

The Life of David

David Anointed King of Judah

2 Samuel 2:1-32

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Scripture

It has been said that “good things come to those who wait.” Well, whoever coined that saying was not thinking of toddlers! We recently visited our grandsons. Our almost three-year-old grandson wants what he wants *now*. He has little concept of waiting.

David was just a teenager when he was anointed by the Prophet Samuel to be the next king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:12-13). However, David’s coronation as king did not take place for more than a decade. Saul was still king over Israel, and Saul came to fear David. Moreover, Saul tried to kill David on many occasions because he saw David as a threat to his own kingship. David, however, refused to touch the Lord’s anointed. Eventually, Saul died at the hands of the Philistines at the battle on Mount Gilboa. The way was finally opened for David to become king over Israel. But, even then, David was anointed king over only Judah and not yet all Israel. Nevertheless, this was the start of David’s kingship.

Let’s read about David anointed king of Judah in 2 Samuel 2:1-32:

¹After this David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” And the Lord said to him, “Go up.” David said, “To which shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.” ²So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. ³And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. ⁴And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

When they told David, “It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul,” ⁵David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, “May you be blessed by the Lord, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord

and buried him. ⁶ Now may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. ⁷ Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

⁸ But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim, ⁹ and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel. ¹⁰ Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. ¹¹ And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

¹² Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. ¹³ And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. And they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. ¹⁴ And Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men arise and compete before us.” And Joab said, “Let them arise.” ¹⁵ Then they arose and passed over by number, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. ¹⁶ And each caught his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent’s side, so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is at Gibeon. ¹⁷ And the battle was very fierce that day. And Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

¹⁸ And the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. ¹⁹ And Asahel pursued Abner, and as he went, he turned neither to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. ²⁰ Then Abner looked behind him and said, “Is it you, Asahel?” And he answered, “It is I.” ²¹ Abner said to him, “Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and seize one of the young men and take his spoil.” But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. ²² And Abner said

again to Asahel, “Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?”²³ But he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he fell there and died where he was. And all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

²⁴ But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. And as the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. ²⁵ And the people of Benjamin gathered themselves together behind Abner and became one group and took their stand on the top of a hill. ²⁶ Then Abner called to Joab, “Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn from the pursuit of their brothers?” ²⁷ And Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely the men would not have given up the pursuit of their brothers until the morning.” ²⁸ So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men stopped and pursued Israel no more, nor did they fight anymore.

²⁹ And Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, and marching the whole morning, they came to Mahanaim. ³⁰ Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing from David’s servants nineteen men besides Asahel. ³¹ But the servants of David had struck down of Benjamin 360 of Abner’s men. ³² And they took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem. And Joab and his men marched all night, and the day broke upon them at Hebron. (2 Samuel 2:1-32)

Introduction

An article in *The Washington Post* on September 16, 2009, began with these words: “The king folds her own laundry, chauffeurs herself around Washington in a 1992 Honda, and answers her own

phone. Her boss's phone, too." The article was about Peggienelene Bartels, secretary to the Ghanaian embassy in Washington for 30 years. She's originally from Otum, Ghana, a small city of about 7,000, and her story is a fascinating one.

When the 90-year-old king of Otum, Ghana, died, the elders did what they always have done: a ritual to determine the next king. They prayed and poured schnapps on the ground while they read the names of the king's 25 relatives. When steam rose from the schnapps on the ground, the name that they were reading at that moment would be the new king—and that's exactly what happened when they read Peggienelene's name.

So now Peggienelene is a king—yes, a *king*, not a queen (when she pointed out to the elders that she is a woman, they replied by saying the office of king is the post that was open). When she goes back to Ghana, she has a driver and a chef and an eight-bedroom palace (though it needs repairs). She has power to resolve disputes, appoint elders, and manages more than 1,000 acres of family-owned land. "I'm a big-time king, you know," she told the reporter. When she returned for her coronation, they carried her through the streets on a litter. She even wore a heavy gold crown.

Paul Schwartzman, the reporter, wrote, "In the humdrum of ordinary life, people periodically yearn for something unexpected, some kind of gilded escape, delivered, perhaps, by an unanticipated inheritance or a winning lottery ticket." Peggienelene got the unexpected. She became king!¹

Unlike Peggienelene, David eventually got what he expected. God had promised David that he would be the next king over Israel. Finally, Saul was dead, and David was crowned as king.

