

The Essentials: Samuel

Session 6 – 2 Samuel 18: 4-33

Opening Collect

Together: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Watch Video

Read: 2 Samuel 18: 4-33

Discussion:

1. Absalom is not simply an external threat seeking to overthrow David; he is David's son.
How does that impact the way you understand Absalom's attempt to take over the kingdom?
2. Since David's moral failure with Bathsheba, his rule has been plagued with struggle. What about this story reveals God's faithfulness to David? And what about this story reveals David's struggle to follow God?
3. Immediately after our reading, Joab, the commander of the army, rebukes David's sorrow. Is David's lament understandable or inappropriate? What might it say about David?
4. The death of Absalom is both good, in that it stops the threat to overthrow Israel; and it is also bad, in that Absalom is David's son. Have you ever had an experience where God's faithfulness was also a very hard?

Check in and Closing Prayer

2 Samuel 18: 4-33

The king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood at the side of the gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands. ⁵The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom. ⁶So the army went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. ⁷The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. ⁸The battle spread over the face of all the country, and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword. ⁹Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging^[l] between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. ¹⁰A man saw it and told Joab, "I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." ¹¹Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a belt." ¹²But the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not raise my hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'For my sake protect the young man Absalom!'" ¹³On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life^[d] (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof." ¹⁴Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with you." He took three spears in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak. ¹⁵And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him. ¹⁶Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the troops. ¹⁷They took Absalom, threw him into a great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Meanwhile all the Israelites fled to their homes. ¹⁸Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar by his own name; it is called Absalom's Monument to this day. ¹⁹Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run and carry tidings to the king that the LORD has delivered him from the power of his enemies." ²⁰Joab said to him, "You are not to carry tidings today; you may carry tidings another day, but today you shall not do so because the king's son is dead." ²¹Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed before Joab and ran. ²²Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said again to Joab, "Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, seeing that you have no reward^[d] for the tidings?" ²³"Come what may," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain and outran the Cushite. ²⁴Now David was sitting between the two gates. The sentinel went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he looked up he saw a man running alone. ²⁵The sentinel shouted and told the king. The king said, "If he is alone, there are tidings in his mouth." He kept coming and drew near. ²⁶Then the sentinel saw another man running, and the sentinel called to the gatekeeper and said, "See, another man running alone!" The king said, "He also is bringing tidings." ²⁷The sentinel said, "I think the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok." The king said, "He is a good man and comes with good tidings." ²⁸Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, "All is well!" He prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king." ²⁹The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" Ahimaaz answered, "I saw a great tumult when the king's servant Joab sent your servant, but I do not know what it was." ³⁰The king said, "Turn aside, and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. ³¹Then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." ³²The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to do you harm be like that young man." ³³^[e]The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept, and as he went he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"