

Justice, Equity and Peace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 May 2012

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Folks, let's pray. Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word. In Christ's name, amen.

Amen. Well, team, we're back in Samuel. That's great, eh? Woo! Back in the Sam town. It has been about six weeks, five or six weeks, so let me give you just a lead-up to this week because in case you've forgotten exactly where we kind of came from here, let me retell the whole story very, very quickly in a couple of minutes, but the basic story rather than the deep theology behind it.

Okay, so the book of Samuel is about primarily concern with these kings, but the story doesn't begin in throne rooms or in castles. It begins in a very domestic scene, a man and a wife.

Well, there was two wives, but there was a nice one and a not-so-nice one. But the one that was really lovely was called Hannah, and she's a very, very sad woman. That's how the whole story begins.

It's a very sad woman called Hannah who can't have children. And she prays to God, God, give me a child. If you give me a child, I'll give this child back to you in your service. And so God gives her a child.

[1 : 11] It's Samuel, a miracle baby. Samuel grows up and is called to deal with Israel as a leadership crisis. And the problem with Israel's leadership is this, is that the priesthood is corrupt, because the priests are kind of running the show at this point, right?

And so this boy, Samuel, grows up and eventually leads the Israelites to repentance. So it's great. He grows up to be this great priest guy. So it's all looking good, except that the Israelites, who have been saved by God on several occasions from their enemies, the Philistines, said, listen, we want to be like the other nations.

We want a king. And that was essentially a rejection of God. And Samuel warns them. He says, listen, if you get a king of your own choosing, it's all going to go sideways. And they said, no, no, no, it'd be great.

We'll have our own king, you know. We'll choose him. So basically, so they get this king called Saul. He's a very tall, kind of good-looking guy. And he has some initial success, but ultimately disobeys God.

And you just can't really get what the program of the authority of God, I guess. So God chooses somebody else. God chooses David. So Saul was the people's choice, and David was God's choice.

[2 : 23] So David is anointed on the sly, becomes quite famous when he defeats the Philistine giant, Goliath. And to make a long story short, Saul, who is still the king, gets very jealous of David.

So David is forced to be on the run for a really long time, hiding in caves, et cetera. You know the story, right? Saul dies in battle. David is made the king officially, and in 2 Samuel 7, which we, the last sermon we heard on Samuel, which Ryan preached fabulously, which is the high point of Samuel, I think.

God promises David a kingdom which would last forever. And so we come to 2 Samuel 8. So that's the basic story. Now let me just give you a sort of a theological reminder of what's happened.

David is one of the most three-dimensional characters in the Bible, I think.

We have this very detailed picture of this man. When you include the Psalms in particular, we hear his heart, what's happening in his heart.

[3 : 35] I think there's more written about David than any other person in the Bible, apart from God and Jesus, of course. So why is that? Why is he so important? And why have we spent a good chunk of our church time talking about this guy?

Well, here it is. When David is at his best, we get a glimpse into the character of God. So this earthly king, through this earthly king, we get a picture of our heavenly one.

And there's lots of things point to that, okay? But one of them is just like New Testament descriptions of Jesus, for example, describe him as the son of David.

And that's really important to understand, that through David, when he's doing well, we get a glimpse of Christ. It's really important to understand that. Because otherwise, we could read like chapter 8, like the first chapter that Dan read out so well for us, and we could go, well, there you go.

There is a moderately interesting account of an ancient Near Eastern border skirmish. And we quickly move on.

[4 : 43] Or we could read chapter 9, which Dan also read, and we could go, man, David, such a nice guy. Seriously. He, you know, helping out that dude whose feet didn't work really well.

He is the loveliest man. We should be like him, you know. Don't think that. Okay. We want to hit these chapters through the lens of good biblical theology and see what God is trying to teach us.

Because it's certainly more than, well, wars happen, and David, he's a heck of a nice guy. So let's have a crack at them, all right?

What is God trying to tell us here? 2 Samuel 8. In the first six verses, there's not much details. We don't know who started these wars.

But in the first six verses, it records four victories against the Philistines, the Moabites, the guys from Zobar, which is a great name for a planet.

[5 : 52] I don't know where Zobar is, actually. And the Syrians, right? Philistines, Moabites, the guys from Zobar and the Syrians. And then verses 7 to 12, David gets heaps of stuff from his enemies.

I guess it's like plunder, I guess. And some stuff is gifts. It talks about shields of gold, bronze, silver, tons of stuff. And then verse 13, it says, David subdues the Edomites, which is important later on just because it establishes this trade route and lots of wealth flows into the house of David.

Now, at this point, that's basically kind of what happens. At this point, it still sounds like kind of like a moderately interesting description of primitive people at war. Except, except, I want you to note the following things.

