

2 Samuel 2:1-11

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Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0 : 00] All right, so we are looking at 2 Samuel tonight, 2 Samuel chapter 2. That's page 255 in the Pew Bible, if you want to turn there and follow along.

I think we'll have the words on the screen, is that right, Lindsay? Yeah, we'll have them up on the screen too. So, 2 Samuel chapter 2. Tonight we're just going to focus on the first 11 verses of this chapter.

You can see it's a long one. We'll just focus on the beginning portion. All right, let me read this for us. After this, David inquired of the Lord, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?

And the Lord said to him, Go up. David said, To which shall I go up? And he said, To Hebron. So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

And David brought up his men who were with him, Everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

[1 : 08] When they told David it was the men of Jabesh Gilead who buried Saul, David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead and said to them, May you be blessed by the Lord because you showed this loyalty to Saul your Lord and buried him.

Now may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. Now therefore let your hands be strong and be valiant, For Saul your Lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.

But Abner, son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, Took Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. And he made him king over Gilead and the Asherites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel.

Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, And he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Let's pray together. Lord, we long for your word to dwell in us richly. Lord, we want the word of your kingdom, the word of the gospel, the word of grace, the word about you, Lord Jesus, to dwell in us and to seep in us so deeply.

[2 : 29] That our thoughts and our loves and our words and our actions are a picture and a reflection of you. So God, as we study this text tonight, would you help us to seep deeply in it?

To hear what your spirit is saying to us? God, so that we might love you and know you better and better. And God, would the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight.

Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Amen. All right. So I want us to consider this text tonight under this very simple heading. Responding rightly to God's rightful king.

In other words, are we responding rightly to God's rightful king? And I want to just unpack this really simply in two parts. One, God's king, God's rightful king.

And two, our response to him, our rightful response. So first, big heading, God's rightful king. Here we are. We're studying the book of 2 Samuel this fall.

[3 : 37] And as you can see from our text, this book is all about the person of David. Now, if you're not familiar with the Bible or with the Old Testament, David is one of the just massively important figures in all of scripture.

You can't really understand the Old Testament. In fact, you can't even really understand the New Testament in many ways without understanding, in some sense, the person of David. And he's incredibly important for two reasons.

One, he's important, on the one hand, as an example, in some ways, of someone who trusts God. Of someone who has a God-centered heart. So he's a model for us.

But he's not just a model of sort of piety and spirituality for our lives. More importantly than that, in the storyline of the Old Testament, David really is the quintessential king.

All the other kings in Israel will be measured, in some sense, by King David. I don't know what we're going to do next in our sermon series in the evening service.

[4 : 40] Maybe we'll do 1 Kings. Then maybe we'll do 2 Kings after that. Maybe after eight years we'll have finished the entire Old Testament. But you would see, if we went through 1 and 2 Kings, that all these kings end up being measured against David, in some sense, as a measuring stick.

And yet, and yet, as we'll see in the unfolding of 2 Samuel, in the unfolding of David's story, we see that even David, even the great David, isn't actually, is not the one that we're waiting for.

Not even David himself, the great David, can be the true and real savior of Israel and the world. That the great king David points ahead, actually, in hope to an even better king to come.

So that's kind of the big picture of 2 Samuel. Our passage, in particular tonight, shows us the very, very, very beginning of Saul's actual reign.

Of David's actual reign, excuse me. Not Saul, he just died. That was 1 Samuel chapter 31, right? And David has just heard about that in our last chapter. He heard about Saul's death and he mourned. So here's David just having mourned Saul's death.

[5 : 50] And now, in 2 Samuel chapter 2, David's kingdom finally begins. God's kingdom through David, at long last, is inaugurated. And in the three paragraphs that make up, verses 1 through 11 of our text, the narrator, I think, wants us to see three things about David.

Three things about this rightful king. And first thing is David's obedience. David's willingness to listen to God and to do what God says. That's in verses 1 through 4.

I mean, picture it for a second. David, at the beginning of this chapter, is still living outside the land. He's still living in the country of the Philistines. He's still in exile because he's been running from Saul.

And he's just heard that Saul has died. And what does David do? Does he sort of charge into Israel, all guns blazing? At long last, here I am.

