

Out of Jerusalem

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[0 : 0 0] did. Well again, it's great to be here on a Pentecost Sunday, and believe it or not, we have a connection with 2 Samuel 15 as well. These aren't normal Pentecost readings, but we're in a series, if you've not been with us, on 2 Samuel, and we're nearing the end of it. We've got about exactly a month left on it. But on this day of Pentecost, we are rejoicing because Jesus has given to us his Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus. He told the disciples, go to Jerusalem, and there will be power from on high that you will receive. And as you know, on this day, the Holy Spirit was poured out so that the disciples began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Messiah, the King and the Lord. And on that day, 3,000 people were added to the kingdom of God. And I thought it was great that we read from Psalm 145, a psalm appointed for today. And in it, we said that all your works give thanks to you, O Lord, all your saints bless you. And here's what they say. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

And as you probably know, if you've been with us, this is exactly what Nathan, that God promised through Nathan to David, that through his descendants, there would be an everlasting kingdom that would come about. And the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the sign of that kingdom breaking into this world.

And that people are transformed by the gospel of Jesus so that they become part of that kingdom of God forever. The amazing thing is, is that this was promised at David's time for David's descendants.

And if you heard today's reading, you're probably thinking, really? Is this really going to happen through David's descendants? David's sons are already a disaster. That's the only way that you can think of them. Number one son we heard last week, Amnon, was murdered by number two to the throne, Absalom, because Amnon had committed sexual crime within the family against his half-sister. And here in this reading today, we see these children's lives spinning out of control again, and we see David unable to guide them wisely. And so Absalom leads a revolt, hostile takeover that leads to civil war. So we have to look at this and say, this reality does not fit the promise of 2 Samuel 7. How is this eternal king going to happen? It's complete chaos in David's kingdom. And it is impossible. It is impossible for humanity to bring an eternal kingdom out of this mess. And as you look over the next thousand years of Israel's history, you won't change your mind. It is humanly impossible. But what does Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount? He says, what is impossible with humanity is possible with God. And of course, Jesus is the possibility of God. He is the one who alone can make this eternal kingdom break into the world.

[3 : 5 2] And on Pentecost, we see Jesus invading this world. And we see people who are given power by the Holy Spirit ministering to people in Jesus' name, telling them about Jesus, and seeing their lives absolutely transformed.

It is because of Jesus' death on the cross and rising again. So how does Samuel 15 fit into this? Well, Samuel 15, we can't look at this and say, well, these figures are people we should follow. We should pattern our lives after people like Absalom or David. But what we can do is see, what are we learning about God? What is God teaching us through this? The Bible is about God first and foremost, revealing himself to us so that we will be changed by him. And certainly, 2 Samuel 15 helps us understand, first of all, that God is in charge and that he works out his saving plan even when he seems absent and not in control. And what we see in this chapter is that God is faithful when we are not. We're going to see him pour his undeserved grace onto sinful people. And he uses very imperfect and dysfunctional dad named David as a key person in God's plan to send his son Jesus Christ as the Messiah into the world. And so God uses this passage to renew

our faith in God. And I hope that's what happens by God's work for you today. And there's three things I want to mention from this passage. The first is that God fulfills his word even in the evil of Absalom.

If you remember a couple of sermons ago, right after David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, God told David through Nathan that there would be a consequence to his sin. Yes, God had put David's sin away. But there was a consequence. And that is that God said, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And it would happen, as he said, in this chapter. Absalom fulfills that promise. Look at verses 1 through 12. If you look at that section on page 266, you see Absalom's name mentioned time after time after time. And God's name is not mentioned except in vain, where Absalom is lying to David. And none of it is good when you see Absalom mentioned. It's all bad stuff. And if you remember right, back in chapter 14, David had sent Absalom into exile for murdering his half-brother Amnon. And when David was convinced to bring Absalom back to

Jerusalem, he did it pretty unwillingly. And he said, well, if you come back, you can't ever come into my presence. You're just going to be here, but I'm not going to see you. Very dysfunctional situation.

