

The Righteous and Loving King

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Date: 18 February 2018

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[0 : 00] page 304 in the Bibles in front of you. And it's this book focused on Israel's greatest king, King David. Here he is. I've got a discreet picture of him from Michelangelo's statue there. Okay. And I think it's fair to say David is one of the greatest men who has ever lived in world history. Very little doubt about that. A man of astonishing courage, amazing integrity, and yet terrible flaws as well, as we'll see as the book progresses.

He's a fascinating man. And so you can read to Samuel on one level just as an incredible true story about an incredible man from history. But of course, it's in the Bible as God's Word.

We've just said that it's the Word of the Lord. It's the Spirit speaking to us today. And that's a bit harder, I guess, to connect. What's this got to do with us living so far on and so far away? So let's pray and let's ask for God to help us hear this as a word of His Spirit for us.

Some words from 1 Samuel. There is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides you. There is no rock like our God. So Father God, as we come to your Word now and read of events 3,000 years ago, we ask that you will graciously help us to hear your voice and know you as the Holy One, the wise one, the rock. For Jesus' name's sake. Amen.

Well, what kind of leader do we want? You might have seen in the news last week that there was a big gathering of Commonwealth leaders in London. And one of the things on the agenda for them was who's going to lead the Commonwealth when the Queen dies. It's not hereditary being head of the Commonwealth. And so they're discussing who they want to be their leader after the Queen has gone.

[2 : 02] And I suppose you can see them asking that because even if you're a Republican, it's hard not to like the Queen. She's extremely popular around the world. But when she's gone, what will they do?

Of course, our monarch in the United Kingdom is constitutional. She doesn't actually have a great deal of power. Perhaps one of the reasons we don't mind her. But that means that we focus our energy on the leaders of our political parties. And last week, there was this story about Jeremy Corbyn and did he meet with a communist spy? You might have seen that. And he said that was a smear and not true. And there were rumors about him. And then Theresa May headed off to meet Chancellor Merkel in Germany. And we're kind of thinking, is she going to manage all of this with Brexit? And we have this love-hate relationship with our leaders. We love to criticize them when anything goes wrong. But really, that's because deep down, we know that we need good leadership.

So what kind of leader do we really need? Who could we really put our hope in as a leader? Well, by the time we get to this point in 2 Samuel, if you're just reading through the Bible, something very significant happens in a very understated way. It happened at the beginning of chapter 2 in verse 4. Chapter 2, verse 4. David is at Hebron and we read this.

Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah. That is hugely significant. And the reason is because if you take a step back and think, what is human history all about? It's no exaggeration to say that human history is all about God establishing his kingdom. That's what God is doing in the world. Ever since he made the first human beings to be in relationship with him and they rejected him and his kingdom was shattered, God has been at work to establish his kingdom in the world. You can think of God's kingdom as God's people living in God's place, enjoying the blessing of relationship with God.

Now, in 2 Samuel, we're in 1000 BC, 3000 years ago, and God has a people who are his people now, Israel. He's rescued them out of slavery in Egypt. He's brought them into the promised land of Israel.

[4 : 25] And in 1 Samuel, the people asked for a king and they demanded a king and they got this king Saul. But because Saul was kind of the people's choice for king, he has been a nightmare. He's rejected God.

God has condemned him and God has rejected him and God has chosen a different king and that's David. So when in chapter 2, the men of the tribe of Judah, which is one little group within Israel, when they anoint David as king, it's a new dawn. This is the first time in human history that God's chosen king is reigning over some of God's people. It's a very significant moment. It's very small, but it's very significant. And before we get there, in chapter 1 of 2 Samuel, we learn more about God's chosen king. And that is the connection for us with learning more about Jesus by looking at 2 Samuel. Jesus said to the people around him, you earnestly study the scriptures so that by them you may obtain eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me. And four times in today's Bible passage, God's chosen king is called his anointed, which is his Messiah.