You know, it's my time. I deserve this. No. The first thing David does is inquire of the Lord. He wants to know what God wants him to do.

[6 : 56] And this is so different than Saul, isn't it? If you were with us through 1 Samuel in the spring, you'll remember that Saul, as his rule went on and on, listened less and less and less to God.

But here is David, inquiring of the Lord, wanting to do what God says. Not wanting to do what he thinks might be prudent or timely or right, but what God says.

And notice, too, that David's obedience here is entire. It's sort of total. When God tells David to go up, David goes with what? He goes with his entire family.

With all of his wives, with all of his children, with all of his men, with all of his army. They all go. In other words, David is holding nothing back. He's got no sort of plan B here.

He's all in. This is a decisive and complete obedience to the word of God. So God's rightful king here is shown to be one who is entirely obedient to the Lord.

[7 : 55] It's interesting that the key word in this paragraph, or the word that's sort of repeated again and again, is the verb to go up. Did you notice that? Look again at verses 1 through 4. David says, shall I go up?

And the Lord says, go up. And David says, go up where? And then in verse 2, the narrator says, David went up. That's the same verb. And then again in verse 3, it says, David brought up.

Again, that's the same word. Now what's the point? Well, this paragraph in many ways is not just David sort of going up home to his homeland in Judea.

He would have actually gone up elevation wise. But this is David going up to his throne. This is David ascending as the king.

This is his royal ascension. And he's going up as one who is obedient to the Lord. God's rightful king, the narrator is telling us, is the one who ascends, who reigns in obedience to the word of God.

[9 : 02] So David here, God's rightful king is obedient. Second paragraph, starting at the end of verse 4, running through verse 7, shows us the second thing about God's rightful king. And what we see here is his kindness.

Now, to understand sort of what's going on in these verses, you have to realize that the city of Jabesh-Gilead, that the people who live in that city were some of King Saul's biggest supporters.

One of the first things that Saul did in his reign was to save the people of Jabesh-Gilead from a foreign army's attack. It was in some sense the high point of Saul's rule if you look back in 1 Samuel chapter 11.

And the people of Jabesh-Gilead never forgot what Saul did for them. So much so that when they heard the news that Saul had died in battle with the Philistines and that his body was being desecrated, hanging from the wall of the Philistine city Beth-shan.

When they heard this, some of the men from Jabesh-Gilead risked their lives in the middle of the night, just after Israel had been totally pummeled by the Philistines. They go marching into enemy territory in the middle of the night to retrieve Saul's body and to give him and his sons a proper burial.

[10 : 16] I mean, that's like something that they make movies out of, right? It was loyal. It was daring. It was loving. The people of Jabesh-Gilead were some of Saul's most loyal supporters.

And the first thing that David does after ascending and being anointed in Judah is to reach out to that very city in kindness.

Now, yes, in doing this, there is sort of a political element to what David is doing, right? David knows that if Jabesh-Gilead can come over to his side and acknowledge his kingship, then he will have won a great ally in the north, right?

But more than that, David is extending genuine love to these people, is he not?

Again, there's sort of a key word of this paragraph. And the word that's repeated again and again and again in this section of the narrative is the Hebrew word hesed. It's probably one of the most important words in the Old Testament, I would say.

[11 : 27] And it's a bit tricky to translate. Sometimes it's translated kindness. In verse 5, this word is translated loyalty. The loyalty that the city Jabesh-Gilead shown to Saul.

In verse 6, it's translated steadfast love. In other words, hesed is covenant-keeping love.

An unbreakable bond of undivided loyalty and affection. Has anyone here ever read the Jesus Storybook Bible? Do you know that Bible?

The kids' Bible? Greg, I'm sure your kids have read the Jesus Storybook Bible. Well, if you haven't read the Jesus Storybook Bible, go downstairs after the service and grab a copy and buy it and read it. Because it's really edifying.

But one of the ways in which the author of that book describes God's hesed love is by his never stopping, never giving up, always unbreakable, forever and ever and ever love.

[12 : 24] It's sort of this string of descriptions to describe this kind of rock-solid loyalty that God, and that by extension people, can have to others.

