

City of God

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[0 : 00] Well, I want to congratulate you, first of all, for coming to the 10 a.m. service. It's good to have you here. And I want to make sure that you're not feeling self-righteous when people come in in the middle of my sermon for the 11 o'clock service.

And I've got to tell you, so you're not feeling self-righteous, that your driving record is worse than the 9 o'clock service. Or maybe it's because there's more of you here. I'm not sure.

But we're going to be looking today at 2 Samuel 5 and 6. We're going to see a striking difference here from what we heard last week in the chapters that we looked at 2 through 4.

Because last week, if you remember, God seemed hidden and we saw human sinfulness that seemed to take the upper hand until we looked at it carefully and at the end of the chapters to see that God in His power had worked through all of that sinfulness to turn that sin in itself and on itself so that His good purposes were worked out.

So that everything that opposed the kingdom worked in the end towards God's kingdom being established. And in this reading today, we have the glorious sort of fruition of what God has been doing for years and years where the kingdom of God is set up.

[1 : 19] And there's a striking difference in these two chapters. God works quickly. He works very directly and very powerfully as well in these two chapters.

We see God set up His kingdom and David is made king. And it's very, very important for us because we learn the nature of the kingdom of God and what it means to be in that kingdom.

That's important because it helps us to renew our understanding of our relationship with God, that we are in the presence of a holy God, that there is great joy that God is present with us.

And this is a good time to read this because Lent is a time for us to renew our relationship with God, to renew our serving in our worship of the God who has redeemed us.

That's what is going on here. And as great as we see David become in these chapters, God is revealed as being greater and His power is displayed through David.

[2 : 23] And the changes that God enacts in these two chapters is breathtaking. So that really, David is not so much saying, how long, O Lord, here, but he's saying, how can I keep up, Lord?

Lord, God is going ahead. He's bursting forth. We're going to see here. And it is a powerful thing to see God working so directly.

Now, God shows us this in His Word in snapshots or slides of the new kingdom in chapter 5. And I want to look at this slide show sort of one by one briefly.

Each of the slides show us God working very directly. First slide is David, who is publicly anointed in Hebron.

So if you look at verse 2, the tribes of Israel all come up and say, the Lord said to you, you shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you shall be prince over Israel.

[3 : 22] And so you see, what's going on in the anointing publicly is the elders are simply saying, we are confirming what you, God, did many years before for David.

And that's why on verse 3, they anoint David king over all Israel before the Lord. It is in God's presence, by His permission, according to God's plan, that they do this.

And, you know, all of these things have happened in David's life. He is 37 years old now. He's gone through civil war. He's gone through all the threats to his life, the running from Saul.

And here he is in God's perfect timing. God has brought all of the nation, all of the tribes of Israel under one king.

They are united under David. And David will be the shepherd of God's people for the great shepherd, God Himself. And this is the beginning of the golden years of Israel, where the kingdom of God is newly established.

[4 : 24] So immediately what David does is he goes in the second snapshot, second slide, he goes with his soldiers to Jerusalem, where the Jebusites have a stronghold.

It's a strategic location. It's high on a hill, about 2,500 feet. It is too strong for Joshua to conquer 400 years before, when the Israelites first came into the promised land.

Three ravines surround it. There are high, strong walls. And the Jebusites are so sure that David cannot take the city, that they taunt him. They say, even if we were just the blind and the lame guarding this stronghold, you could not take it.

But immediately we see very quickly in verse 7 that David takes the stronghold of Zion. And Zion was a ridge.

It was just about 11 acres. And it was the eastern hill of Jerusalem. And that little location is what David took along with the rest of Jerusalem.

[5 : 30] And I'm just emphasizing how small that area is because Zion became something much greater. It became a name for the city of Jerusalem, the holy city.

And that soon became the name for the people of God as well. And then Zion became the name, because of Jesus, for all of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, which is what we sang about in that great hymn for our offering.

And it is the new Jerusalem that will come down from heaven that will establish God's rule on earth one day when Jesus comes.

And so you see, from these small beginnings, Zion becomes the meeting place between heaven and earth. It is the place where God begins this kingdom that is meant to spread through the world. And I want you to notice, too, that David, it is not all about David's ingenuity and going up the water shaft and in a very clever way taking Jerusalem.

[6 : 33] This was not just David's plan. It was God's plan. A thousand years before, God promised Abraham that he would give the land of the Jebusites to his people.

And in David, he did it again in his perfect timing. It's the perfect place for the uniting of Israel, because none of Israel's tribes had claimed it, since it had always belonged to the Jebusites.