Or Christ. King David here is a shadow of his descendant who will come, Jesus Christ. Later on in the book, God promises to David that he's going to give somebody in David's royal line, a future king, the throne of God forever. And so through David, as David is a great model for us of God's ideal king, he is a shadow of what eventually gets fulfilled for us in Jesus' coming. And it teaches us about Jesus, but also about the kingdom that Jesus has come to bring. And if we're people who follow Jesus, we're people in his kingdom today, looking forward to him bringing fully and finally his kingdom on earth, this is what kingdom life looks like with Jesus. So this morning we're going to focus on two big things about God's chosen king. They're in the notice sheet, if you find that helpful. They're things to rejoice in and be inspired by. And the first is that when Saul dies, God's righteous king can't be conned. God's righteous king can't be conned. We're picking up the story after David's had a lot of trouble with Saul. And since chapter 16 of 1 Samuel, we have known as the readers that God has chosen David to be king. He sent Samuel the prophet to anoint David. So we know what's going on. But Saul hates David. David has become a great warrior. He killed Goliath. He's become a commander in the army. Saul has been trying to kill David and he's been on the run. But at the moment they've been separated. I've got a map on the screen. You probably can't quite see the words, but you can see the arrows there. What's happened is that Saul is leading an army from Israel. They've gone up the green arrow to meet the Philistines. They're the red arrow. And they've gone up the left-hand side. And they've met at Jezreel for this big battle. And David has come back down south to this place, Ziklag, at the bottom of the screen, the very bottom. So he's quite a long way away from Saul and the fight that's going on. But Saul's battle goes horrifically wrong for Saul. And Saul and his sons get killed by the Philistines. David doesn't know that yet. He's waiting in the south. He doesn't have news. He's come back to Ziklag, having fought off the Amalekites. And then we read in verse 2 that a messenger arrives. And it doesn't look good. I mean, you can tell as the messenger arrives. Verse 2, on the third day, a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head.

[8 : 18] When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. David asks him what's happened. And in verse 4, we get the news. The men fled from the battle. Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead. So David asks how he knows this. And he says that he was there as he saw Saul struck down. And Saul asked him for help. In verse 8, Saul asked me, who are you?

And Amalekite, I answered. Then he said to me, stand here by me and kill me. I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive. So I stood beside him and killed him because I knew that after he had fallen, he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to you, my Lord. It sounds plausible, doesn't it? The problem is, it's a lie. We know from the previous chapter, 1 Samuel 31, what really happened. Saul was critically wounded in the battle and he fell on his own sword. This Amalekite didn't kill him. Then the Israelites in the region have abandoned their towns and fled. But this Amalekite knows that David doesn't know that. So he's trying to get in early and get some honor from the future king. So he grabs the crown from the battlefield and he heads south for three days. He thinks he can con God's new king. And he says that he's killed Saul, expecting that David will be happy with him for that. As though David is like some human dictator who wants to grasp power from the king. Maybe he's hoping he'll get a reward as the man who finally finished off Saul. But he has made a terrible miscalculation.

The problem is, he has misjudged the character of God's anointed king. David has already spared Saul's life. He had opportunities when Saul was chasing him. At one point, he's hiding in a cave and Saul goes in to take a leak. And David, rather than kill him, just cuts the hem of his robe off to demonstrate he could have killed him. But he won't kill him because he knows that right now, Saul is God's right. He's going to let God be the kingmaker. So he asks another question in verse 13. Where are you from? And he gets the answer, I'm the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite. That reveals to David, this is a man who lives among Israel. He's lived among Israel. So he should have known not to kill Saul. So the verdict comes in verse 14. David asked him, why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? And he has the man executed. The irony in verse 16 is that he is killed for the crime that he said he'd done that he didn't actually do. Verse 16, your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, I killed the Lord's anointed.

[11:19] So what do we learn from this? First of all, we're seeing that God is deeply concerned as to how you treat his Messiah, his chosen king. For all of Saul's failings, even though God wasn't pleased with Saul, at that moment he was still God's messianic king. And this man should have been afraid. As David said, why weren't you afraid? Afraid of God's reaction if you attack his anointed?

And we need to remember that today about God's ultimate Messiah, Jesus. So often our culture mocks Jesus. People around us are not afraid to speak against Jesus. He gets ridiculed. He gets maligned.

But we should tremble to think about how God will treat that response on judgment day. How we treat God's anointed is of first importance to God.

We're also seeing from David's reaction that David is a righteous king. He's one who reigns with justice. God's anointed, God's ideal king will reign with perfect justice.

And that's great news for us because today we live in a world where we long for justice, don't we? We see it all the time. We saw it in the news last week. There were these three billboards placed outside Grenfell Tower.

[12:39] I don't know if you saw that to copy the film that's out, three billboards. And it said, 71 dead, still no arrests. How come? Now, nobody there, I think, is accusing anyone of deliberately killing those people.

But people are concerned there must have been carelessness, perhaps even recklessness. And we yearn for justice in that situation. There was the news of the two British jihadists who were part of this Islamic State torture and murder cell, the Beatles.

They were being captured in Syria. And the relatives of the victims relieved when the defence minister said that they should stand trial in an international court.

We heard about Oxfam, didn't we? Being hauled in front of ministers about what happened in Haiti with these prostitutes. It's not just the prostitution in Haiti. It's the allegation there was a cover-up. Because we long for justice. And we're angered when we hear that there's injustice. And we see here that when God's kingdom is ruled by God's king, justice prevails.

