

2 Samuel 5:1-5 and 6:1-15

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel chapter 5 and then 2 Samuel chapter 6, which can be found page 308 of the Church Bibles. 2 Samuel chapter 5 verses 1 to 5.

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns.

And the Lord said to you, You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall become their ruler. When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord.

And they anointed David king over Israel. David was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned for 40 years. In Hebron, he reigned over Judah for 7 years and 6 months.

And in Jerusalem, he reigned over all Israel and Judah for 33 years. And now chapter 6. David again brought together all the able young men of Israel, 30,000.

[1 : 31] He and all his men went to Bala in Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God, which is called by the name, the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the Ark.

They set the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Yuzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the Ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it.

David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with cassonets, harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles, and cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Yuzah reached out and took hold of the Ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.

The Lord's anger burned against Yuzah because of his irreverent act. Therefore, God struck him down, and he died there beside the Ark of God. Then David was angry, because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Yuzah.

And to this day, that place is called Perez Yuzah. David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, How can the Ark of the Lord ever come to me? He was not willing to take the Ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David.

[2 : 49] Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household.

Now, King David was told, The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the Ark of God. So David went to bring up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing.

When those who were carrying the Ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the Ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks, Abby. Friends, good morning. Great to be with you. Good to have an Aussie double act on Bible reading and preaching.

A reminder, if you would like to pray with someone after the service, people will be available at the back and would love to do that with you to pray about anything. But let us pray now as we come to God's word.

[4 : 02] Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a God who speaks. You haven't left us by ourselves to work out who you are or to guess that you've told us.

And so we pray as we come to 2 Samuel 5 and 6 this morning, that you would speak to us at an individual level and a corporate level, that you might mould us and shape us to be your people.

And we pray that in Christ's name. Amen. When do you think was the high point of cinematography?

What is the... It's another way of asking, what's your favourite movie? Right? What's the best movie of all time for you? Maybe if you think you're maybe a real sort of classicist when it comes to movies, you think back to something like *Gone with the Wind*, with the iconic quote, quite frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

Or maybe something from my sort of era, *The Matrix*, right? You know, mind-bending plots and twists all over the place.

[5 : 13] I wonder, perhaps, if there are some men in the congregation, perhaps middle-aged men in the congregation, who when it comes to the finest film of all time, if your mind goes to *Indiana Jones, Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Harrison Ford, set in the 1930s, beating up Nazis to get an ornate wooden chest from ancient Israel and win World War II. What's not to like? In the movie, both the Nazi forces and *Indiana Jones* want the Ark, not because it is a nice wooden chest, but because the Ark comes with the promise of blessing, of power, of victory.

They wanted the Ark because it would bring blessing. In 2 Samuel 6, David wants the Ark for Jerusalem because it will bring blessing. If you had an Ark or an object of some sort today and had a mindset that it was going to bring blessing, what would it be bringing?

What is blessing? What is good? What do you desire? What is it that you find yourself hungering after day by day?

These are big questions. What is blessing? And perhaps more significantly, what is God's role when it comes to bringing blessing to your life? In Glasgow, in 2025.

[6 : 57] Throughout the centuries, different religions have approached the question of blessing and getting blessing from God with a particular methodology. Work out what I want and then twist God's arm so that he or she or they or it will give it to me.

So I want to have a child. So I sacrifice to the fertility goddess so that she might grant me a child. I want to have a big harvest.

So I pray to the rain gods to send rain on my crops. I want the evil spirits to stop tormenting me.

So I sacrifice my firstborn to appease them. I want a nice Christian family. So I pray to Jesus to make my children nice, well-adjusted, and well-educated.

Or the theologically astute version, I pray to the Father through the Son by the Spirit to make my children respectable and able to recite the Catechism. But this is what religions do. This is what we all do.

[8 : 11] Whether you consider yourself to be religious or not, this is how we sort of live through life. I want a spouse. I want wealth. I want safety. So I appease men or my boss or my government so that maybe they will bless me with what I want.

