

Solomon Rises¹

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Our passage today is part of what we call the succession narrative of Solomon; i.e. how he makes his rise to the throne.

There was a small retailer who refused to sell his property and business to a huge box chain that had rolled into town. They bought up all the land around him but still he refused, so they built anyway all the way around him. His little shop was right there on the street in the middle of the façade of the newly built box store – surrounded on both sides. On the day of the grand opening of the new box store the man hung a huge banner across the top of the door of his store that read MAIN ENTRANCE.

Sometimes the little guy wins.

In the Text

The thing we have to understand is that Solomon was that little guy. He wasn't in consideration for the throne at all from the point of view of his fellow Israelites – no one had dreamt that the son of the Bathsheba, the wife of infamy, the former wife of Uriah, the wife of that scandal, would have a claim to the throne at all. He was, to put it mildly, a dark horse in the race to succeed David.

Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba, and went to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he named him Solomon. The Lord loved him, and sent a message by the prophet Nathan; so he named him Jedidiah, because of the Lord. (2 Sam 12:24)

That is all 2 Samuel says about Solomon.

Now there is a lot at stake here because we all remember the promise God made to David: ***When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom...and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*** (2 Samuel 7:12-14).

The angel Gabriel says to Mary of her son:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). This is how the story comes full circle from David to Jesus, and this passage today is about the lineage between the two.

In our story today David is in his last days and the oldest son and heir to the throne, the crown prince we might say, was Adonijah, the fourth son born to David while in Hebron. ***He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom*** (1:6b).

Even though Adonijah is in line to succeed David, like Absalom last week, he also just can't sit still and wait and live in righteousness. Rather, as David was now old and in his last days: ***Adonijah son of***

¹ The I and II Book of Kings, originally one volume, pick up the history of the monarchy at the death of David and the rise of Solomon, to the Babylonian Exile in 587 BCE, so about a 450-year period. Although the book is a political history, the Oxford Study Bible (p. 423) says, "the theme is the moral and religious failure that eventually led to the loss of national identity and autonomy (2 Kings 25).

Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king”; he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him (1 Kings 1:5).

Here we go again! This time it is also quite dramatic. He gathers his supporters at En-rogel in the Kidron Valley right next to the city walls of Jerusalem. They are having this party with all the king’s sons and sacrificing sheep and it’s all celebration time his self-coronation as king.

But... they didn’t invite Nathan the prophet of the Lord, David’s main man. Nor... did they invite the outcast Solomon (1 Kings 1:10). In fact, there is no record of David promising this to Bathsheba in all of 1 and 2 Samuel. His birth to Bathsheba is the only reference (2 Samuel 12:24, and 5:14). We only learn of the promise in 1 Chron 28.²

I think David had to be reminded of his promise to Solomon by Nathan and Bathsheba. He was, after all, seventy and was **old and advanced in years... and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm** (1 Kings 1:1). Wait a minute, King David was my age and I can’t get warm and I can’t remember stuff!

Nathan hears about Adonijah’s self-coronation and realizes that this is a death sentence for Bathsheba and Solomon, and goes to Bathsheba and he sends her into the aged King David and instructs her to say, **‘Did you not, my lord the king, swear to our servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?’ ... otherwise my son and I will be counted offenders** (1 Kings 1:13, 21).

In one of the more entertaining scenes of the Books of Samuel, competing parties are going on about 5-600 meters apart, one at En-rogel and one at Gihon spring; both are just outside the walls of the city in the Kidron Valley. This all transpires in a matter of a couple of hours.

Just down the valley as Adonijah is wrapping up his celebration, they hear the people of the city blowing the trumpet at Gihon just up the valley. They **blew the trumpet and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!” And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise. Adonijah and all the guests who were with him hear it as they finished feasting** (1 Kings 1:41). The party quickly broke up as people realized Adonijah was now out of favour with the king!

From the Text

What can we learn from all of this for today? Two things I suggest:

- One is that all of God’s work among us arises from humility.
- Two, the most important thing about God’s forgiveness is that it must flow beyond us to those around us.

I don’t really follow sports much. But when it comes time to the big championship game all I have to hear is that this team or that team is the underdog. The odds are against them with the bookies and they are going to be sent on their way by the favoured team. Suddenly I’m rooting for the little guy. I just want them to win because no one thinks they will. It’s awesome when they do!

² Chronicles is thought to be a derivative text from Samuel and Kings assembled later in Israel’s history. That Solomon’s rise to power was promised publicly by David may be an attempt to read this development back into the story at a later time and justify the rise of Solomon.

It seems to me like God specializes in surprising us with blessings that come from the place that is least expected. It is always the underdog in the story of the Bible! Moses, exiled as a criminal, sitting in a dusty field tending sheep far from his home and people, sees God in a burning bush. David, a young man tending sheep in a field and not even invited to the meeting about who will be king, is anointed with oil by Samuel. The baby born in a stable out back.