[7 : 03] In fact, Absalom, after two years, gets so sick of not seeing David, he burns David's top general's field to try to get David's attention. And it worked. He was finally able to come into God, into David's presence. But in verses 1 through 6, Absalom acts out. You know, he figures, if I can't get my dad's affection, I'll get Israel's affection. So he goes into Jerusalem every day with horses and chariots and 50 men before him to say, I am important. I'm next in line for the throne. And also, early in the morning, Absalom would meet people coming into the city who had legal claims, legal arguments that needed to be decided upon by the Supreme Court because the village judges couldn't figure, couldn't deal with the claim. And so they'd come early in the morning and he would tell the people, oh, you know, things are just too busy. Courts are overcrowded. I'll deal with you here. And he would tell each of them, first of all, where are you from? They'd get to know each other a bit. And they'd say, look, your claim is good and right. And David and the judges can't hear you. And then in verse 4, he says, oh, that I were judge in the land. Then everyone with a dispute or cause might come to me and I would give him justice. Well, he did this over and over again to everyone with a claim. And in verse 6, we hear that he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And literally, that means he deceived

Israel. And leaders, we know this, can do that. They deceived Israel. And you would think that David would nip this in the bud. He'd see what was going on and say, stop. But again, he's paralyzed. He doesn't seem to be able to deal with his son. And after four years of this, Absalom had gathered up enough support that he went to David, again, trying to deceive him and say, I want to go to Hebron today and give thanks to God for bringing me back to Jerusalem as I prayed six years ago.

And David says, yeah, go in peace. Go to Hebron. That's where you were born and so forth. And give thanks to God because you were allowed to come back to Israel. Now, David should have known something was wrong. Why would it take Absalom six years to thank God for bringing him back?

But he says, go in peace. And Absalom sends out secret messengers all throughout the tribes. You see in verse 10, to say that Absalom is now king at Hebron. And remember, Hebron's also the place where David was first publicly anointed king. This is a powerful communication. Very effective. And then in verse 11, he takes 200 key men from Jerusalem with him. They don't know Absalom's plans, but they're important leaders. And worst for David is in verse 12. Because Ahithophel, and unfortunately people don't name their children Ahithophel anymore. It's a great name. It's not used very often.

[10 : 06] But Ahithophel was probably Bathsheba's grandfather. He was the chief advisor for David. And he was brilliant. We're going to hear later on that in the next chapters that when he spoke, it was though God himself were speaking. That's how people would call him. He was a brilliant chief advisor. And he joins Absalom. So the conspiracy grows very strong. Now, you can see in that first third of the chapter that this is a dark, dark time in Israel. Absalom's plan for a complete takeover is going to involve probably killing David. It looks like the end of the kingdom that God promised. But we need to, we know that this is not new to God. We know that God's not taken by surprise. In fact, we know that he promised that it would happen. And that God's word is simply

being fulfilled here. And so the question for us is, if God promised this evil against David from his, within his own house, is Absalom responsible for his actions? Is it evil? Is he sinning? And the answer is yes, because there are two truths running side by side. And it is impossible for us to figure this out in our own minds how this can be. But you see it over and over again in the Bible. Absalom's acts are evil because they oppose God. And we need to name that. It is wrong. And at the same time, God's word is proving to be true. It's real rebellion against

God, against his anointed one. And it's rebellion that he has freely chosen for himself against God. Yet it also fulfills God's promises. And what we're being taught here is that no one's will, even those wills that are committed to evil against God, operates outside God's sovereign rule.

Yet God has given a real self-determining choice to Absalom. And he gives it to us as well. And I want to give you probably the best example of this in the Bible. It runs all through it.

But the day of Pentecost has the best example. Peter is teaching about Jesus being filled with the Spirit. And the Holy Spirit moves Peter to say this. He says, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

You see what Peter is saying here? God willed this and you are guilty. Both of those things going together. And you and I, this is a mystery. This is something that we will not be able to fully understand. We know that both things are true. And God names evil for what it is. Terrible evil. And we've experienced that in our own lives. But we also know here that God is in charge. That he brings goodness into this dark and broken world. And it seems like that is impossible at the time of the evil.

[13 : 28] But clearly, the Bible tells us, God is sovereign. That he is king. There is nothing that is outside his ability, his power, and his love.