[13:49] It's great news. But personally, we're also seeing that crime doesn't pay when it comes to God's king.

The Amalekite man thought he could hide the truth from God's king. And when you know the full story about it, he looks like a bit of a fool trying this. But how often do we live as though we think we can hide the truth from God's king?

We can hide the truth from one another, can't we? We can hide our own self-centredness and pull the wool over the eyes of the people around us. But we mustn't ever think that we can trick Jesus as to how we really think of him in our hearts.

He warns us in Luke 12, There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

And that means that in God's kingdom, crime doesn't pay. We sometimes hear that phrase, don't we? People get caught, and we say, It just goes to show crime doesn't pay. But the thing is, if everyone really believed that, no one would ever commit any crime, would we?

[15:02] So clearly, lots of the time, lots of us believe crime does pay. Otherwise, we wouldn't do it. And when it comes to breaking God's laws, which we all do, going against his will, sinning, breaking his commands, we do that all day, every day.

We only do that if we believe it's worth it. Every time we sin, we believe a lie that says, This is better for me than keeping God's commands.

We believe that sin pays. And lots of the time, of course, that's because we think we can get away with it. Nobody will find out if I have an affair. It will be a secret.

Or nobody will find out that I'm laying into this person behind their back, slugging them off. It will be a secret. The Amalekite thought that when he came to God's king.

But David's clinical justice shows that in God's kingdom, when God's righteous king is on the throne, you can't con him. He knows what's going on.

[16:07] But that wasn't David's only reaction to the news about Saul's death. So that's our second reflection on the character of God's king. It's that when Saul dies, God's loving king grieves for his people.

The urgency of grief comes in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 1. As soon as he hears the news, he tears his clothes, he mourns, he weeps, he fasts.

And then in the rest of the chapter, when we get this lament, we see not just the urgency of grief, but the discipline of grief. David writing a song to express his sorrow, to process his grief as to what's happened.

And in verse 18, he orders that the song be taught to Israel. It's an important model to us of godly grief, that grief can be overwhelming and paralyzing, and it can also be very long-lasting.

And we need to be patient with people in our church family who are grieving, and not think, oh, surely they've got over it by now. Grief takes a long time to process. But we also see from David's grief, his priorities.

[17:14] One of his main concerns is the honor of God, and what this defeat will do to God's honor among the nations. So he says in verse 20, He doesn't want God's name to be undermined by that.

Just as we, if you're a Christian today, we might look at the condition of the church in our country today, and we see some great churches, but we see some churches that move away from the Bible, where Christians don't really look any different from people around them.

We see churches in decline. And it's easy to become self-righteous about that, and think, oh, well, we're not like that. Whereas the reaction we should have is grief about that.

Grief as to what it says about God, and what happens to his name and his honor when his people do not live distinctive lives under the word of Christ.

But then David moves on, and he grieves for the individuals who have died. The repeated line, if you just look at verse 19, A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel.

[18:35] How the mighty have fallen. Then if you look at verse 25, How the mighty have fallen in battle. And verse 27, How the mighty have fallen. The weapons of war have perished.

Grieving for the people. And this is what we want from our leaders. Again, if you think about Grenfell Tower, when that horrific fire happened, the next day, the Prime Minister was severely criticized because she went to the scene, and you might remember this, she went to the scene, and she went to the emergency services to check they had what they needed, rather than going to the victims and people grieving the loss of their relatives inside.

And she was slammed for that. People were furious. They said she doesn't care. Now, we're told by friends and colleagues of Theresa May, who leapt to her defense, that she was distraught privately about what had happened, but there were security concerns, and she was also trying to check the emergency services had what they needed.

So I think that the criticism of her was probably unfair at the time, but the damage had been done. The impression, this is a leader who doesn't care about her people.

And the problem in our culture today is that we are in a sentimentalized culture, so we don't care so much as a culture to hear that someone was distraught privately. They have to show us that they were very upset.

[19:59] Now, why have we got like that? It's basically because under the surface, we fear that our leaders don't care enough about the people, that they are detached from us.

Well, here in David, we have the model of a leader who does care, tearing his clothes, calling the whole nation to lament, not embarrassed to grieve in public, but he's not being showy.

It's genuine. It's sincere from his heart. And remarkably, after his grief for the people as a whole, his grief focuses in, his sorrow focuses in on Saul.

And his lament for Saul is shockingly kind. When you remember, Saul has been trying to kill him. If you look at verses 23 and 24, Saul and Jonathan, in life, they were loved and admired, and in death, they were not parted.

They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions. Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.

[21 : 06] He's remembering the best of Saul. And part of that is lamenting that Saul, because he made himself David's enemy and because he rejected God, he has faced God's judgment and he's grieving over that.

