

Absalom Commits Treason

Call to Worship: Psalm 2

1st Scripture: Luke 20:1-19

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 15:1-12

Hymn #89- *Come Thou Almighty King*

Hymn Insert- *Blessed Be Your Name*

Hymn #81- *A Mighty Fortress*

Introduction:

With the help of Joab, Absalom has finally been able to see his father, the king, for the first time in five years. But, we already get the sense that David's troubles with Absalom, are not yet over. The vain description of his appearance, would seem to indicate that he was anything but repentant for his gross sin, and far from grateful for the pardon, which his father has granted him. In our text for this morning, this suspicion will be confirmed. Here, we will find Absalom, craftily organizing a conspiracy against his father, so that he might steal the kingdom from him. This will ultimately lead to the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy, concerning David (because of David's sin), and the great downfall and judgment of Absalom.

I. Absalom Steals the Hearts of the People (vs. 1-6)

Already the talk of the nation, because of his good looks, and his admirable appearance, Absalom gradually worked his way into the hearts of the people. The utter craftiness of his overall treasonous plan, was so well organized and premeditated, that we not only get a greater appreciation for the way in which, he had earlier, patiently organized the murder of his brother Amnon, but furthermore, we cannot help but see a clear semblance of satan himself, in Absalom. In a very negative and wicked sense, this scheme was very well calculated, carefully planned and profoundly brilliant. This was nothing short of satanic wisdom, on the part of Absalom, and the cursed sense of his horrible death, would further seem to confirm this. Suffice it to say that, Absalom was no dummy here. God does indeed frustrate his plan, but this young man was as cunning as the serpent, in the execution of this overthrow.

Note some of the very calculated ways, by which he carefully maneuvered the kingdom into his own grip:

1) He surrounded himself with royalty (beyond that of a prince), and cast this royal presence (and aura) of himself, before the people, continually (vs. 1). He would have easily been visualized as the royal successor, to the "now aged David's" throne, and then some.

Notice, he "provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him." He was more than "someone"; he was more than a prince; He was the highest presentation of royalty. Throw the stellar looks into the equation, and you have an open door into the hearts of the people.

2) He took advantage of the present weaknesses of his father's kingdom. David was older now. He had suffered great hardship and turmoil, especially within his own family. Justice was lacking, or at the very least, not moving swiftly enough. David was not the dominant and animated warrior, who went in and out among the people, as he had done in his earlier years. Times have changed. People were growing dissatisfied and discontent, and they were tempted toward a desire for fresh vibrancy and change. And Absalom knew, and took advantage of this. Rather than help strengthen his father's kingdom, he used these weaknesses, as a means of pushing forth his own agenda. How did he do this? Let me summarize verses 2-5:

He would get up early in the morning, and stand before the gate, leading to the king's palace. And whenever someone would arrive there, seeking justice over any given matter, Absalom would engage them, knowing that they would be delayed and put off, when seeking help from the king.

As an "icebreaker," he would simply call out to the traveller, "Where are you from?" And when the person told him what city he was from (in Israel), he would converse with him, flatter him, and get him to tell Absalom about his particular case. Once Absalom obtained that information, even without hearing the other side on the matter (because, justice was not his genuine concern), he would favor the individual, telling him that he had a good case, and flatter him into seeing Absalom as a trustworthy and respectable advocate. And then, he would pour on the "manipulation" works. "Well, its truly a shame that the king doesn't have a representative deputy, who could hear you on this matter, because you are definitely in the right. Too bad I have not been made a judge in the land, so that everyone who has such problems could come to me, and I would give them swift justice. Well, good luck then."

And Absalom would use this form of a manipulative strategy, day after day, on numerous subjects of the kingdom, so that he could gain support, from all over Israel. It was his deceptive "grass roots effort," for stealing the kingdom from his father, making his father look inept, uncaring and unworthy of the crown, while making himself look capable, concerned, and worthy of the crown. It got to the point where people would come and bow down before him, such that,

like the pope of our own day, he would put out his hand to the people, and then lean forward to bless and honor them with his kiss. And, as he did this, day after day, for four years, he gained a large following, ultimately stealing the hearts of the people, away from the king.

Again, the patience of Absalom, in the exercising of his crafty plan, is satanically profound. Remember, he waited two full years, before arranging his hit on his brother Amnon. And throughout that time, he kept his heart in check, speaking neither good nor bad to (or about) his brother, so that, when the time came, his vengeful design, would be totally unexpected. And now, here, he patiently and diligently takes hold of the hearts of the people. There was no rush to the fast track for Absalom. In fact, in the opposite sense, if, we as Christians, could translate that energy and resolve, into a righteous diligence, in our commitment to Christ and the expansion of His kingdom, this church would be exploding in growth and prosperity!