I determine what I want. I work out how to get it. God may or may not be involved, but he is involved on my terms, on the basis of my religious acts or my religious performance.

We want X, so we go to Y and do Z and we call it life. What's your X?

What is blessing? Three points for us that we see from the Bible this morning as we dive into 2 Samuel with the question of what is blessing in our minds.

First, shepherds as leaders. Secondly, fools for priests. And then the humble shepherd king. We're going to start with shepherds as leaders. Keep open 2 Samuel 5 and 6 in your Bibles.

[9 : 23] It's important that as we come to chapter 6 we think about chapter 5. In chapter 5, David has conquered Jerusalem. But before that, we have from our reading this public anointing and recognition of David as Israel's king.

Finally, after our journey through 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, Saul has died by this point. David is now in place. And so we read 2 Samuel 5 verses 1 and 2.

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, we are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns.

And the Lord said to you, you shall shepherd my people Israel and you shall become their ruler.

And there's a long line of leaders in Israel's history who have been shepherds. The first time that God's people see the land they are to come to is when Abram has grown his flocks to such an extent that he has to separate from Lot and they go towards the promised land.

[10 : 47] The 12 tribes of Israel are the 12 sons of Jacob. Jacob has his sons, if you remember, as he is working for Laban, looking after his sheep. And it is Jacob's skill as a shepherd that brings about the blessings of land and wealth for him and for his family, the 12 tribes of Israel.

In Exodus, God comes to Moses. Exodus chapter 3, verse 1, Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

And this would be where God appears to Moses in the burning bush. And the man who led Israel, or led the flocks through the wilderness to the mountain of God would be the one who God entrusts to lead his people through the wilderness to the foot of the promised land.

David, when he was called, was initially not presented to Samuel by Jesse because he was looking after the sheep. This is no accident. God has set the shepherd as the prominent picture of what faithful leadership looks like for his people.

If we jump into our day and age, the word pastor is a shepherding word. In fact, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, that's the word that is used for shepherd in verse 2 of chapter 5.

[12 : 13] What God wants for his people then and what God wants for his people now is to have leadership that is shepherd-like, leading his people to a God-given destination, keeping them in course while all the while caring, nurturing, protecting, providing.

Whether over a handful or over tens of thousands, that's what shepherds do. That is what Martin, our lead pastor, is called to be.

It's what the staff team are called to be. If you are leading in kids ministry or in youth ministry or if you lead a growth group or a roots group, you are called to be shepherd-like, to pastor your flock.

And if you are ever in a church, even this church or in a church plant, and the consistent tone of leadership is not this, then get out.

Because the shepherd is the picture of biblical leadership. Leaders are to be like shepherds and chapter 6 will ultimately show us whether David is faithful in this charge to shepherd God's people, Israel.

[13 : 40] The first thing that we see is that he desires to bring the ark of God back to Jerusalem. This is a good desire. Jerusalem's just been conquered in chapter 5 as well. The ark, as has for a long time, been outside.

The Philistines were in charge of it and now it's sort of been wandering around a bit. And David wants to bring it back. That's a good thing. And he recognises that it's a big deal because he brings together 30,000 men for this expedition.

Verse 2 helps us to feel the gravity of this moment. Have a look at verse 2 of chapter 6. He and all his men went to Bala in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God.

And then it just sort of slows down to remind us of just how big a thing this is. The ark of God which is called by the name.

The name of the Lord Almighty. That is the Lord of hosts. Commander of heaven's armies. Who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.

[14 : 47] Now this ark is a wooden chest for a full description of the ark and the cherubim and the intricate detail that this incredible specimen has been manufactured to. You can read up on it in Exodus 25.

But the big idea is that while the ark is not God, God's presence comes with it. So Exodus 25, 22.

There above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

It's a wonderful picture of God's character actually. Because the cover that is mentioned on this ark is to continue the picture of this.

It's like the chair of the throne where God is. It's where God sits to meet with his people and the cover is called the atonement cover or the mercy seat.

