the alternator stopped working and the electrical system lost power. In that moment I didn't think, "I'll push my car home." I thought, "I'm stranded and I need someone to come and help me."]

What being in need should do for us is show us the end of ourselves.

God made us in such a way that we would have constant reminders of that.

Just take food, water, and air for starters.

Have you ever asked, "What did God make us to need to eat, drink, and breathe?"

He could have made us to not need those things so why make us the way He did?

To show us that we are needy creatures and that our greatest need is Him.

That is exactly where Adam and Eve went off the rails isn't it?

They believed the lie that they could be their own gods, that they could do their own thing and be ok.

Where did that lead? To death. That is where pride always leads.

[I believe one of the things that feeds the godlessness of our society is the abundance of material things. It cultivates entitlement and pride. Eventually though everyone is confronted with a

situation where they come to the end of themselves. Where they cannot meet their own need and those moments are opportunities to cultivate humility in our hearts. In order to be a Christian one of the most basic things you need to understand is that you have broken God's laws and there is nothing you can do to make that right. There is nothing you can do to save yourself from the eternal wrath of God, you are in desperate need. The good news of the gospel is not you are awesome, or you can save yourself, the good news of the gospel is the God has provided a Saviour for you in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To be saved from hell you need to be humble enough to see your need of a savior. If you can see that, then you may be able to see this as well, that...]

Point #2 – Being mistreated should move us towards humility. (Verses 5-8)

While it never feels good to be treated badly, it is often an opportunity to become more aware of our pride and to humble ourselves.

Sometimes when things go bad for someone there are those who want to pile on to the situation.

David runs into someone like that on his way to the Jordan River. **(Verses 5-6)**

It is helpful to think back to chapter fifteen and remember the description there of David and his company as they are going up the Mount of Olives.

It says in verse 30 of that chapter that David went up the mountain “weeping, barefoot, and with his head covered” and it says that “all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went.”

It is a picture of lament and humiliation.

Shimei takes the opportunity add insult to injury here.

If I am understanding verse 13 correctly as the road that David is travelling on comes through Bahurim it runs alongside a hill or ridge and that is where Shimei is standing and he taunts the king.

It says here in verse 5 that he “cursed continually”.

This is more than a, “I am happy to see you go comment.”

This is a constant verbal assault against the one who has sat on Israel's throne for many years.

A curse—as we will see in a moment—is more than an insult, it is a declaration of condemnation that is spoken in the name of the LORD.

On top of that he is throwing stones at the king and his servants.

The text doesn't say how big the stones are. My suspicion is they are not that big because there is likely some distance between them, but it is still an action of condemnation.

Verses 7-8 give us the main content of the curses be spoken down upon the king.

A very important question that we need to ask here is, “Is this true?”

Shimei is cursing David saying the God is giving him what he deserved because the blood of the house of Saul is on his hands.

Any fair assessment of the history between Saul and David would conclude that Shimei is totally wrong about that.

It was actually the other way around. It was Saul who tried on several occasions to take David’s life and when David had the opportunity to take Saul’s life he spared it twice.

David was not the cause of Saul’s undoing, Saul did that to himself by disobeying the LORD.

Shimei is being driven by personal bitterness because his family was removed from royalty, but even though his motive is wrong and his curse is based on the wrong thing there is some truth to his curse.

David is a man of blood.

He took the life of Uriah and others to try and hide his sin.

He is called a ‘worthless man!’ here. That no doubt seems very harsh to us but if we think about what sin does to our standing before a Holy God it is an accurate way to put it.

What right does David have to stand before the LORD? What can he do to make himself clean from the stains of his evil deeds? What treasure or worth does he bring to the table? Nothing!

Shimei is correct to say that this is from the LORD. This is what Nathan the prophet said was going to happen on account of what David had done with Bathsheba.

Based on how David responds in verse 10, it would seem that he gets that.

Here he is, the man who mere hours ago sat upon the throne of Israel, humbled before a relative nobody yelling curses and throwing stones.

Each of us no doubt have a great many thoughts on being cursed and mistreated as David is here, how often do we think of it as an invitation to humility?

[The well-known preacher Charles Spurgeon had some thoughts on this very subject. He said, “*Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation, and you would be no gainer by the correction. If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth.*”]

That is not how we typically think of insults and accusations is it?

How do we most often try and handle those things?

Don't we try and fight against them?

Doesn't the world counsel us to tell ourselves how wonderful, good, and important we are?

Do you know we have an accuser far worse than Shimei?

That is what the Bible calls Devil. He delights in listing off all the things that make us wretches.