In fact, it's one of the ways in Exodus 34 that God describes his own nature. That God's own nature is one of covenant loyalty and covenant love.

And what David says to the city of Jabesh-Gilead is functionally, that's what you showed Saul. And because of that, I'm praying that the Lord shows you the same.

And then in verse 6, David does something very interesting. He says, and I will do good to you because you've done this thing. Now, David doesn't actually use the word hesed there.

But what he's saying basically amounts to the same thing. He's saying, let me show you covenant favor. Enter into a relationship with me.

[13 : 32] And let me prove to you how loyal I can be to you. And it's almost as if David is saying here, when you read the verse as a whole, that he's almost saying, look, I'm praying that God will bless you.

Now, let me be the channel. Let me be the mediator through which the Lord blesses you. Yes, Saul is dead, but I'm not going to punish you.

I'm going to embrace you, David says. And again, isn't David so different than Saul here? Remember back in 1 Samuel 22, it's one of the most sort of grim aspects, I think, of this whole story in 1 and 2 Samuel.

In 1 Samuel 22, Saul has just heard that some priests had kind of innocently helped David by giving him some bread and giving him a sword because David was on the run.

And when Saul hears that, he puts the whole village to death. For one little act of kindness to David, Saul mows down the whole city and murders them all.

[14 : 34] But David, David approaches Saul's biggest supporters and his most loyal fans and the ones who showed him the most kindness.

And how does he respond to them? He says, let me show kindness to you. Let me love you. Let me be faithful to you. Let me be the channel of God's blessing to you.

Friends, that's God's rightful king. That's the kind of king that we actually need. One who extends kindness to people who were the staunchest supporters of his adversary.

One who extends and mediates the Lord's kindness to others. Lastly, in verses 8 through 11, we see that God's rightful king is patient.

When Abner makes Ish-Bosheth king, what's David's response? Outrage? Retaliation? Full frontal attack? No. David waits patiently for the Lord to establish his throne.

[15 : 40] After all, when David is anointed in verse 4, he's anointed king over Judah, right? There are still 11 other tribes in Israel at this point who haven't yet acknowledged David to be their rightful king.

But David doesn't take this opportunity to seize the throne and to force an immediate response. No, David actually waits on the Lord to establish the Lord's reign in the Lord's own timing.

And again, briefly, isn't that so different than Saul? Saul was facing pressure from the Philistines. Do you remember that? And he's waiting for Samuel to show up for a sacrifice. He grows impatient. Doesn't wait any longer.

Makes the sacrifice himself. Rushes into it. Does his own thing. But here we see David patient. Even when a rival is put on the throne, he doesn't rush in.

He doesn't blaze ahead. He's willing to wait on the Lord and to trust the Lord's timing. So here's God's rightful king. The author of 2 Samuel is showing us.

[16 : 42] A king who's rich and who's strong in obedience and in patience and in kindness. It's a pretty stirring picture actually.

Unlike a lot of rulers the world has seen, isn't it? Now, of course, you might not care very much what sort of king David was.

After all, this whole episode took place around the year 1000 BC. That is 3,000 years ago is what we're talking about here. And as we'll see in the rest of the second, Samuel, David isn't always perfectly obedient and kind and patient.

So what does all this have to say to us today? Well, if you think about it, the people of Israel needed a king because they were weak and because they were breaking apart.

The defeat of Saul at the end of the last book meant that the Philistines now controlled most of the northern territories of Israel. Those regions that are listed there in verse 9, you know, most of those at this point in history were occupied by Philistine troops.

[17 : 54] So even though Ish-bosheth was supposedly king over them, he didn't really have control of any of them. That's why his capital city in Mahanaim was on the other side of the Jordan, basically in the Transjordan region on the far reaches as he could possibly get.

And the fact that David is anointed king by Judah, one tribe out of 12, only his home tribe and none of the rest, shows that Israel wasn't just weak at this point, they were fragmenting.

They had lost their center and they were falling apart. Now maybe you look at your own life and you wouldn't say you need a king.

Maybe the idea has never crossed your mind. Maybe the idea sounds kind of stupid actually. Maybe you think you can run your own life. Thank you very much.