Well, needless to say then, Absalom stole the hearts of the people, readying himself to enact "step two" of his devious plan. The people were dissatisfied with David. The people believed that Absalom was truly concerned for them, and could better serve their personal interests. And now, Absalom could tighten all of the loose strings, and formulate his tapestry of treason!

II. Absalom's Treason (vs. 7-12)

After *four* years [from the time Absalom and David were reunited--explain possible copyist error of *forty* here]...after four years of flattering and swindling the king's subjects, Absalom moved into phase two of his plan. He tells the king that while he was living in exile, at Geshur, he had made a vow to God, stating that, if God had brought him back to Jerusalem, he would offer peace offerings at Hebron, as a means of serving, honoring, and giving thanks to God, for His kindness. And so, he now wanted to honor that supposed vow. And the king allowed him to go in peace.

Now, obviously Absalom was lying about this obligation, so as to strategize his way to the throne. Hebron was not only Absalom's place of birth, where he could easily obtain the favor of the people, but furthermore, it was the ideal place for Absalom to set up his reign, at least, until he was able to displace his father, and his father's loyalists from Jerusalem. Remember, David himself, reigned at Hebron, for seven and a half years, when he ruled over Judah alone (2 Sam. 5:5).

And so, having been granted permission from the king, to go to Hebron, he then sent out spies throughout all of the tribes of Israel, so as to gather further support for Absalom's reign, and to proclaim his dominion, at the signal of the blaring trumpets. Trumpet blowers would be set up in all of the regions, where they would be prepared to play aloud, in unison, at a designated time, in accordance with the conspiracy. And then, the spies would shout aloud, "Absalom reigns in Hebron!" The many, who had already supported Absalom, would quickly join in the celebration, and those who remained, would probably follow suit, figuring they had no choice in the matter.

Absalom had also taken two other critical steps, to help solidify his plan. First, he had invited two hundred respectable men from Jerusalem, to go with him, to fulfill his vow. Now, this large group, had no idea that they were being used as a part of Absalom's conspiracy, but he invited them for at least two reasons:

1) It gave the appearance that Absalom had the support of a large following of very influential people, as he traveled to Hebron with them. The ones following him, thinking they were merely accompanying him on his journey to fulfill his vow, appeared to be conspiring with him and supporting him, in the establishing of his throne in Hebron.

2) These two hundred men, would have been hard pressed to remain faithful to Absalom, once he had gotten to Hebron. For the security of their own future, in what appeared to be the successful setting up of a new kingdom, they would probably not want to take the risk of going back to support David, once at Hebron.

Crafty? Yes. Cunning? Yes. Brilliant, unto an evil end? Yes. And so, all of the chips were falling in place for Absalom.

And finally, a last critical step, involved his securing of the support of Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, who was probably the wisest counselor in all of Israel! We will see, later on, that his counsel had never failed. Not only, would this have provided Absalom with a significant source of wisdom, for establishing his kingdom; not only, would he probably have had many significant connections, which he could have transferred over to the support of Absalom, but furthermore, he knew David very well, and would, therefore, be well equipped to help Absalom utterly defeat David. [*Historically, some say he was Bathsheba's grandfather, and wanted to get back at David, for all that he had done to Bathsheba and Uriah. I cannot verify this, one way or the other. Whatever the case, as we will soon see, his actions here, were

treasonous, and contrary to the moral will of God]. And so, while Absalom was offering his peace offerings at Hebron, he had called for Ahithophel, who came to him there. And his support base was now well intact!

With all of this in motion, we can conclude this section, with the final sentence, given in verse 12, "And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number." The plan was coming together well, and with the help of all assigned parties, Absalom was more and more, securing the kingdom for himself.

III. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Having worked through the text, brethren, let us now close, by considering a few concluding thoughts and applications:

1) Brethren, note again, the power of pride in the heart of man. What could ever tempt someone, who had everything that Absalom had, to want more, and to covet the position of his own father? What could bring a man to the point that he would desire to rob his own father of his crown; the one, who had brought him into this world, and the one, who had graciously pardoned him of a capital offense crime?

What could tempt a powerful and mighty angel; one given the very gift of angelic life and glory, to find discontentment right there, coveting the position of his eternal Creator?

What could ever, even within an eternal time span, tempt a most privileged being, fearfully and wonderfully fashioned after the very image of his God and Father, to rebel against His Creator, and to eat a piece of fruit from one forbidden tree, in a Garden full of approved trees, covered with perfect tasting fruit?

Is not the answer to all of these questions, the same? Pride! You see, brethren, at the very root of Absalom's "kingdom treason," against his father David, was a coveted "cosmic treason" against his eternal God. It is a satanic rebellion, after the image of the father of the fall, satan! "For God knows that when you eat of it, you will become like Him..."