And so David was able to build up that city and become strong. Now, if you look at verse 10, you see another snapshot, which is very interesting. It says there in verse 10 that David became greater and greater for one reason and one reason only.

The Lord, the God of hosts, was with him, was working. And God's work was so great that a king from Tyre, which was up northern Lebanon and Syria, sent messengers to David and cedar trees and carpenters and masons who built David a house.

David could have congratulated himself. Foreign rulers are coming. But instead of doing that, David knows better. And you look at verse 12.

[7 : 48] Because of Hiram's gift, he knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he, God, had exalted his kingdom for the sake of Israel.

So you see, David is clear right through his reign that it's only by God's decision, by his grace, by the power of his hand, that the kingdom grows and that he becomes great.

And notice that he knows it's not for his sake, you know, to build David up, but it is for Israel. So that Israel will be a means by which God will bless the nations of the world and he saves the nations.

David is doing well. David is doing what is right throughout this. But I want you to notice something extraordinary that happens. The narrator suddenly turns us to David's sin.

It shows us the dark side of David. Look at verses 13 through 16. The narrator suddenly turns and shows David's flaws. And he says he took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem after he came up from Hebron.

[8 : 59] Now that was a sign of power in a worldly sense, that there would be more and more sons and daughters born to David. And this is what the nation's kings did.

It was what the world did. It was a compromise with the culture that was around him. And not only that, but he was disobedient to God's word. In Deuteronomy 17, Moses gives the law and he prophetically says, you know, one day you, Israel, might want to have a king.

If you do, there are six limitations. And two of them are this in Deuteronomy 17. Well, David is doing this.

And it shows us that David, even though he is a Messiah, an anointed one, he is not the Messiah. We must wait. Israel must wait for one who is the sinless son of God.

It tells us that only Jesus does not disappoint. And really it's a lesson to us not to make spiritual leaders in the church, in, for instance, the evangelical community, don't make them to be spiritual gods as well.

[10:20] Put them on a pedestal in that way. Because somewhere along the line, they won't live up to it. They won't meet those expectations. It very clearly is showing us David's flaws, that this is not the Messiah that is to come.

Now, the last snapshot of the kingdom is 17 through 25 in chapter 5. And this is a picture of the greatest threat to Israel, the great menace.

And it's the Philistines, the arch enemy of Israel. They're alarmed because David is uniting all of these tribes and he's got a capital city now. They see him as a threat.

And so all of the Philistines unite, it says, in God's word. All of them unite together to search for him, to destroy him in Israel once and for all. And so what does David do?

He's a great general, very accomplished. But in verse 19, before he goes into battle, he prays to God for guidance. And the living God speaks.

[11:27] He says, go up, meet the Philistines, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand. And then what happens in verse 20 is that David came to Baal-perazim, which means the Lord of bursting through, and David defeated them there.

And he said, the Lord has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood. Therefore, the name of that place is called the Lord of bursting through. You see, David's saying, this is God's doing.

This is God's power just flooding out over the Philistines. And it's a description here of a God who not only speaks to David, but a living God who fights David's battles for him.

God conquers all the Philistines and their gods as well. Look at verse 21. He says, you can see their idols are left strewn over the valley, and David's men carry them away.

God is shown as the true king, not only of Israel, but of the world as well. Well, the Philistines are desperate, and they make another final attack.

[12:33] They muster everybody again. And again, David inquires of the Lord. But this time, God says something different. The Philistines are all in the same place that they were before, same valley.

But God says, go to the rear instead and wait until you hear the sound of soldiers in the tops of the trees, and then attack.

Well, David obeys that voice again. And it says that God struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer. And that means that this was an incredibly decisive victory.

In fact, so much that for the rest of David's reign, the Philistines would not be a menace anymore. And you have to realize that Israel would always remember that battle.

Because there was great anxiety. The greatest stress on Israel was this menace from the Philistines. And in those two battles, it was completely taken away.

[13:37] We can't imagine what that was like for that burden to be lifted. It would be the same sense if all the enemies of Israel today, all the countries around it, all the terrorist groups, would enter into peace talks and make a lasting, complete peace with Israel.

So they no longer had to worry about being attacked. That was the sense in Israel with this victory. And so you can see that very quickly, God has made Israel secure.

He has made Israel strong under David. And the real question now that the Israelites are asking is, not who is against us, but who is this one who is amongst us, who is present with us?

They are in awe. The living God shines over everything. And so you can see in those snapshots that we looked at that God has set his heart on David and on Israel.

He rules over them through David. He speaks to them through David. He protects them, makes them secure through David. He even brings gifts to Israel through the nations of the world.