And the cross of Jesus demonstrates this in the most amazing way. Because God's rule over the worst kind of evil, or over the most rebellious acts against him, is shown in Jesus. God uses the sin of killing Jesus on a cross to bring people to be reconciled to God forever. He uses this terrible rebellion to bring peace with God.

And through the power of the Holy Spirit in Peter's preaching on that first day of Pentecost, 3,000 people are brought into that peaceful relationship with God. Knowing God's deep, powerful love for them, only because Jesus died on the cross at the hands of sinful man. And in our own lives, we see all kinds of things that make us wonder about God's rule, and perhaps doubt it. We see things in this world that make it look as though God is unsuccessful. We see evil flourish. We see God ridiculed. We see pain in our life that persists. But God's rule over Absalom's rebellion shows us that nothing is outside that rule. Nothing can block his plan and his good will for us and for the world, his perfect will in our lives. And that perfect will, first and foremost, involves us embracing the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the next section of chapter 15 leads us into this. It's a wonderful following to this, seeing God's rule and his kingship. It says in verses 13 to 23, we see David and the scene shifts from Absalom's to him. But the man who shines really brightly in that section is Ittai the Gittite. And that's a great line. It's good to say over and over again. Ittai the Gittite. And what happens is that in verse 13, a messenger comes to David. He tells him the people of Israel's gone after Absalom. And David tells everyone who is loyal to him to flee Jerusalem. And there is this very poignant scene of all of these loyal followers of David walking out of Jerusalem. It's dramatic. And David probably does this for a couple of reasons. He's not a coward. He doesn't want to see a siege of Jerusalem. He doesn't want to see civilians and innocent people killed. He doesn't want to see destruction to the city. But also, he can tell by this who is truly loyal to him as well. And as they're going out of the city, David stops at the last house. The last house on the edge of the city. And there he has all the people who are coming after him pass in front of him like a royal review. And he's looking at who the people are that are committed to him. And it's amazing how many people from outside of Israel are in that group who are loyal to that Messiah, that anointed one. And some of them are Gittite, 600 of them, from Gath, from Goliath's hometown. They're Philistines who are now part of God's people. And the king stops the procession and he singles out the leader, Ittai. And I want you to look at verse 19 because it's wonderful what is said here. The king says to Ittai, why do you also go with us? Go back, stay with the king, meaning King

Absalom, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home in Philistia. You came only yesterday and shall I today make you wander about with us since I go, I know not where? Go back, take your brothers with you and may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. David's saying you've proved your loyalty, I bless you. Stay back for your own safety and for your family's

sake. But look at verse 21. It's a marvelous response. Ittai answers the king as the Lord lives and as my lord the king lives wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be. And you know, David is at a loss for words at this devotion. All he can say is, go then, you know, pass on. And it's very moving to see as you look further on in verse 21 that, or verse 23, that at the end of verse 22, that all the little ones who were with him went as well with the adults. So these families, very vulnerable people, are going with David. Well, this is radical loyalty. These are vulnerable

Philistines making a promise to the living God that he will in life or death be with David. It's a beautiful and powerful thing to see. It's a ray of light in a very dark and sad time in the life of Israel. And I think it's important for us to pay attention to Ittai's words because God speaks to us through them. This Philistine is committing himself, his soldiers and families to a very flawed Messiah, David. And he doesn't know where this loyalty is going to lead him. He knows it could be life or death. But he says, I will be your servant. I will always be close. Well, where does that devotion come from? I think it's because Ittai has known God's steadfastness, his steadfast love and faithfulness that David spoke about. He has gone from serving dead idols in Philistia to serving the living God.

[19 : 34] He has tasted and he has seen that the Lord is good and he can't imagine leaving the Lord's anointed. And I hope Ittai is a deep encouragement to you and me this morning because he is a picture of how all people should receive God's true Messiah. If Ittai loves deeply sinful David in that way, how much more are we to love the Messiah Jesus Christ, God's true anointed one? If you like Ittai have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, then it follows that you will have a radical loyalty to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whether for death or for life. And as David said, Ittai had no idea where following David would take him. And God's word is saying to us, renew your trust in Jesus.