And now, we come to the rise of Solomon. As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago from Matthew 1 genealogy, he has also come from a lowly place, ***And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah*** (1:6). The son of a terrible scandal that marred the king's legacy.

And against all expectations the son of Bathsheba is designated the heir to the throne of David. And the great (14x) grandson of Solomon, the son of infamy, is the Messiah of God. Bathsheba, the woman so wronged and torn from her home, living hopelessly in the house of the king, becomes the Queen Mother of the Messiah.

We learn from this that no matter how things might appear, God is the God of hope and blessing from the quarter least expected.

When I left my job at 30 and went off to do a masters and a PhD. I got a job at a tiny, failing college in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I don't think anybody envied me, except that I got a job in a field where there were very few to be had. But I've been able to be part of the establishment of two new Christian universities in Canada, Ambrose and Booth; I got to resurrect Campus Manitoba in my time in government, and... I got to come here!

If you are a young person today and your life is filled with uncertainty and the odds are stacked against you, just walk with God in life. God specializes in taking things from humble origins to places of unexpected blessing. But you must walk with God.

And so the genealogy goes along from the scandal of Solomon to the scandal of Joseph the husband of Mary, whose son Jesus was born in a stable not a palace, who is called the Messiah.³ The creed says that this Jesus "was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures." Never give up your hope in God.

The second thing I think we can learn and hopefully apply somehow is this:

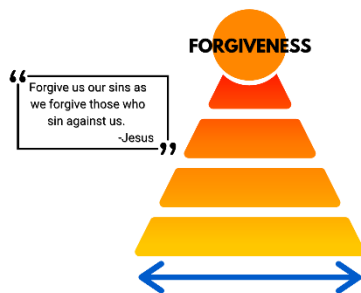
We've been examining the sin and repentance of David. But what about those around him whose lives were destroyed by his sins?

Imagine what Bathsheba's life had been like in the King's house. How did the other wives and concubines look at her? She was the woman who brought the king into shame they said, no doubt. 'She is the cause of it all!' they probably said. It is the same thing we see today where the victim of sexual abuse is blamed for causing it. Her life must have been a misery.

Solomon as the heir apparent?! No.

³ The genealogy of Jesus in Luke does not mention Solomon, but does mention Nathan as the son of David. "Luke has avoided the royal line from Solomon to Jeconiah ... [perhaps] because of the oracles of Jer 22:28-30..." (Luke, Fitzmyer, Vol 1 p. 501; see 2 Sam 5:14 for the reference to Nathan that we find in Luke 3:31). Matthew 1:17: ***So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, [h] fourteen generations.***

What is beautiful about this story is that her life was redeemed by the grace of God. And it came through the restoration that King David made to her at the end of his days.



David’s sin in the matter was “put away” when he repented we learned last week. This is the vertical aspect to forgiveness. God forgives us. That is wonderful.

But the most important thing that comes from the forgiven life is not just our salvation, but also how forgiveness flows laterally out from us to others; what I will call “lateral forgiveness.” David, in fact, did restore what he had taken from Bathsheba. She was, in the end, not only justified and restored, but she became the mother of the Messiah. And I hope that all this brought forgiveness for David into her life – the most difficult thing of all for her.

The vertical aspect of forgiveness has to do with our relationship with God (the First Table of the Law, commandments 1-4). The lateral aspect of forgiveness has to do with our relationships with others (the Second Table of the Law, commandments 5-10).

We see the importance of lateral forgiveness as Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer, ...***forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us*** – here we see the vertical and the lateral. It is the most complete thing.

Last week we looked at the portrait of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt (Gen please put that painting up again please). One of the most important lessons from that story comes from the oldest son who cannot forgive the younger son who wasted the family inheritance in a foreign land.⁴

On July 2nd the statue of James Cook is tipped into the Inner Harbour and a few hours later someone torches the totem at the top of the Malahat. I know these are complicated issues, but this is what happens when there is not forgiveness among us.

Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive his brother or sister as many as seven times, Jesus answered, no... seventy-seven times (Matt 18:22).⁵ We must, Jesus said, ***forgive your brother or sister from you heart.***

This is today’s lesson for the *Journey of the Heart*. This week, let the forgiveness of God that has flowed into your life, flow into the lives of others.

⁴ He says I’ve served you faithfully all my life, ***But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!*** And the father says, ...***we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was lost and has been found.*** The ability to pass forgiveness that we have received from God along to others is the real evidence of the life of forgiveness.

⁵ In the parable of the Unforgiving Slave the king forgave the slave 10,000 talents, an astronomical amount, when he begged the debt be forgiven. Then that same slave went out and demanded that his fellow slave who owed him a day’s wages pay his debt and threw him into prison till he could pay. ***Pay what you owe!*** (Matt 18:23-35)

August 15, 2021 ***Solomon Rises*** 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14; Psalm 111; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

Thanks be to God. Amen.