[14:47] The living God has formed this new kingdom for Israel so that he can work out his plans, that all the nations of the world will know that God is the living God.

And we probably have to wonder what David was thinking at this time, at this moment when God is working so powerfully. And probably what he is thinking is in his prayer in Psalm 86.

It's prophetic. And it says this. It says, There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

That's where all of history is headed. And in Jesus, because of his resurrection, we know that that is the end of all time, that every nation will bow down before Jesus.

That is the great goal. That is the great vision of us as a church. As we're thinking about vision, it is that all nations will come and worship the living Lord Jesus and glorify his name.

[15:57] So what does David do now? What does he do? He's got his capital. Things are secure. What's the next move? Well, we see his first, the high priority in all of it because we come to chapter 6.

And there he says, Because Jerusalem is secured, the great enemy is defeated, he wants to make Jerusalem a city of worship. A place where people understand the presence of God with them.

And praise him and rejoice in his presence with him. That's what chapter 6 is about. And I want you to notice that the way David does this is to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

And it's important that we look at this for a moment. The Ark, he calls it there in verse 2, is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.

Now I want you to look at the front of your bulletin and there you will see a picture of an Ark. And it's probably fairly close. We don't have photographs, but this is a very good rendering.

[17:08] And in this Ark, we see God revealed to Israel and to us really.

Now look at the top of that Ark. There is the cherubim. The Ark is incredibly significant because it is telling us three crucial things about God.

And the first thing it tells us is that he is a God who rules. So 1 Chronicle 28, David calls the Ark the footstool of our God.

And you see those cherubim, and symbolically, he understood that that was the footstool of God.

And the throne that the footstool goes with is over all of the earth.

And God in his power is one who is the Lord of lords, the King of kings. The second thing that this taught the Israelites is that God is one who reconciles himself to people.

[18:12] And once a year, the high priest would come into the holiest of the compartments of the tabernacle. And he would come to the Ark.

And on the top of it would be something called the mercy seat, which you see is the cover there.

And he would kill animals and sprinkle their blood on top of that cover.

And what it was was an atonement for his own sins and also the sins of all of Israel. And that atonement cover, the mercy seat, was the place of the blood of the atonement.

And what it accomplished was the cleansing, the forgiveness, the reconciling of God's people at the cost of that atonement. This is God's provision for his people.

And then thirdly, the Ark signifies God who reveals himself. So in that box, it is hollow. It's gold, but it's hollow inside. And God commanded that a copy of the Ten Commandments would go inside of that box.

[19:18] And of course, that is God revealing himself to his people, showing what his will is because of his love for his people, showing them what it meant to be in relationship with God.

God speaks to Moses in those commandments. And also the Ark was the place where Moses would get further instruction from God. Now, what does that sound like to you?

Who does that testify to? You know, if we're doing a children's talk, you know the answer. It's Jesus. And in the catechisms of the Reformed Church, often Jesus was talked about as being prophet, priest, and king.

Prophet because he reveals God to us. He is God's word. King because he is the king of kings. He is the Lord of lords who reigns because of the resurrection of Jesus.

And he rules and defends his people. But he is also a priest because he gives his own blood as the high priest for the pardon, for the forgiveness of sins eternally.

[20:24] And that's why Hebrews 9 says, Jesus the high priest entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

So you see, the ark reveals who God is. It shows us also that Jesus is the living God, worthy of our worship. But this is the God David wants his people to worship and to know and to understand.

He is the God who speaks. He is the God who pardons. He is the God who is majestic, who rules his people. And so the question is, how are they to worship him?

Chapter 6 tells us two things. Worship him with trembling, knowing his holiness, and worship him with joy at his presence.

These two things that seem contradictory. But I want you to look at both of those. We see the holiness of God in chapter 6 when God strikes Uzzah down, when he tries to take hold of the ark, when the oxen stumble.

[21 : 34] And you know that Uzzah was Abinadab's son, so he lived with the ark for many years. And it illustrates for us a constant issue for Israel over its history.

And that is that it would forget about the holiness of God or take it for granted. And are we not like Israel in that? We constantly need to be reminded of the reality of the holiness of God. That he is a God who is perfect and righteous in everything. And sin cannot come in his presence. And really, God in his kindness revealed to the people of Israel that the ark had to be handled in a way so that people would not be hurt.

The holiness of God is a real and powerful thing. And that's why you can see in your picture that there are poles on the ark so that the Levites, the priests, could carry it without touching it. There's a strict warning in God's law that if anyone touches the holy things of the tabernacle, they will die. And yet David and Uzzah disobey God's word and they presume on his kindness.