This is a king who laments the death even of his enemies. Don't we long for a leader like that? And then picture Jesus on a donkey heading into Jerusalem.

The pilgrim crowds are praising him. The children are singing. They're laying palm branches in front of the donkey. But he knows what faces him in the city. And Luke says, As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.

If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes. He's not weeping for what they'll do to him.

He's weeping for them that they will reject him. This is the love God's great Messiah King shows even for the people who reject him.

[22 : 17] If you're here and you're not yet a Christian, I don't know if you've ever thought about this before, that Jesus thinks a lot more of you than you do of him. That every day you spend away from him, he grieves for you.

He is concerned for you. And he longs that you would come home to God through him. Have you ever thought before that that's what Jesus is like?

Because for my money, it is knowing his character that moves us to receive him personally. But the climax of David's lament isn't about his enemy Saul, it's about his friend, Jonathan.

Verse 25. Verse 25. How the mighty have fallen in battle. Jonathan lies slain in your heights. And then you notice the word that appears for the first time in this song?

The song that the whole nation is to sing? I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother. You were very dear to me. Suddenly it's just personal for David.

[23 : 21] I, me. This isn't the nation's song anymore. The grief-stricken king expresses personal brokenness at the loss of his friend. He goes on.

Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. There's nothing sexual about the love. It's a love of steadfast, faithful friendship. David is cut to the heart.

And Jonathan's love for David is a wonderful example to us of the love we should show to God's anointed king. Jonathan was the son of King Saul. So by rights, hereditary rights, the whole nation, he would have inherited.

But he gladly recognized that, no, David is the king. And he risked his life to defend David and ensure that David survived. He put his allegiance to David over his allegiance to his own father. And now he's gone, and David is all at sea. And again, don't we long for a king like this? One who has the strength and wisdom to direct and govern a great nation, and yet who deeply loves every one of his subjects.

[24 : 30] Well, again, picture Jesus not on the way to Jerusalem now, but in Bethany shortly before that. Arriving in Bethany after his friend Lazarus has died, we've seen in Hebrews in recent weeks that Jesus is the majestic eternal son.

And he now is seated in victory in heaven. But when he arrived in Bethany, he sees Lazarus' sisters weeping, and he's deeply troubled.

And he asks, where have you laid him? And they take him to the tomb, and he breaks down and weeps. And the people who were there look at Jesus, and they say, see how he loved him.

See, in Jesus, we have a king who calls us to recognize his rule, just as Jonathan did for David. But when we do that, he's glad not just to call us subjects, but to call us friends.

He knows us. He loves us personally. And in Jesus, we have a king who is so offended by death, so grieved by it, so outraged by death, he stepped into our world to die our death for us.

[25 : 41] The good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep so that he could promise to you, I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even though he dies. So how are we responding to God's king?

In our final scene, David sends out an invitation. Just after he's anointed by that little tribe at the beginning of chapter 4, the tribe of Judah, he sends a message to the people of a different town, Jabesh Gilead, and he invites them to accept him as king.

Chapter 2, verse 7, he says, Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul, your master, is dead, and the people of Judah have anointed me king over them. And we face exactly the same choice today in Glasgow when it comes to David's greater son.

His kingdom in Scotland today seems very small and insignificant, the number of people who are bowing the knee to Jesus as their king. You might feel as though his reign is irrelevant to the people you're about to spend your week with in the coming week.

The pressure is on us not to live for him. But just as with David, from Jesus, we get a winsome invitation. He says, Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[26 : 59] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. And as we weigh up that offer, we're invited to consider the character of this king. He's a righteous king who can't be conned.

His kingdom is a place where justice and righteousness reign. And he is a loving king, one who grieves in love for his people. So let's be willing to be brave.

In a world that doesn't know him, will we accept over our own lives the reign of God's righteous and loving king? Let's pray together.

A moment of quiet to reflect on our king, the Lord Jesus Christ. gracious God and loving heavenly father, we thank you that you have given us in the Lord Jesus Christ a righteous king.

We thank you for our living hope of his future kingdom where justice rolls on like a river and righteousness like a never-fading stream. We await his return and long for it soon.

[28 : 31] And Lord Jesus, we thank you for your love for your people that when we were still far off, you grieved for us. and now that you have brought us home, you call us friends.

May we fix our eyes on your righteous loving rule that we would bravely seek those values today ourselves as we pledge our allegiance to you, our king.

Amen. We're going to respond together to God's word by singing. The band are going to come up and lead us. We'll be right back. And so after that, guys, we wait a few domains about supporting the him ast naszym who were going to dispel proyecto of or as 20 of the or floor of \$ all and we're now through