But you know, even though you wouldn't say you need a king, maybe you, like Israel, still feel like things in your life are breaking apart. Fragmenting.

[19 : 01] And of course, you, like me, like everyone else, you can put on a really good show, right? You can post lots of happy pictures to Instagram.

I was down for the count for like three days this week with poison ivy, like all over my face and my hands. I didn't put that on Instagram. Wasn't like, hey, my week stinks. Instagram. No.

You can put on a good show. Lots of happy pictures on the internet. You can be killing it at the office. Winning respect. Earning raises. But you know, if you're honest, underneath the veneer of all of that, oftentimes we're not even sure we're even hanging on to begin with.

You pretend to be strong, but you're weak. You pretend to be together, but you're falling apart. And on top of all that, you're not even sure who you could tell. Because everyone around you seems to be playing the same game.

Posing is strong and together, but inside weak and fragmenting. And you know as well as I do that that's not how it's supposed to be. God actually didn't create us to be weak and to fall apart.

[20 : 18] To feel like we're on a roller coaster just inches away from falling off the track at any given moment. And if that's not the way it's supposed to be, then why are we like this?

Well maybe because we've been getting something all wrong. You know, in a traditional culture, in a sort of traditional culture, if you were to admit that you were weak and your life was falling apart, here's what that traditional sort of culture would tell you.

Well you need to do what your family tells you to do. You need to do what your sort of societal structures tell you to do. In other words, you need to find your identity or your center in your primary social group. That's who you really are.

Do your duty. To family, to nation, to whatever. You know, if you walk across Yale's campus over here, you'll see a big sort of thing etched in stone where it says, Is that right?

Is it on next to the Beinecke? For God, for country, and for Yale. I don't know of any person, let alone Yale student, whose heart is sort of inspired by that.

[21 : 25] And yet that's the answer that you would get in a traditional culture if you feel like your life's falling apart. Do your duty. That's what's going to hold you together. But you know, today in our culture, we don't really like that answer.

And after all, it didn't really work at the end of the day, did it? So if you ask someone in our sort of progressive culture, What do I do? I'm weak. I'm falling apart. Here's what they'll probably tell you. Not look to your family, but no, you need to do what your heart tells you to do.

You need to look inside. Find your center. Find your identity in yourself. That's how you're going to find stability and strength. Start to create a self according to your own inner desire. Don't listen to other people.

That's how you'll find it. So you see, here are the answers. On the one hand, on the one hand, people saying, Look outside. Look to those around you.

They'll tell you how to be secure. And on the other hand, people saying, Look inside. That's where you find it. But you know, the trouble is, this new answer, this sort of looking inside answer, that doesn't really work either.

[22 : 31] We're still just as fragmented and weak as before, and maybe more so. But here's where the Bible is so radical. In the midst of all this, the biblical answer cuts both ways.

It doesn't say look out, and it doesn't say look in. The Bible says look up. Family wasn't made to run your life.

And you weren't actually made to run your life. God was meant to be your king. You see, friends, the human heart, the human life, is too precious a thing.

It is too valuable a thing to be kept, and to be run by anyone else. If I owned a valuable piece of artwork, here's the one place I would not hang that piece of artwork.

In my kids' bedroom. Here's why. Because if I entrusted this piece of artwork to my kids in their bedroom, they would use it as a target for their Nerf guns. Or they would bounce into it when they were jumping on their beds.

[23 : 43] They wouldn't know how to care for it. But friends, don't you see, your life, your soul, is of much more value than the most precious and rare piece of art.

There is nothing in the world that amounts to the value of a human life. And to whom will you entrust the care of you?

When God wanted to put a king over Israel, he raised up David. Someone obedient and full of covenant kindness and patience.

But when God wanted to put a king over our lives and over the world, he sent his own son. And like David, Jesus was obedient and kind and patient.

But Jesus was all that David could never be. Because eventually, David's obedience cracked and his kindness wavered and his patience grew thin.

[24 : 53] But Jesus Christ was true to the end. And after his death and resurrection, Jesus ascended his throne. And didn't sit on a throne in Hebron, but sits at the Father's right hand.