[22 : 45] And they take that ark in the same way that the Philistines transported it with a cart, an oxen. That's when they captured the ark back in 1 Samuel 4.

They have a very casual approach to the holiness of God here and it cost Uzzah his life. David's angry because God has burst forth against Uzzah.

And our culture and probably our sinful self relate to David's anger. David speaks to our nature that he wants to tame God.

He wants God to conform to his desires and his ways. But God is a holy God. And we simply cannot stand in his presence because of sin.

And that's why the good news of Jesus is so very, very good. His power to forgive sins means that we trust him. We call God Father, this Holy One.

[23 : 43] We call him Father. We know his love for us. And we say that even as we say, hallowed be thy name. Even as we say, your name is holy.

We come into his presence because of Jesus. And I think that this experience is a turning point for David's reign. And the reason I say that is because we're going to see here that he's afraid of God's holiness.

He doesn't know what to do with it at first. It says in the Bible here that he stops short of Jerusalem and he keeps the ark in the house of Obed-Edom. And it's there for three months.

And what happens to that family? Is it cursed? Do they experience death? No. They are deeply blessed. And David changes because of this.

He must have realized through that family that God's blessing and his holiness come together. That's really the message of the ark, isn't it? God is holy and we are not.

[24 : 47] So we can't know him. But in God's love and mercy, he speaks to us by his word and reveals himself to us. God's holiness also means that he is the king far above all kings.

He cannot be approached. But in his love, he becomes Israel's king. And in Jesus, he becomes our king as well.

And then finally, God's holiness means sin and evil can't stand in his presence. He is holy. But God in his love provides for the reconciliation of our sins temporarily and symbolically in the sacrifices of animals in Israel.

But in Jesus, he forgives eternally through that perfect sacrifice. You see God's love and his mercy coming along with his holiness. There is a deeper understanding of God's grace in this.

And this is where there is repentance for David. He understands now the holiness of God. And he acts on that repentance by leading his people in worship by deep reverence for God and obedience to his word.

[25 : 58] And wonderfully, that new reverence for God leads directly into a deepened joy, a deepened delight in God with praise and thanksgiving. He really learned the key to true worship.

As he says in Psalm 211, he said, Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. That's true worship, rejoicing with trembling.

And verses 13 and 14 give an example of this. Look at verse 13. Now, they carry the ark as the word of God taught. And so, every six steps they are offering sacrifices.

Big change. They don't go to the seventh step because seven is the number of perfection of God. They don't want to presume on that. He's diligent in honoring God and his word.

And at the same time, in verse 14, David dances before the Lord with all his might, wearing only a linen ephod, a garment that priests would wear, which he's entitled to as the king of a kingdom of priests.

[27 : 00] The whole community joins him and rejoices in God. There is a sense of renewal here of all of the people of God joining in this thanksgiving, this exuberant praise because God is with them.

It spreads among the people. It looks like a revival. But into this great revival and renewal, there is this bucket of cold water that is thrown in the form of Michael, David's wife.

And you can see that she is somebody who despises David from her heart when she looks and she sees him worshipping and praising God in that way.

She despises him for unseemly devotion to God. And in this, she was really like her father, Saul. So if you look at verses 16 and 20 and 23, Michael's called the daughter of Saul, not the wife of David, the daughter of Saul.

She is very much in his thinking about a worldly sense of king. And so if you look at verse 20, she very sarcastically says, sarcasm is not new at all.

[28 : 15] She says, how the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself, and by that she meant taking off his royal robes and all that's entitled and wearing instead the priest clothes, and before the eyes of his servants, female servants, as one of the vulgar fellow, shamelessly uncover himself.

In other words, she's saying, where is your pride, David? You're compromising your kingly status and mine as well. You're going overboard in your devotion to God and it reflects badly on me. You are above abandoning yourself and serving God because you are the king. People serve you. And that's really the spirit of our age, isn't it? It tells us, keep your faith private.

Keep it respectable. Don't let God compromise your opportunities. And above all, don't let anyone else, especially God, rule your life.

But David says at the end of verse 21, I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes.

[29 : 27] But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor. And we see Jesus here, don't we, being honored by those who are considered by the world not to be wise or great.

But what we see wonderfully here is that for David, there's no greater honor than completely humbling himself before his king to serve him. There's no greater joy for David than abandoning himself in devotion to the holy God.

And I want to close by asking you to look back at those two chapters and see what's happening. We have seen the grace of God in choosing David as king, in uniting all of Israel, in giving them a capital city, defending Israel from her worst enemies, blessing nations even far away.

And we see David responding to that grace in chapter 6. And he responds with enthusiastic humility. And I think enthusiasm is a good word.

