

**Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Adult Bible Class
May 31, 2020**

After God's Own Heart - King David

In our country the transition from one government to another is generally a well-ordered process carried out with respect for all involved. That was not the case in the kingdom of Israel following the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan at the battle against the Philistines at Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31). Saul's death created a power vacuum and even though David had been anointed in a private ceremony some years before, his ascension to the throne was not guaranteed, at least humanly speaking.

The opening chapters of 2 Samuel tell us of the years of intrigue and maneuverings which finally led to David being crowned over the whole country of Israel. Here are some of the high points:

1. After Saul's death, David prays for direction and is publicly anointed as king of the tribe of Judah. He held this title for 7 years. (2 Samuel 1)
2. Abner, commander of Saul's army, appoints Ish-Bosheth, son of Saul, to be King of Israel.
3. A lengthy battle breaks out between the family of Saul and the family of David.
4. As Saul's family weakens Abner defects to David.
5. David's commanders are not so sure of the sincerity of Abner's allegiance, so they murder him.
6. David mourns for Abner
7. Two brothers who are leaders of Ish-Bosheth's army mutiny against him and kill him.
8. David becomes king of all Israel. (2 Samuel 5)

The Lord's Anointed

The contrast between David and Saul could not be starker. Saul was a man addicted to power. His jealousy is undiminished and several times he tries to kill David. He is desperate to hang on to power even though he knows God has rejected him and chosen another to assume the throne.

David, on the other hand, has two golden opportunities to kill Saul and is encouraged by his soldiers to do just that. Yet, he will not do it. As evil as Saul had become, he was still the Lord's anointed. In fact when a soldier comes to tell David he killed Saul after his failed suicide attempt, David executes the soldier for killing the Lord's anointed. The same fate awaits the brothers who mutiny against Ish-Bosheth.

Why is David so reluctant to seize power? Simply put, he realizes that authority is not to be grasped, but is bestowed. It is a gift from God, not to be seized even by one who is anointed to be king one day.

We see the basics of David's understanding of kingship in 1 and 2 Samuel. A more complete understanding comes from two Psalms written by David reflecting on what it means to be king.

Psalms 2 (selected verses)

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ...
He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,
“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 110 (selected verses)

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”

The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.
He will execute judgment among the nations,

From these two psalms we see the proper roles and relationship of the king:

- The king is the representative of God’s rule on earth
- The king’s rule is not just national, but has a global dimension
- The king is totally reliant on God
- The king is like a priest – he is the mediator between the nation and God
- The king shepherd’s and protects the people. They are blessed when they take refuge in him.

The King’s Agenda

Given this understanding of what it means to be a king, we understand David’s first goals for his reign – the capture of Jerusalem and the bring the Ark of the Covenant to the Holy City.

Jerusalem was never fully conquered by the people of Israel when they entered the promised land some 400 years earlier. It was not a big city, occupying just 11 acres and had only 3,500 citizens. However, it was a royal city and staunchly defended by the Jebusites who lived there. Capturing and holding the city was a great victory for the new king. It allowed him to have his capital in a strategic location where he could consolidate power and rule the 12 tribes of Israel

Taking the city also allowed him to begin to reform the worship life of the people of Israel. The ark resided at Shiloh prior to the reign of Saul when it was lost to the Philistines who captured then

returned the ark following a plague. When it was returned to Israel it resided at Kiriath Jearim for 20 years until David begins to move it to Jerusalem.

The move to Jerusalem comes in two stages. First, the Ark is moved by 2 of the sons of the Levite who had been its custodian. However, when one of the oxen pulling the cart stumbles one of the sons reaches out to steady the ark and is immediately struck down. David hits the pause button on his plans. After some further research he discovers the ark is to be carried by Levites and a group of appropriate individuals is gathered and the Ark comes, at last, to Jerusalem.

With the Ark in Jerusalem David leads a reformation of sorts, carefully rooting worship in the God's Word revealed to Moses. So, for example, Levites ministered before the Ark and cared for it. Priests began to offer burnt offerings regularly, morning and evening. Music also became a part of the worship of God's people.

The Ark was "sacramental." A visible sign of God's presence with the people and that real presence is at the heart of our worship yet today!

So, What Does All This Mean For Us?

Once again there is a temptation to make all of this into a morality story about how patience and humility win out in the end. To be sure David, does exhibit these virtues, but as with previous episodes in his life David there is something much more profound going on here.

There are at least two big points of contact between these ancient events and our lives today.

1. The Kingdom of God – Jesus comes to be the ultimate king of the family of David. Both Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 were written to celebrate the coronation of the Davidic Kings. However, they are also prophetic Psalms that point to Christ. All that was true of the early king's relationship to God is even more true about Christ's relationship to the Father. Also as with David, the kingdom is achieved through humility.
 - Acts 2:29-36
 - Philippians 2:6-11
 - St. Matthew 28:18-20
2. The Place of Worship in the life of God's People – David brought the ark into Jerusalem and worship became the centre of the life of the nation of Israel. So also in the kingdom of God. The Divine Service, the gathering of God's people around Word and Sacrament, is the beating heart of the kingdom. Like the people of Israel who "met" with God at the Ark, so we "meet" God as we come together week by week. He is really present in his Word, in our Baptism and at the Table.