[15 : 49] Because God always desires to have mercy and see the sins of his people atoned for so that he can be with them. It's the same reason God sets shepherds over his people so that shepherds would bring his people to him.

But as always when you have a holy God who's going to meet with his people you have to be careful. You meet with him on his terms. You have to do it the way that he has said.

Thankfully in the Old Testament we have the priests the Levites who are responsible for carrying out God's instructions with his people in the right way leading the people in worship.

It's the Levites who are responsible for transporting the ark in line with God's instructions. And so as we jump back into chapter 6 of 2 Samuel to help us with our second point for today fools for priests I've actually got an alternate translation that's going to help us to feel this foolishness that the priests have.

It's roughly going from verse 2 to verse 8 if you want to sort of roughly follow along. It's going to show us it's the Levites who have the problem. Here we go.

[17 : 11] King Charles assembled all the men of the United Kingdom. He and all his men went to Glasgow in Scotland to bring back the crown jewels of the British monarchy which had been on display there.

They balanced the crown jewels on the roof racks of a brand new Hyundai i20 and brought it from the museum which had a very steep driveway.

Lyle and Fergus were undergraduates and sons of the museum's curator. They were driving the Hyundai i20 but Fergus was listening to his Spotify playlist via his AirPods.

When they got just south of the English border Lyle grabbed for the jewels because the Hyundai i20 hit a pothole. This is why that place is called Carlisle. Now what did they think was going to happen when they choose to transport the Ark of the Covenant like this?

When you balance something big and bulky on a cart pulled by oxen down a hill of course the thing was going to fall off. They're supposed to carry it with poles.

[18 : 28] That's what the instructions had been given to them in Exodus. They had been warned in Numbers 4.15 that if they touched it they would die. But they are not careful or cautious because they're not reverent.

They have no sense of the holiness of God and so it ends in tragedy. Uzzah is struck down by God when he touches the Ark.

It's one of those things in the Bible. You might like that. You might not like that. It doesn't actually matter whether you like it or not.

What matters is that it happened. I mean the only explanation that this is in our Bible is that this is a historical incident.

It's hardly the thing you're going to sort of just drop in there for a laugh. So what we need to come to grips with this morning is why did it happen? And the answer is because God is a holy God and you and I are not holy.

[19 : 50] We may approach him on his terms only. Not because he is mean. Not because he is harsh. He desires to be with his people and he has made a way for it but where people are flippant and don't listen to him or they make assumptions of how he will act and they don't treat him as God.

When we do that we are playing with fire. This episode stops the procession in its tracks. It's a reminder to David of two things.

We see in verse 8 and verse 9. The first of these is that all of God's people need shepherding. Verse 8. Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah and to this day that place is called Perez-Uzzah.

I don't think David is angry at God here. I think he is frustrated at the fact that this situation has happened.

It's certainly not the case that he thinks God is unfair or rash. In the previous chapter in verse 20 God breaks out against the Philistines and David rejoices. There's no issue with God acting or breaking out in this way.

[21 : 11] Here God breaks out against one of his own sheep and David is angry about the fact that this has occurred. You can imagine the things going through his head as he realizes that he's going to have to stand up and lead everyone now that he is the king of Israel.

He'll have to ensure that the Levites do their job properly. He'll have to set up like a certificate of compliance for ark transportation. Well actually what he needs to do is he needs to teach the scriptures to God's people so that they know who God is and how he's invited them to be with him.

He'll need to do all of these things because all of God's people need shepherding and he is now the shepherd. The second thing he's reminded of is verse nine, God cannot be manipulated.

Verse nine, David was afraid of the Lord that day and said how can the ark of the Lord ever come to me? This is no normal religion where you want X or you go to Y and do Z.

This is a holy God who comes to us on his terms. He is full of mercy. He wants to come to you but you have to listen to him.

[22 : 35] You have to fear him. You have to tremble before him, before his holiness and majesty. How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?

Is the question of a man who is faced afresh his own inadequacies, his own failures, his own assumptions about God, his own mistakes.

