

Coming to the King

2Samuel 19:16-43

I have mentioned on a few occasions that I often instigated fights with my brother growing up.

He was older, bigger, and stronger than me so you would think I would learn my lesson and stop getting on his nerves, but no I persisted.

Most of the time it ended with me getting beat up, lying on the ground for a few minutes, and then moving on to the next thing.

Every now and again though something more significant happened.

One of those occasions happened in the front entry way to our house.

I don't remember what started our fight, but the law of averages being what it is I am reasonably certain that I was the cause.

At some point along the way my brother grabbed me by the collar of my shirt and started pushing me backwards and slammed me into the front door.

Under normal circumstances in an open area I could not have pushed my brother backwards on account of his height and weight advantage, but in this case I now had the door to assist me in my struggle.

I pushed off the door and to my surprise my brother found himself unable to immediately stop my momentum and once I had him off balance I tried to pick up as much speed as I could to keep him off balance and to slam him into the wall with as much force as I could muster.

At this point I have no doubt that my mother would like me to mention that she had told us to stop.

I just want to say to all the kids this morning, you should listen to your mother!

My satisfaction of slamming my brother into the wall was very short lived because drywall is not nearing as sturdy as a wooden door and my brother's shoulder had managed to make a substantial hole in the wall.

My immediate thought was to run away before my dad got home.

My mother told us that would be a bad idea and that we should meet dad when he arrived.

The waiting was terrible but eventually dad arrived home and we met him at the front door.

To his credit, dad took it pretty well and explained that I would be learning how to do drywall repair.

He also explained that it was a good thing we had waited for him to get home because if we had decided to run and hide the consequence would have been much bigger.

[Have you ever had an experience like that? Where you are waiting for your mom or dad to get home and you are not sure how it is going to go when they arrive? That is the picture that

comes to my mind regarding our text this morning **2 Samuel 19:16-43**. In this passage we meet King David on his way back to Jerusalem to reclaim Israel's throne. As he makes his way back we find some people coming to meet him. Some out of fear, some to explain themselves, some to serve him, and some to serve themselves. In this text I believe there are some strong parallels between these people coming to King David and people coming to the King of kings. Have you considered recently that we will one day come before the LORD? Have you considered recently whether that will be a good meeting or not? That is what we want to consider this morning and this text has some important lessons for us in that regard. This text is an invitation for us to come to the King, it shows us first of all that...]

Point #1 – We must come to the King in repentance. (Verses 16-23)

The bible is extremely clear that it is impossible to be right with God unless we acknowledge the contempt we have shown for the LORD in all our rebellion.

It is important to know that when David had fled for his life from Jerusalem it looked like he was probably never coming back.

It looked like his son Absalom had the advantage and it looked like David's time as king had come to an end.

Now everything had turned on a dime on account of the LORD exercising His power in His providence to defeat the army of Absalom and keep David on the throne.

As David is on his way back to the capital city some people come out in a hurry to meet him according to verses 16-17.

One of the people rushing out to meet the king is a man named Shimei.

Why the urgency to come and see the king? Because he knows when David returns to Jerusalem there is a good chance he is going to be in trouble.

You see when David had fled for his life Shimei has stood on a ridge line above the king and cursed him, kicked dust at him, and threw stones at him and his company.

He was happy David was in trouble and told him that he was getting what he deserved.

With David victorious, Shimei thinks his life may be in danger not to mention his house, his land, and his family.

So he does this in **verses 18b-20**.

While we cannot know the heart of this man we can evaluate what he says.

He clearly and without excuse confesses that what he did to David was wrong.

He knows that he is guilty and he knows what his actions deserve and he falls down before the king and asks for mercy.

His need for mercy is very clear from verse 21 where Abishai reminds the king that Shimei's actions deserve death, but this is what happens instead **(Verses 22-23)**.

Instead of death Shimei receives forgiveness.

Would he have received that if he had continued showing contempt for the king? Likely not!

His only hope here in coming to David is to turn from his wickedness.

[Have you ever been canoeing or kayaking down a river and come across a sign that says danger waterfall ahead? I've seen that a few times and I've noticed there is usually more than one sign. When you see a sign like that you have two choices. One, keep going and go over the falls or two paddle in a different direction.]

That was Shimei's choice here and he chooses to paddle in a different direction and receives mercy from King David.

One of the questions commentators wrestle with in this passage is whether or not this is genuine.

Was Shimei really sorry? Did David really forgive him in his heart? There are reasons to be skeptical of both men here, but nevertheless they are pointing us to what is necessary for us to come to the LORD.

Listen, there is no hiding from God and there is no fooling Him either.

He knows how we have rebelled against Him, He knows how we have wanted Him off His throne so that we wouldn't have to answer to Him, and He knows whether we have truly turned from that way of thinking and feeling.