Renew your commitment to serve him. Stay close to him and his teaching, especially when other voices and figures in this world seem to carry the day for a time. We don't know where this will lead us.

We don't know where Jesus takes us in our loyalty to him, but we do know that we will be close to him. This is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And we will be his servant, the Holy Spirit strengthening us to serve us.

That's the joy of the Christian life. That is the greatest joy that we have, is to devote our lives to Jesus Christ, our Messiah. And I think the wonderful example of this is in Peter's life, where Jesus says to him, you know, all these people are leaving me.

He's been speaking about being the bread of life. He gives eternal life. And people say, that's too hard. We're leaving. And Jesus asked Peter, do you want to leave as well?

[21 : 31] And Peter says this, he says, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

And that's the question for each of us as well. When we're tempted not to stand for Jesus, to whom would we go? Where else would we go? That is loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. We're being called to that in this scene. Well, the last thing that we see here in this reading is God's gift of faith. And I think this is just great timing, coming after a call for us to be completely devoted to the Messiah Jesus Christ. We need faith. And this is a gift from God. And we see this in verses 23 through 30. It's an emotional scene. 23 talks about weeping. Verse 30 talks about weeping.

And in the midst of this grief, God gives faith to David, even though David knows this is part of God's judgment on him. And here's how it happens. In verse 24, Abiathar and Zadok, with all of the Levite priests, bring the Ark of the Covenant to the edge of the city. And they want the Ark to go with David. But David says to Zadok, verse 25, no, carry the Ark of God back into the city. If I have found favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place.

But if he says, I have no pleasure in you, behold, here I am. Let him do what seems good.

Let him do to me what seems good to him. And you see what David is saying here? I am not going to trust in the furniture. You know, I'm not going to take the Ark of the Covenant and see that that's my guarantee that God will do what I want him to do. Instead, he says, let I entrust myself into God's hands. Let him do to me what seems good to him. And that is faith that only the Holy Spirit can create in us. It's very different from a lot of the prayers that we are tempted to say, which are, you know, God, take care of me, do for me what I want. Make this thing work out in this particular way. It is saying, it is saying, behold, here I am in the power of the Holy Spirit. Do to me what seems

good to you. That is the prayer of faith. That is the Holy Spirit led prayer for us. And you know, it may be that you are in a David kind of situation. David, from a human point of view, has reason to think that God had given up on him.

He had sinned deeply against God and God had promised judgment. He had not led his family well. He was reaping the consequences. But it's in that moment where he feels very undeserving that God's grace powerfully comes on David so that he is able to completely give himself over to God. And you should know that in this particular time, David wrote a beautiful psalm, Psalm 3. And he said this, he said, many are rising against me. Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for me, him in God.

[25 : 02] But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of your head. This is who Jesus is for us. He is our shield. He is our glory. And he lifts our heads. It's assuming that our heads would be bowed down at times by grief and the burdens of this world. He is the lifter of your head. And this is especially true when it looks to human eyes that there is no hope or salvation. That is faith that God gives. And he gives it in every circumstance as we call upon him.

And I want to end by saying that to put yourself in God's hand as the one who is sovereign over everything in your life is not a passive thing to do. It's not something where we just sit and wait to see what happens. It actually moves us to act. But it moves us to act in a way that doesn't involve idolatry. It acts with God in mind. Do to me what you would have that is good.

What you would want. And so we see David do this. Look in verse 31. Ahithophel, David finds out this bad news about Ahithophel. He's now giving brilliant counsel to Absalom. And immediately David prays.

He's active. He's active. And he says very specifically, Oh Lord, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. And we may not realize it at this moment, but verse 32, God answers immediately. And we know that it's not in the way David expects.

There's not confusion in Ahithophel at this point. In fact, we know in the next chapter that he gives great advice that would ruin David if it was followed. But God in his mercy and his wisdom brings Hushai to meet him with his coat torn and dirt on his head. You would not, looking at him, think this is God's answer to David's prayers. But David recognizes God's work. And he tells Hushai, go back to Absalom, tell him that he would serve him. And in this way, Hushai could work a defeat of the council of Ahithophel. And he would send updates through Zadok and Abiathar's sons.