Lesson

In today's text, 2 Samuel 2:1-32, we see what happens when

¹ <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2009/november/1110209.html>.

God establishes his kingdom.

Let's use the following outline:

1. God's Kingdom Is Inaugurated by Divine Guidance (2:1-4a)
2. God's Kingdom Is Extended by Winsome Appeal (2:4b-7)
3. God's Kingdom Is Opposed by Rebellious Opposition (2:8-32)

I. God's Kingdom Is Inaugurated by Divine Guidance (2:1-4a)

First, God's kingdom is inaugurated by divine guidance.

As I mentioned earlier, Saul wanted to kill David. So, David fled to Philistia and lived as an exile among the Philistines. Eventually, the Philistines attacked Israel, and killed King Saul and three of his sons in the battle on Mount Gilboa. When David learned of Saul's defeat and death, he knew that the way was now open for him to become king over Israel. But, we need to notice that David did not simply move forward without *first* seeking the Lord's guidance. Verse 1 says, **“After this David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?’ And the Lord said to him, ‘Go up.’ David said, ‘To which shall I go up?’ And he said, ‘To Hebron.’ ”**

We should not miss the significance of what David was doing here. Many years earlier, God had promised that David would be the next king over Israel. But David does not just assume the kingship. He goes to the Lord and asks him what he should do. David was seeking divine guidance from God regarding the establishment of his kingdom.

A lesson for all of us is that we should always seek the Lord's guidance, even when the way forward looks patently clear. We should never presume that yesterday's promises must be fulfilled

today. We should always seek the guidance of God in everything and at all times.

It is also noteworthy that God sent David to the city of Hebron in Judah. Hebron was nineteen miles south/southwest of Jerusalem, and was at that time the most important town in Judah. Hebron was a town rich in covenant memories, for it was at Hebron where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah were all buried (Genesis 23:17-19; 25:9-10; 49:29-32; 50:13).

So David went to Hebron, with his wives, his soldiers, and their families. Verse 4a says, **“And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.”**

Here, for the first time, God’s chosen king—David—begins to rule visibly on earth. At this point in time, David ruled over only one tribe. But, this was not because God could not pull off David’s rule over all of Israel at that time. No. It is important to keep in mind that every aspect of God’s kingdom was under his guidance at every point. Yes, it was a small beginning. But, it was the kingdom of God—on earth. For now, the kingdom of God was tucked away in the hills of Judah at a city called Hebron. Hebron, which reminds David—and us—of God’s covenant promise to Abraham that he will become a great nation, and that through him all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3).

I wonder how often David wandered over to the tomb where Abraham and the other patriarchs and their wives were buried, and pondered God’s covenant promise. Though David’s kingdom was starting small, it was nevertheless a real kingdom. He was God’s king ruling on earth—for the very first time!

God’s kingdom is like a mustard seed. It starts small and grows into something that is really big. Jesus’ kingdom started small, and it is growing into something that is really big. Let us be encouraged that there are places all around the world where people are turning to Jesus in faith and repentance.

II. God's Kingdom Is Extended by Winsome Appeal (2:4b-7)

Second, God's kingdom is extended by winsome appeal.

You may recall that when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead learned that Saul had been killed, the men went through the night to recover Saul's body and gave him a decent burial (1 Samuel 31:11-13). They acted in this way because Saul had rescued their city from Nahash many years earlier (1 Samuel 11). So, the people of Jabesh-gilead had always thought well of Saul. When David was told, **"It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul," David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "May you be blessed by the Lord, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him. Now may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them"** (2:4b-7).

David expressed to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead his gratitude for their act of kindness. He also proposed that he would act kindly toward them because of what they had done for Saul. And finally, he invited them to transfer their allegiance to himself. God had anointed David as king, and he was appealing to them to submit themselves to his leadership. There is a wonderful winsomeness about David's appeal to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead to submit to his kingship.

Isn't that how the kingdom of God is extended? By winsome appeal. David's Greater Son, Jesus, seeks to extend his kingdom by winsome appeal as well. He put it this way in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." A yoke requires absolute submission. But Jesus' appeal is so winsome. He

appeals to people to follow him on the basis of his character (“for I am gentle and lowly in heart”) and on the basis of his promise (“and you will find rest for your souls”).