One, the victories were devastating. Absolutely devastating. The passage uses the Hebrew word *nakah* a bit, which means to smite, which is a great word.

Nakah! Is actually how you say it. That might not be true.

[7 : 03] But it means to smite, right? Verse 4, let me read out some stats. Let's, let me hit you with some numbers here. Verse 4, David took from him 1,700 horsemen, 20,000 foot soldiers.

Verse 5, when the Syrians of Damascus came to help, they were roped in by somebody else. They hired, this one group of people hired this whole other group of people to help them out, right?

David struck down 22,000 of the Syrians. Verse 14, all the Edomites became David's servants. Basically, David massively, if you saw it on a map, David massively extended the borders of his kingdom north and south by completely dominating the surrounding kingdoms.

Even when one of these groups was just roped in as a kind of like a mercenary, like 22,000 mercenaries, right? Just wipe them out, try to squish them in. No context. No contest.

All of the victories were devastating. Two, something to note. Some folks were defeated and one, submitted.

[8 : 10] One submitted, which I think is interesting. So the Philistines, the Moabites, the guys from the forest world of Zobar, it's a little Star Wars joke, and the Syrians all defeated.

But verse 9, This is such a great line. Listen to this. When Toi, king of Hamath, had heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadizar, Toi sent his son Joram to King David to ask about his health.

So David had just wiped all of his people out, and this guy is obviously freaking out a little bit and sends his son to ask David about his health. So, how are you?

You must, are you okay after all that smiting? Are you well? So this guy, smart move, right? He submitted rather than be defeated.

So some were defeated. One group actually submitted, which was the right move. Okay, three. Third thing I want you to know, that God is clearly the major player.

[9 : 23] In this story. God's clearly the major player. Verse 6 and 14, it says, And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. Verse 11, talking about all the stuff he plundered. King David dedicated to the Lord silver and gold from all the nations he subdued.

Okay. So what do we say about all this? Now you could be thinking, well, that still just only makes it slightly more interesting. But let's put our biblical theology glasses on and look at the context.

In 2 Samuel 7, the chapter previous to this, God promises David lots of stuff. Lots of great stuff. The eternal kingdom, etc. But he also says, I will give you rest from your enemies.

I'll give you rest from your enemies. Now, what has to happen for that rest to come? What has to happen is the destruction or the submission of David's enemies.

So what we're seeing here in chapter 8 is God fulfilling, in part, his covenant promise to David. God says, you'll have rest from your enemies and you'll have this great big kingdom.

[10 : 32] And here we see in chapter 8, it's starting to come true. Now, if, like we said, that's all supposed to point to Christ and his kingdom, what is it saying to us?

Is it saying that, you know, British colonization was a really great thing? No, it's not talking about that kind of stuff, right? In its simplest terms, this chapter, the story of David's kingdom, at this point, the story of David's kingdom is a picture of Christ's return to establish his kingdom in its fullness.

And here is what it's saying about that return. It's saying, one, Christ's kingdom will be resisted. There are four or five different enemies listed in this passage.

And that's clearly the case at the moment for the Christian faith. It is resisted in the world, of course. Two, that resistance is using the words of one of the great Star Trek baddies, the Borg, when God comes, resistance is futile.

In Romans 14, it says, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue confess to God. So the bowing of the knee will come voluntarily or by, I don't know how, like forceful submission.

[11 : 49] You will either voluntarily submit your life to Christ when he returns or you will be made to. That's what happened in David's time. That's what happened in David's time. And it's what's going to happen when Christ returns.

So rather than be smited, it's likely better to be like this random toy guy in verse 9 and submit your life.

Folks, Christ will return and his kingdom will not come through popular demand or by popular demand, but Christ will just make it happen. Christ will return and make it happen.

And he will do that over every objection and all opposition and all that to say, this passage is not just an interesting piece of history that we should bypass in our reading.

This is, I mean, it is history, but it's more than history. It is foretaste, a primer of who God is, of what he will do and how we should respond to that.

[12 : 51] Okay, that's chapter 8. Now, let's move on to where David is nice to people, shall we? Okay, chapter 9. You remember that one, right?

If the big word in the last chapter was nika, which means to smite, then the key word here is hesed. Hesed. It's mentioned a number of times, hesed.

Hebrew word, we don't have a single English word to get across the full meaning of it. It's something like loving kindness or covenant love. If we had to go with one word, it would probably be loyalty.

Okay, a little bit of background to chapter 9. In 1 Samuel 20, Jonathan, you remember Jonathan, right? Jonathan, who was David's best mate and then he died.

He was Saul's son. You remember Jonathan? Jonathan? Jonathan met with David in their last meeting. It was 1 Samuel 20, the last time they met alive. And here's what Jonathan says to David.

