

April 13

2 Samuel 14, 15, 16; Psalm 3

Hi everyone, this is Klint Bitter with your Project 4:4 daily accelerator for April 13th.

Our reading for today was in 2 Samuel, chapters 14-16 and concluded with Psalm 3.

David didn't allow Absalom into his presence, though he was back in Jerusalem, for 2 years. To get that audience with the king, Absalom has to scheme and bully Joab. Finally, David grants Absalom an audience. When the king kissed Absalom, it symbolized forgiveness and the restoration of royal favor.

It's worth noting that Absalom's sin story is distinctly different than David's. When David sinned with Bathsheba, he confessed, repented and received forgiveness *from God*. When Absalom sinned in killing Amnon, he sought the forgiveness of his father and never really repented.

This has me thinking about the way people around us can help us either hide from or turn to God. If I find forgiveness from those around me, but I haven't sought forgiveness from God or repented, of what value is that? It's like sweeping the dirt under the rug. Sure, the house looks clean and feels clean. But you're sure to trip over that lump under the rug...it'll come back at you.

This is reminding me that if I'm seeking human forgiveness *in stead of* God's forgiveness, there's a real problem. And we have no reason not to seek God's forgiveness, because we know he's a good God longing to forgive.

The rest of our reading for today walks us through the depths of Absalom's twisted heart. There's something seriously "off" here that caused the heir to the throne to rebel instead of waiting until his father died. The story here shows us that this was not the seizure of an opportune moment, Absalom planned and plotted his uprising. While there's no direct, biblical evidence, I can't help but wonder if this was part of the plan all the way back when Amnon was murdered. In any case, Absalom's betrayal was carefully plotted out.

I'm greatly indebted to the work of John Soper who has provided much of the source material I've used in preparing these commentaries. Here is another place that I agree with his conclusion: After reading this, I can't believe that David was surprised by the rebellion. I think we could make an argument either way, it just seems to me that David is too wise, too sharp to let this plotting and politicking go on just beneath his nose and be oblivious to it.

This leads me to wonder: why didn't David do anything about it? Why did he let Absalom go to Hebron? Why did he say, "Go in peace."?

We saw the best of David when he was a fugitive pursued by Saul. In that “chapter” of David’s life, we see this extreme trust – or reliance – on God’s sovereignty. David was not going to take the kingship by his authority, but by God’s. He trusted God’s plan and sovereign authority. David refused to lift a finger against Saul in those days; choosing instead to see God choose who would be king and when.

This attitude of David’s shows up in two big places during today’s reading.

The first is when Zadok, the priest brought the Ark of the Covenant out of Jerusalem – following David. This would have been a statement to all of Israel about whose side God was on (and whose side the priests were on). But, David sends the Ark back to Jerusalem saying, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the Lord’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.”

This is a stunning show of incredible faith, guts and strength. I don’t know about you, but if I were under siege as a king, I think I’d be building support all around me – from every place I can get it. But David’s trust in God pushed him further into submission. He was not about to presume upon God’s plan, but would trust God to do ‘whatever seems good to him.’

Again, we see this same attitude in the exchange with Shimei. Shimei was a relative of Saul who took David’s departure from the city as an opportunity to throw stones and curse David. One of the king’s men offers to “solve” the problem but David stops him. He’s essentially saying, “we don’t know the mind of God, maybe God put him up to this because he’s choosing Absalom as the next king.”

This kind of submission is incredible. As we read this, we’re in the midst of a culture that is – in many ways – obsessed with vengeance and revenge. If this were a plot to the latest blockbuster movie, we’d be thinking, “go get ‘em David...give him what he deserves.” And if we saw that character exact his revenge and take back the throne, we’d probably rejoice.

I’m deeply challenged by this. So often I take “God’s plan” into my own hands. And if I’m honest, it’s not because I’m being treated as poorly as David, but because I have a trust problem. Trusting God in the deep, difficult places of our lives is not easy. It wasn’t easy for David, the Scripture tells us that he “continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot.”

What’s the road of trust God is calling you to walk today? Maybe you’re in the midst of a relationship gone wrong. Or maybe you’re being mistreated in the market place and revenge seems to be the right next step. Maybe you’ve been betrayed by a friend or – even worse – a family member.

Whatever it is, don’t expect it to be easy, without opposition. May you, as David affirmed in Psalm 3, hold firmly to the truth that God hasn’t left your side and it’s He who sustains you. Whether you’re climbing the mountain barefoot and in tears or

on a quiet walk down one of life's beaches – may your trust in our good God increase.

This has been Klint Bitter, encouraging you to be marked by a deep trust in the one true God.