It comes from the word, from the Greek, *entheos*, which means in God. And what we're seeing in David is that it's this great ambition not to be powerful, but to make the true worship of God the center of his kingdom, the great reality of their life together.

[30 : 53] The presence of God is everything to him. And I believe that this passage calls you and I to enthusiasm. enthusiasm. We have received grace upon grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, our prophet, priest, and king.

Far greater than the grace that David experienced. He brings us into his kingdom, Jesus does. So how are we responding to his grace? Enthusiastic worship is the central reality of the kingdom of God.

And it means much more than enthusiastic singing and praying and praising God and hearing his word in our services, which is very important. And we should always evaluate ourselves in our services to see that we are enthusiastic and are serving God in them.

But as with David, it also means ambitiously and humbly serving God in your work, in your family, in this church, with your friends, without concern for your rights and your privileges.

And so, as we leave this passage, we hope and we pray by God's grace that this enthusiasm will come amongst us as a church.

[32 : 09] And in Lent, it's wonderful to know that that kind of enthusiasm will mean a life of exuberant praise, but also it will mean tears of repentance as well.

This is what enthusiasm in worship means. And so my prayer is that God, the Holy Spirit, will fill you afresh today. That He might renew in you a sense of His holiness, His deep, powerful holiness. And that He might cause you to delight in your King, Jesus Christ, as you love Him with all of your heart, with all of your mind, with all of your soul, and with all of your strength.

And so it's right for us to end by praying with David. So let's close our eyes and we'll listen to David's prayer from Psalm 86. All nations shall one day come to worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.

Teach me Your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth. Unite my heart to fear Your name. I give thanks to You, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Your name forever.

[33 : 26] For great is Your steadfast love towards me. Amen. Please kneel and join me in prayer.

When I pray, Lord, in Your mercy, please respond with, hear our prayer. Almighty and everlasting God, You who revealed Yourself to all Israel and made Your holy presence known with the ark, we thank You and praise You that You have revealed Yourself to us also in the person of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that through Him You have provided atonement for sin and in Him we are continually renewed.

Turn our hearts, Heavenly Father, and cause us to rejoice because of Your unending goodness. Let Your Holy Spirit fill us like King David with thanksgiving, gratitude, enthusiasm, and delight.

Lord, in Your mercy, we confess that we often fall short and we all too regularly disobey Your commands.

We repent of the many times that we have chosen to entertain ourselves instead of pleasing You, to pursue selfish advantage instead of helping others.

[35 : 20] or to entrust our future to our own cleverness instead of faithfully depending on You.

Have mercy upon us, God our Father, for the sake of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, forgive us.

By Your Holy Spirit and for Your glory, restore us to the fullness of truth and guide us in the way of peace. Lord, in Your mercy.

Today, we remember the victims of natural disaster one year ago in Japan and those who continue to suffer, mourn, and rebuild after the devastation caused by those events.

we bring before You the victims of the current wars in Syria and elsewhere. In these and in the other concerns of our hearts, give strength to the weak, console those who grieve, restore those who are broken, and by Your Spirit draw to Yourself all those who are in need.

Lord, in Your mercy. We pray now for our leaders, for the Prime Minister, for the Premier, for the mayors of our cities, and for all who serve in public office.

[36 : 52] We pray for the bishops of the Anglican Communion and for the clergy, ministers, and lay leaders of St. John's. Direct each of them in truth and integrity according to Your perfect will.

By Your Spirit, grant that they would carry out the duties of their offices with honor and with care. Lord, in Your mercy. In Your mercy.

We pray for our missionaries, Richie Spidell with Navigators, Kirsten Rummery with Living Waters, Jeremy Curry with YWAM, and Janine and Philip Lafleur with InterServe.

We pray today for two Ontario Anic parishes, the Church of the Good Shepherd in St. Catharines and the Church of the Messiah in Norwich.

We pray also for the sick and suffering, for Derek, Rowena, Merv, Susan, Chris, and Jean.

[37 : 56] Silently, in our hearts, we now bring to You the names of the other people in our lives who especially need Your care at this time. We lift them all to You, Heavenly Father, You who knows every deepest need and who satisfies the longing of every heart.

Lord, in Your mercy. Keep us in Your presence, Heavenly Father, through the days of this week. Cause us to return our thoughts and attention to You frequently in our homes, in our places of work and study, and as we travel.

Make us mindful of opportunities for us to bless and serve others. May the power of Christ transform us and the people who You place in our lives.

In everything, be glorified forever, Heavenly Father, through Your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[39 : 15] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.