[13 : 54] Here's the dialogue. Do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.

And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David saying, may the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies. Well, it's finally happening. About, I don't know, 15, 20 years later, David has smote his enemies.

That's chapter 8. And it was time to fulfill the covenant promise to care for Jonathan's family. So, David, verse 1, chapter 9, says, is there still anyone left in the house of Saul that I may show him kindness?

He said, I may show him he said for Jonathan's sake. And there was Jonathan's son who we will call Mephi through the rest of the sermon because I have to say his name a lot.

I'm not trying to be funny. It's just, it will just, just be hard work. Okay, Mephi. Mephi is alive. He's a refugee. His feet are crippled.

[14 : 53] He's landless. He's not in great shape. So David got this guy tracked down Mephi and brought him before him. Verse 6, Now why does David say do not fear?

Why would he do that? Well, Mephi was probably terrified. I mean, in his mind, he's probably thinking, it's conjecture, but I think it's indicated here. Like, there's probably one thing going through his mind.

When a new regime takes power, the key word back in the days was purge. Now all the remnants of the previous regime were killed off, gotten rid of.

Solidification by liquidation. So that's probably what's going through Mephi's mind. Fair enough. He was Saul's grandson. He was, remember Saul tried to kill David a lot of times.

He was the enemy of God. He became the enemy of God, of God's people. He became the enemy of David. This guy could become a rallying point for David's enemies. So it wasn't looking good for Mephi.

[16 : 11] He had nothing to bargain with and he was in the presence of the new king. So what did David do with this guy? Verse 7, For I will show you kindness, he said, for the sake of your father Jonathan.

And I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father and you shall eat at my table always. Isn't that awesome? He not only restores him financially, he basically sort of adopts the guy.

He adopts him, welcomes him in. Provision, position. Now is it that David is just a big softie? Is he just a really nice guy?

Well, I think the previous chapter prevents us from thinking about David as a really nice guy. I mean, he hamstrung 1600 horses. You know, he drew a line in the sand.

You guys are fine. Not so much over here. It doesn't present him as a super nice guy.

[17 : 16] David's kindness to Mephi here is not about being nice. David's kindness is about being loyal. Loyal to a covenant.

To the point of protecting and positioning and equipping a potential enemy. So the big question is, so what? What does this all matter to us? What is it? Is it just a cool kind of story here?

Well, if this is a picture of Christ's rule, then we are God's Mephis. God seeks us out. God seeks out the enemy.

Reaches out. Restores. That's us. And why does he do that? Because of a covenant promise. A covenant promise that we see throughout the Bible that's given its fullest expression in Christ.

So when we come to God, us, like this young crippled man, we have no bargaining power. And at various points in our life, we have resisted God's leadership.

[18 : 19] We have been an enemy to God, you know. And yet, what do we receive from God? We receive, he said, loving kindness. God is loyal to you because he's made a promise to his people.

your salvation is safely in God's hands and he will keep that promise.

Sometimes we think, goodness, it's, you know, oh, I'm not sure if I'm saved. I'm not sure if I'm good enough or... Your salvation is not in your hands. It's in God's hands and he's made a promise and he will keep to that promise.

That's good news, right? Okay, so we have tonight two distinct stories. The Christ King who smites and the Christ King who restores.

Can I just finish by saying these things do not need to be reconciled. They are both things that God will do. Neither one counters or undermines the other and we want God to do both.

[19 : 28] You know, we want a God who protects his people by getting rid of their enemies and for us our enemies are, you know, sin, selfishness, death and these are things we can't beat on our own but like David's army, it is God who wins these battles for us and without these victories we can't have eternal rest.

if you are here this evening and you are not a Christian and you have an ache in your heart and unrest you will not be able to meet that by getting the perfect job, by finding an amazing lover, by living in the best city, by having the greatest pair of jeans, by being the funniest person or the most attractive person.

That unrest in your heart will just continue to eat away. That is not something you can beat and the answer to that unrest and here's the great lie is not inside of you, it is outside of you.

The new age myth is that you just got to find kindness and goodness inside of you and be a better person and God will, you know, God will accept you and love you. No, that's not Christianity, that's the opposite to Christianity.

Christianity is that God defeats your enemies and selfishness, the self-interest, the ache that you feel, you know, only God can meet that need in your heart, only God can forgive you, only God can defeat that, the enemy.

[21 : 11] so, we want a God who gets rid of our enemies, who defeats our enemies and that victory looks like the cross.

We also want a God who restores because, well, you know, on our most self-aware days, I think we recognize that we're not in great shape and in need of restoration, all of us. So that is the God of Nakah, the God of Hesed, and that, folks, is what this passage is about.

Amen. Isaiah, are you coming to pray for us, my friend?