Let us extend a winsome appeal to others to submit to the kingship of Jesus. He is the true king, and he appeals to sinners to submit to his authority and kingship.

III. God’s Kingdom Is Opposed by Rebellious Opposition (2:8-32)

And third, God’s kingdom is opposed by rebellious opposition.

We read in verses 8-9, **“But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim, and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel.”** This was clearly an act of rebellious opposition against David. Verses 10-11 go on to say, **“Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.”**

The chronology is not entirely clear. Most likely, Abner was in control over Israel for five and a half years, and then he had Ish-bosheth installed as king for two years. This matches the seven and a half years of David’s reign in Hebron.

More importantly, though, Abner knew that God had promised the kingship to David. By opposing David, Abner was opposing God and his will. Abner is simply acting like those in Jesus’ parable who said, “We do not want this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14).

King David now met with rebellious opposition. And, this rebellious opposition to the kingdom of God will continue until

Jesus returns.

The rest of the chapter tells us about the conflict between Abner and David's captain, Joab, and their armies. At Abner's suggestion, it was decided that the issue between the two armies was to be settled, not by a conflict between the two armies, but by a conflict between twelve representative men from each army.

Amazingly, when these pairs of twelve men killed each other and so failed to settle the rivalry between the two armies, the two armies themselves clashed and the army of Abner was defeated. Then Asahel, Joab's brother, pursued after Abner and refused to turn aside from following him, Abner turned and killed Asahel. The men of Joab's army, as many as came by the spot where Asahel lay in his blood, stopped and stared in awe, mourning the early death of this young hero, but the remainder of Joab's army kept on pursuing Abner and his men. At sunset, the most loyal men of Abner's fleeing troops gathered around Abner on a hill to make a stand against Joab and his army, but a battle was averted when Joab accepted Abner's appeal for a cessation of hostilities.

Abner then returned to Mahanaim with his army, having lost 360 men in the battle with Joab's forces. Joab and his men having lost 19 men plus Asahel in battle, took Asahel's body and buried it in the tomb of his father in Bethlehem and then marched all that night to Hebron to report to David the following morning.

Let me note verse 32a, which says, **“And they took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem.”** It is no accident that we read of **Bethlehem**. Just as David's reign began in Hebron, here **Bethlehem** points us to the future hope. God's kingdom will eventually come, but not by the failed strategies of Abner and Joab in the days of David. Bethlehem will feature in the future establishment of God's kingdom on earth. For we know that it was in Bethlehem where David's Greater Son, Jesus, would be born. He is the king whom David could only dimly foreshadow.

Let us not become discouraged when we see rebellious opposition against the kingdom of God. The fact is that the kingdom of God *is* growing. Moreover, even though we may be discouraged at the growth of other religions, we know how the story ends. God's kingdom *will* triumph. God's kingdom *will* prevail. And God's kingdom *will* cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the incident of David anointed king in Judah of 2 Samuel 2:1-32, let us make sure that we are members of God's kingdom.

There's a popular surfing video that captures well what it feels like to be part of the growing kingdom of God.

The video starts with famed surfer Laird Hamilton upright on his board. He is holding on to a rope being towed along the water by a speeding jet ski. You sense a massive wave rests just underneath Laird and the jet ski, but the camera is focused in a manner that you can't quite tell how big it is.

As Laird gains speed via the power of the jet ski, you begin to see that he is on the downward slope of the wave. He lets go of the rope and the jet ski moves out of the camera's view. The focus is on Laird alone. As the camera pulls back, back, back, you see the surfer for what he is—a mere speck on a wave so enormous it defies comprehension. You realize that Laird is standing on the crest of a 65-foot breaker. The wave curls and the surfer zooms down its face, propelled by the wall of water crashing around him, exhilarated by the ride of a lifetime.²

Like the wave, God's kingdom is on the move. It is growing, and it is enormous beyond our comprehension. We join God's kingdom by trusting in Jesus and repenting of our sin. Let us be sure then that we are members of the kingdom of God. Amen.

² See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2009/october/6101909.html>.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
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