[His crown will never be removed and each one of us will come before Him at some point. Our only hope in the face of that reality is to come before Him now in repentance. To confess that we are wrong and that He is right. To turn from our evil and plead with Him for mercy through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that if we do that God is "*faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" There is no other way to come to God and live. Secondly we see from this passage that.]

Point #2 – We must come to the King trusting in His wisdom. (Verses 24-30)

If we are to sit at the Lord's Table we need to be satisfied with what He decides for us.

In these next verses we are told about another man coming to the king, a man named Mephibosheth.

The focus on Mephibosheth here probably explains the mention of Ziba in verse 17.

You see Ziba was originally the servant of Saul, the man who was king of Israel before David, and David had made Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth.

David had given that command because Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul and the son of David's best friend Jonathan and David had made a covenant with his friend to deal kindly with his children.

He gave the son of Jonathan all the land that belonged to Saul, Ziba along with his sons and servants to work to the land, and David had Mephibosheth eat at his table like one of his own sons.

Now when David was fleeing Jerusalem for his life, Ziba came to him to give him some things to help him along on his journey.

David is happy for the help but when Ziba shows up he asks him, "Where is Mephibosheth?"

Ziba tells David that Mephibosheth stayed behind in Jerusalem because he believed that with all the trouble going on he would end up getting the throne.

David, clearly displeased with that information, gives all the land of Mephibosheth to Ziba.

My guess is that Ziba likely believed this would be one of David's final acts as king.

I don't think he ever expected David to return and hear the other side of the story, but on account of God's faithfulness he is back in Jerusalem and Mephibosheth comes to the king (**Verse 24**).

Being unwashed and dishevelled according to commentators was a clear expression of mourning.

So either this man has some unrealistic ulterior motive or he has been genuinely sorrowful over the king's departure. (**Verses 25-28**).

Mephibosheth's side of the story is that Ziba lied to him.

In order for him to go with David he would need a donkey because he was lame on account of an accident from when he was a boy.

When he says here that he was going to saddle a donkey for himself, it almost certainly means that he commanded his servant to saddle the donkey.

The donkey was saddled but instead of setting his master upon it, Ziba took it to the king and told him that Mephibosheth had despised David's love and was seeking selfish gain.

Did you catch how he refers to David in verse 27? He says that "the king is like the angel of God."

That is way of saying, "I trust your discernment, and I believe you will be able to tell who is telling the truth here."

David gives his answer in **verse 29** and Mephibosheth responds in **verse 30**.

Commentators are divided on what David means here.

Either he is restoring the previous arrangement where Ziba along with his sons and servants will work the land for Mephibosheth or he is splitting the land in two and giving half to each man.

Whatever the case may be Mephibosheth is satisfied with the decision. In fact he essentially says to the king here, “I don’t care about the land I’m just glad you are back safely.”

While the text is not crystal clear on who is telling the truth, I definitely think it is leaning towards Mephibosheth.

He has been treated like a son by David even though he has done nothing to deserve it and he seems to respond here with the love of a son and satisfies himself in discernment of the king.

How much more should we have that attitude with the LORD?

David may have been a wise king, but what is his wisdom in comparison with the God who has known everything from all eternity past?

Mephibosheth understands that he has no right to sit at the king’s table, how much less of a right do we have to sit at the Lord’s Table?

Unlike this man who has a side of the story to tell, what can we say to the LORD to justify ourselves? Nothing!

And yet what does God offer us in Christ?

Forgiveness, eternal life and the inheritance of the new heavens and the new earth.

The default of the human heart is to sit in judgement of the Lord, to be upset at how He deals with us, to think that our ways are better than His.

Those things are giant obstacles to our coming to Him.

Listen, He has done you no wrong!

His judgements are always based on knowing everything and if you belong to Him He seeks your highest good.

One of the hardest things for people in coming to the LORD, but one of the necessary things, is accepting that His judgements are always correct.

[Just ask yourself this morning, “Can I rest in whatever God has decided for me?” “Am I happy with the fact that God is God and I am not?” I know we know the answer we are supposed to say, but do we feel it in our heart? If we are honest with ourselves do we have more contentment in our hearts or envy? If we are going to come to the King of kings for a restored relationship with Him then we need to be able to say to Him, “You are right and I trust in You!” That brings us to the final portion of our text this morning. In these verses we find a man whose heart had been with the king the entire time and a conflict between two groups of people

clamoring to be with the king. I believe the writer intends us to see a contrast between a faithful servant and the self-centered. From them we learn that...]

Point #3 – We must come to the King for more than earthly rewards. (Verses 31-43)

To truly want to be with the LORD is to long for something greater than what this world can offer.