Friends, see the deceptive, wicked, treasonous, power of pride, here on display, in the scheming of Absalom. And now, realize that every time you covet the praises of men; every time you "well up" with inner bitterness, when someone else betters you in some way; every time you fail to give God glory for even your minutest achievements (let alone the great ones), you march to the same orders, to which Absalom has marched here.

And yet, if you are a Christian, Christ has redeemed you from the penalty of this, and He is, in the very process of delivering you from its power! If you find yourself, not perfectly, but in some sincere sense, genuinely concerned for the glory of Christ and His kingdom, be encouraged friend. For, there is a power at work in you, far beyond your own natural reach, which is carrying you in this direction. Your fallen makeup can never, sincerely, lead you to be jealous for the glory of Christ! Only the power of the Holy Spirit, who creates in you a new heart; a heart that can discern and lay hold of the cross, can create such a desire within you! Our pride, brethren, makes Goliath look like a Smurf, when considering the greatness and power of it. And only the Son of God can conquer it!

But, while it has no power over our ultimate destiny, and while it can no longer enslave us, it still breathes within us, doesn't it? And so, let the ugliness of its display, here in Absalom, convince us (all the more) to strangle the life out of it, every time it wells up in us! And if you don't sense its continuing presence within you, I wonder, "Are you in the same battle, that the rest of us are in?" I think that the humblest people, tend to be those, who are most aware of the very real presence of pride in them.

2) Brethren, let us also see in Absalom, the natural tendency of our flesh, to take advantage of other's weaknesses for our own advancement. And let us be warned against it. Love, would much rather serve to strengthen the hands that have grown weak, rather than find any personal advantage by it.

One of our critical responsibilities to the body of Christ, is to help strengthen the parts that are weak, and to further encourage those parts that are strong. The Lord desires our prosperity as a body, and not merely as individuals, and as individual parts, we ought to covet the health and prosperity of the whole body, unto the glory of the Head, Christ. The natural man loves the weaknesses and shortcomings of others; it makes him feel better about himself, and he strives to advance by those very means. But, not so in the church, brethren! When one part hurts, we all hurt! When one part falls, we all feel it! When each part is healthy, we are overjoyed, and more healthy ourselves, because of it!

Could not Absalom have invested that great mind for planning, which he had, in the direction of seeking to help sure up, and prosper his father's kingdom and cause, rather than advance himself by the collapse of it? Oh brethren, if this is all about Christ, then it is all about His body; His church...the very apple of His eye! And we would do well; we could be certain

that we would do right; that we would have no regret at the end of our lives, were we to pour our entire lives into advancing the cause and health of His church! There are weaknesses here...strengthen them! We have weaknesses...strengthen and push us forward! Look around...get to know THIS body; spend time with her, study her, be united to her outwardly as you are (in Christ) spiritually; wash her feet; pour yourself into her; follow the example of Christ and die to yourself for her! [The "White Blood Cell" illustration, of how it dies, to preserve the rest of the body from foreign intrusions].

3) Lastly, friends, let me ask you this morning, are you a servant of Christ and His Kingdom, or are you, with Absalom, in rebellion against your King? You see, if you are serving your own lusts and purposes; if you are not marching to the orders of Christ and His commands, then you are committing the worst form of treason, imaginable. Do you see that? This is Christ's world and His Kingdom! And you are either with Him, or against Him. There is no "in between." There is no neutral zone or middle ground. The devil owns those territories, and he has some of his greatest servants, serving him, right there, and they don't even realize it.

Are you building *your* kingdom or *Christ's*? You see, friends, what Absalom doesn't realize, in all of his brilliant and crafty scheming, is that, while he can outdo David, he cannot outdo God. God knows all things and God reigns over all things. And Absalom didn't plan for, what will happen, in a very short time, at the climax of his very short-lived success. He will be cursed, killed, and hung on a tree. But you see, that doesn't have to be you! There is a Savior, who was cursed, killed and hung on a tree for sinners, and He is The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God! And He died for sinners; even of the worst kind. Repent of your sins; turn to Him, for His mercy, and He will pardon you, and bring you into the sphere of His eternal grace and favor! The way of rebellion against GOD, is the way of utter foolishness, and eternal regret! Do you see that? Be reconciled to God, through Christ Jesus...today...right now, before it is too late! Satan, who is far more powerful than you, has initiated the path of rebellion against God, and he cannot possibly win! In fact, he has already lost...and his days of tempting and tormenting, are numbering down very quickly. Will you continue to follow the path of a failed rebel, or will you humble yourself, and bow the knee to the risen and reigning Christ, who must win the battle!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25