He is humbled before God. So where do you go when you're a newly anointed king and the job before you is exceedingly impossible and your attempt to get God on your side has ended in tragedy?

Where do you go in life when your attempts at getting blessing have left you empty?
Where do you go when you feel like life has chewed you up and spat you out?

Well initially David gives up. The ark's progression towards Jerusalem stops. But then we see our final point for today, the humble shepherd king.

[23 : 46] From halfway through verse 12. So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom, this is where it had paused temporarily on its journey, to the city of David, Jerusalem, with rejoicing.

When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

You notice the difference between the last time the ark was being transported and now that David is overseeing the process? Now it is being carried, not pulled by oxen.

It is done reverently and carefully. There are sacrifices after just a handful of steps. David and Israel are humbling themselves before God every step of the way.

The linen ephod is what Samuel wore earlier in the book. It's a picture of humility. Instead of wearing his royal robes or military garb, David is wearing a simple linen cloth.

[24 : 59] and in this moment he has stumbled across pure blessing.

His delight in the seriously monumental occasion of God coming back to lead his people from the right place, being in charge, overflows into this joyous dancing which he refuses to contain.

Don't miss that. True blessing is not something external to God that he gives you when you've been good.

True blessing is God himself. God is going through life and blessing is deserting you.

It may just be that you're looking in the wrong place. True blessing is God himself. Now it's one thing to know that.

[26 : 12] It's another thing to know what to do with it. Because of course if it is that the leaders of God's people are shepherds then that means that we, the people, are sheep.

And we are called sheep because we are vulnerable and because we are very very good at walking the wrong way. Later in our service we're going to sing a hymn called Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing and the line in that hymn that makes me choke up every time I sing it is the phrase prone to wander Lord I feel it prone to leave the God I love because I do feel that deeply.

Even when I'm maintaining all the practices of being a Christian and from the outside it looks rosy I know sometimes my heart is just so cold to the things of God so distracted grazing elsewhere and so I need and you need a shepherd David was a shepherd for God's people it was pretty good and yet he died the people wandered again and the shepherds were not great.

In Ezekiel 34 God comes in judgment over Israel's shepherds because he's had enough. Ezekiel 34 10 this is what the sovereign Lord says I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves I will rescue my flock from their mouths and it will no longer be food for them for this is what the sovereign Lord says feel God's heart in his words for you I myself will search for my sheep and look after them as a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them so will I look after my sheep this is no I want X so I go to Y and do Z this is God coming to you you know when Jesus was born on the first Christmas night and the shepherds who were tending their flocks on hills nearby were invited to come and see him it wasn't just because they were the ones who happened to be there they were invited in to see the shepherd king because he would tend them and he would look after them they are told by the angels in

Luke 2 14 glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace blessing to those on whom his favour rests and a few verses later the shepherds have stumbled across blessing just like David has in 2 Samuel 6 the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which was just as they had been told Jesus came to search for his sheep and to look after them as a shepherd looks after his scattered flock if you're a Christian here this morning and you sit in your chair knowing that you have a heart that has wandered maybe a little maybe a lot maybe for a few days maybe for 50 years Jesus comes to you not in anger not in frustration but he comes as a shepherd to bind up your broken heart and restore it because while he ensured that you were safely behind the gate in the sheep pen he went and faced the wolves and the predators on the cross and his life was given for yours his throne is now an eternal atonement cover for his people that we might be reunited with God if it is today that you are here and you have never made a decision to put your trust in Jesus but you feel like blessing has eluded you in life if you're always left unsatisfied by the things of this world then perhaps you need to hear this morning that in Jesus blessing has come to you so I invite you come to him on his terms humble yourself before almighty

[31 : 13] God and place your wandering heart in Jesus hands let's pray heavenly father we thank you so much for Jesus we thank you for Jesus because we know how deeply we need him and how left to ourselves we get ourselves into such silly situations would you shepherd us look after us that we might be with you for eternity we pray that in Jesus name amen