Whereas the people who have come to the king so far have had something to resolve with him, the next character in this passage has been unquestionably on the side of the king the whole time.

The writer takes us back again to the king's crossing at the Jordan River and tells us about a man named Barzillai in verses 31-33.

Barzillai is one of my favourite characters in the book of 2Samuel.

First of all I really like his name. It means "my iron" or "man of iron".

A fitting name for a man of faithfulness and resolve.

We get a sense of that from how he is described here.

Besides his name we are told four things about him in verses 31-32.

It says that he came down to escort the king over the Jordan River.

A testimony to his faithfulness to the king of God's choosing.

We also learn that he was 'very aged', a man of eighty years old.

In our time eighty is fairly common, but at this time it would have been remarkable to make it to that age.

Thirdly, the writer reminds us of what was said in chapter 17, that Barzillai 'provided food for the king while he was in Mahanaim'.

When most of the elders of Israel had abandoned David and went over to Absalom, this man risked his life and property to serve God's king.

Lastly, we are told 'he was very wealthy' which explains his ability to provide for David and his men.

On account of his faithfulness David wants him to come to Jerusalem where he will provide for Barzillai, it says in verse 33.

He doesn't mean provide him with food and provisions because he needs them, we were just told that he is a "very wealthy man".

He must be talking about giving him a position of honour and influence in the kingdom.

To sit at the king's table was a privilege afforded to relatively few people and most people would have jumped at the chance, but look at how iron man responds. **(Verses 34-37)**

He does not need honour and privilege during his few days left upon the earth.

While he must have been in reasonably good health to make the trip down to the Jordan, his age has diminished his capacity for earthly things.

His enjoyment of food is way down, his ability to appreciate music is far less than it was when he was younger, and so he concludes that there is no need for such an earthly reward for his service.

He wants to go home and be close to the place of his burial and in verses 38-40 we read that the king grants his request.

Now the text doesn't say this, but I believe the inference we should make from his desire to be close to his parents' tomb is a hope in God's power to raise His people from the dead and give them eternal life free from the shadow of death.

I believe he is looking beyond earthly reward.

Contrast that with the people described in verses 41-43.

Two groups are mentioned here, the men of Judah and the men of Israel.

Judah is the tribe that David belongs to and Israel includes the ten other non-Levitical tribes in the nation.

That is how the nation was divided early on in David's reign and it will be divided that way in the future during the reign of David's grandson.

In this passage an argument breaks out between the two groups about who should have the honour of bringing the king back to the throne.

That is unbelievable considering the fact that most of these guys on both sides of the conflict were willing to sell David out mere weeks before this for personal gain.

What a difference! Barzillai serves and honours the king, I believe for the glory of God, and these guys want to attach themselves to the king like zebra mussels for selfish gain.

[This reminds me of when James and John came to Jesus to make a request. They came and asked, "Lord, let one of us sit on your right and the other sit on your left in your glory!" The right and left are the power positions, the places of highest honour. When the other disciples heard what they had asked they were really upset about it. They weren't upset because James and John were missing the point, they were upset because they wanted those positions too. Jesus teaches them that if they want to be great in the kingdom of heaven they need to be servants instead of being concerned about honour, position, and power. Why? Because the joy of glory is delighting in God for who He is and not just the stuff He provides.]

What was happening to Barzillai here physically we should long for spiritually.

The things of this world could not satisfy his physical body any longer, but he was still able to use what God had provided for him to serve the king of the LORD's choosing.

We need to have the same attitude.

If we come to King Jesus because we want all His stuff, then we are going to be missing the point entirely.

Listen, stuff/material things even the stuff in heaven cannot satisfy your soul.

Fame, power, money, possessions will all leave you empty.

The great lie of things is that, "If I only had some more of this or that, then I would be happy."

No you won't be!

What if instead of thinking "If I only had some more of this or that", what if we thought "I want to love Jesus more and use what He provides for His glory."

If that is how we thought then we would have a much better sense of what eternity is all about.

Heaven is not short on things brothers and sisters.

God makes the streets of gold, the New Jerusalem is a city of splendor and majesty, the food never runs out, and no one ever gets sick.

All those things sound really good, but for those who will be there none of those things will have a hold of our hearts.

Instead all of those things will point us to the deepest desire of our hearts which will be a delight in the King of kings.

Before we breathe our last breath and before Christ's return there is opportunity to come to the King and live.

If we are going to do that we have to come in repentance. All of us have shown contempt for the glory of Jesus and we all need to come to Him and plead for mercy.

Praise God He is a gracious king and will forgive us on account of His shed blood.

When we come to the King we need to trust in His wisdom.

And when we come to the King we need to look beyond earthly things delighting in Him for Who He is.

If we do that we will find there is no better place to be than to come to the King and live.