While he is the father of lies he has no need to make up things against us for the list of things that makes our righteousness as filthy rags before the LORD is longer than we can appreciate.

[Where will pride gets us in the face of that? It is like a fresh coat of paint on a rusty car it changes nothing. Humility on the other hand changes everything. Now one might get the impression from what has been said so far, that humility is thinking about how terrible we are all the time. While that would be much more accurate than trying to puff ourselves up, it still wouldn't be humility. Genuine humility is something far better and it is something we desperately need to live a godly life in a fallen world. David here points us in the right direction. How he responds to Shimei shows us that...]

Point #3 – Turning our attention from ourselves to the LORD is humility. (Verses 9-14)

When we live like we actually believe God is all present, all powerful, and that He is actively ruling all things, we will focus much less on ourselves because He will command our attention instead.

Before we hear from the king we hear from his nephew in verse 9.

This really puts the scene into some perspective.

Shimei is one guy. Abishai calls him here a 'dead dog' which likely means he is getting up there in age and he likely wouldn't be missed by very many people if he is done away with.

His cursing and throwing stones seems incredibly unwise when we consider that he is throwing stones at everyone here including those called David's 'mighty men' in verse 6.

These guys are the best warriors in the land and any one of them could easily chased down Shimei and stopped his cursing permanently.

Abishai sizes that up right away. Who is this guy to talk to you like that? Let me go take care of him!

That is the natural response. David has the power in this situation to act in pride and silence Shimei.

Look at what he does instead. (**Verse 10-13**)

He basically says to his nephew, “We have nothing in common you and me” and then he turns to his understanding of the providence of God.

He knows that the LORD governs all things from moment to moment.

He sees this raving old man as being under the control of God and he sees God as permitting him to utter this curse over him.

He understands that God permits or restricts the things that happen from moment to moment according to His will.

He further puts this into perspective by comparing what Absalom is doing to what Shimei is doing.

My own son wants to do away with me, why should it be surprising or upsetting that Shimei would want the same?

No life is in danger from this man’s accusations, throwing rocks, or flinging dirt.

There are no injuries recorded, the primary thing being attacked here is the honour of the king and instead of defending himself David turns his attention to the LORD.

I want to call your attention to something important here.

David does say there is wrong being done to him here in verse 12.

While there are things in what Shimei says that should convict David, the thing that this man is basing his curses on is not right.

Humility does not mean admitting to things that are not true.

Humility does not mean giving in to evil.

Also notice that there is no sense whatsoever of David being afraid of Shimei.

With a word David could put an end to him.

Humility should not be driven by fear.

While weakness and need may point us to our need of humility they are not at all the same thing as humility.

Genuine humility is turning to the LORD and trusting in His goodness and faithfulness in all things.

So instead of getting angry and turning to violence, David bears the curses, the stones, and the dust for the short distance it would take to get past the part of the road and he orders his men to do the same because his attention is on God.

That is humility.

[How much more did Jesus do the same as He walked along the road to Calvary? How many insults and false accusations did He bear? Unlike David, Jesus is completely innocent and yet He takes it all, not from fear or weakness. He told His disciples that He could call “twelve

legions of angels” to His defense. He takes it all because He is entrusting Himself completely to God. Philippians two says that He ‘humbled himself’ with his death on the cross. Because of His humility we can be saved. Because of His humility we can find the greatest of freedom and joy in seeking humility ourselves.]

You see when we are confronted with curses and accusations that are not true we don’t have to get angry and upset.

We can simply say what is true and trust that the LORD will work it out.

When we are faced with challenges and trials beyond our ability we can turn to the LORD instead of ourselves.

When we are reminded of our failures and shortcomings even if it by the devil himself.

We don’t have to try and puff ourselves up, we don’t have to defend ourselves, or deny the truth.

When someone says, “You’re not good enough!” We can smile and be filled with great joy and we can say, “I know, but Jesus is more than good enough!”

He pleads our case brothers and sisters based on His sufficiency and worth.

It says in verse 14 that David came to the Jordan and was refreshed there.

How much more are we revived under the care and provision of Jesus?

The world wants us to make life about ourselves, it want us to keep our attention on ourselves.

That is miserable state of affairs.

It is far better to humble ourselves and fix our attention on the LORD.

Do we understand this morning that we are people in need?

Do we understand that we can trust God through every trial through every injustice?

Do we understand what true humility is?

Do we understand the importance of humility?

If we truly know the LORD and we truly know ourselves how can we do anything else but look to Christ rather than ourselves?

Oh what a difference that would make.

Let us pray towards that end.