[27 : 26] And we're going to find out over the next two chapters that God will save David through this man, Hushai. It is active faith. It is actually taking steps because of placing oneself in God's hands.

And this is the faith that God gives to us as well. It is active. It moves us to pray. It moves us also to look for the opportunities that God gives for his will to be carried out. And by that faith, we will act on what God gives. We will see and we will act on it. So this is the passage that we're in.

It is a passage that shows us what it means to have faith in the Lord Jesus. We see that God rules over everything in the world, even when evil is carrying the day. We are being taught here, particularly to believe that Jesus, true Messiah, has come into the world and to embrace him.

Jesus has come. How do we receive him? God in his wisdom works out his saving purposes for each of us in this man Jesus. And God calls us to have faith in him and him alone. And that will change our life.

That will move us to action. That will move us to see his provision for his will to be carried out. And that will cause us to seek his will in what we do and what we say.

[28 : 56] And so our response can only be to pray. And I'd like to do that now. It's to pray for the Holy Spirit to grant us this faith in the true and living God. Let's pray together.

O Holy Spirit, come to be with us now on this Pentecost. We ask you to fill us and to work through your word that we might know that God, our Father, rules our darkness. That he made Jesus Lord and Messiah, who alone is worthy of all our loyalty and all our worship. Please give to us the gift of faith so that we can say, do to me what seems good to you. May the Lord Jesus be glorified in our lives forever and ever by your power. For it is in his name we pray. Amen.

Please kneel to pray. Father God, we come before you this morning and we want to give you our praise and our worship.

We acknowledge you as our sovereign God, creator and king of the universe. And Lord, we ask that you would be at work in our lives, enabling us by the power of your Holy Spirit to put our trust in you, to truly live in obedience to you and submission to your Messiah.

Lord, in your mercy. Here I pray. Father God, this morning we also want to look beyond ourselves to the wider world.

[31 : 24] We pray especially for the Middle East, for all the things that are going on in Egypt and in Syria. We pray for their political and military stability.

But Lord, we also pray there that your gospel could be made known. We pray for your hand of protection upon him and his church in these turbulent times.

We pray for their ministry of outreach. That many would come to know the truth of your Messiah and learn to walk in your ways.

Lord, in your mercy. Father God, we also, thinking closer of home, want to lift before you the people of Quebec.

We pray for the unrest and the student disturbances there. We pray for wisdom for the leaders. That wise choices and decisions could be made.

[32 : 39] That our country could have good government. And Lord, we especially pray for the Church of St. James in Lennonville, Quebec. And for Mayas Anglican Church in Westmount, Montreal.

We pray that this morning as they, well I suppose, have already gathered to worship you. We pray that the Holy Spirit would be at work in their lives. Leading them in your ways.

Helping them to dedicate their lives fully to you. Lord, in your mercy. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

We also want to thank you, Lord, for the all-in camp that the youth of our church were at last weekend.

We pray that the seeds of faith and growth and devotion to you that were planted last weekend would grow and flourish in the lives of the young people.

We pray, Lord, for the young people of our parish. That they would be filled with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray that they would walk in a manner worthy of you.

[33 : 53] Fully pleasing you and bearing fruit in every good work. And increasing in your knowledge. Lord, in your mercy. You are our mercy.

You are our mercy. And Father God, we want to lift before you Susan Norman, who works at the University of British Columbia with the Ministry of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. We pray that her ministry there would be blessed and guided by you.

Lord, in your mercy. You are our mercy. And for our own parish, Lord, we ask for your help. For those who are weary, Lord, we ask for refreshment.

For those who are afraid, for your comfort. For those who are low, for the joy that comes only from you. Especially this morning, we pray for Owenna, Derek, Susan, Marguerite, Chris, Brian, Anne, and Gordon.

We ask that you would touch each of those people in the area of their need. That they would know that you are the sovereign God.

[35 : 19] And that even when things look dark or don't seem right, that you are sovereign in their lives. Lord, in your mercy.

Lord, in your mercy.

Lord, in your mercy. And now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, and now, and forever.

Amen. Amen.