And now Jesus doesn't send out messages of kindness to some enemies across the border, but Jesus is pouring out His own Holy Spirit to take that kindness of God and infuse it into your hearts and to make you something you could never even imagine.

Friends, Jesus is the true ascended king who issues the Lord's steadfast love even to those who were once His enemies. He's the rightful king. And friends, He's the one that we were meant to build our life on.

Isn't your own self, aren't your own desires too shaky and too fickle to do that? You know that they won't hold. But here's one who will. You see, Jesus knows how precious your life is because He shed His own blood for it.

And as your king, He will never lead you astray. Here's the one who was broken so that you could be put back together. And Jesus was the one who became weak so that you could be made strong.

[26 : 17] And He's the one who now reigns. And through His Spirit is applying everything that He's won through His death and resurrection to those who believe.

And that brings us to the second big point of our text tonight. God's king, our response.

How are we responding to the true rightful king, to King Jesus? You know, there are three groups of people in our text tonight. One in each paragraph. First, you've got the people of Judah.

And what do they do? They receive David as king. And that, of course, is how the narrator wants us to respond, right? That's the right answer. Receive David as king. Crown him the Lord of lords.

Receive him as Lord. But you know, we need to be reminded that like the people of Judah, we need to be reminded that it might take some time before Jesus' reign starts to be visible elsewhere.

[27 : 21] You know, it was two years, two years before the rest of the tribes of Israel found, sort of joined Judah in finding and acknowledging David as their king.

But you know what? The kingdom came. Friends, it's been 2,000 years since Jesus ascended to the throne. And you look around at the world and you think, what gives?

But don't be mistaken, the kingdom is coming. It starts like a mustard seed, Jesus said. And it grows.

And just like David and Judah, Jesus' kingdom is growing and it will grow until one day, not just all Israel will see him and rejoice, but the Apostle Paul says that one day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And you know, what's true of God's sort of whole plan of redemption is true of your life? Sometimes the reign of Jesus in our hearts, in other words, takes time. If you don't see sort of instant transformation, hold on.

[28 : 31] Don't lose heart. You know, this king actually has much bigger plans for your life than you realize. You want Jesus to come in and sort of redecorate some of your rooms.

Jesus wants to come in and he wants to renovate your whole house. He wants to kick down some walls, throw out an extension out the back, maybe finish your third floor attic. He wants to make you into something much more impressive than you would conceive and it takes time.

We have to remember that Jesus is a patient king and we need to keep trusting him. So there are the people of Judah. That's one response. You can crown him the king in your heart and your life.

Another response we see in this text is at the end in verses 8-11. Abner and Ish-bosheth. And this is almost the exact opposite, right? Abner sets up a rival throne, a rival kingdom and he uses the last sort of surviving son of Saul to get it done.

And make no mistake about it, it's Abner who's doing the acting here, right? Look at verses 8-9. All the verbs belong to Abner. Abner took, he brought, he made him king. He's the one who's doing all this.

[29 : 45] Now we're going to get into Abner's story a little more next week. The rest of chapters 2-3 are really about him. But for now, I think the thing to see is that instead of receiving David as king, what Abner does is he sets up a rival king.

And isn't that how all of our hearts actually work? We won't necessarily make ourselves king, at least on the surface, but we'll make something else a king in Jesus' place.

We'll install a sort of replacement or a rival king. And that's the other way that you can actually respond to Jesus as the rightful king.

You can reject him and you can put someone else on the throne instead. But you know, the irony is, is that you still have a king.

The thing that runs your life might be money or sex or power, but something is going to rule you and run you.

[30 : 47] You'll put something on the throne of your life. And you know, if you read the rest of chapter 2, you see the result of what happens when we do that. The whole country and the rest of this chapter just descends into a brutal civil war.

It tears them apart. As I was studying this week, I couldn't get the words of Jesus out of my mind when Jesus met Paul, the apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus before his conversion.

Do you remember what Jesus said to then Saul? He said, it's hard for you to kick against the goats. Why, Jesus said, are you fighting against the inevitable?

It only hurts you. And on top of that, you can't reject his kingship forever. You know, at this point in 2 Samuel, at this point in the narrative, we know that David is going to be the king.

It's just a matter of time. Abner's rebellion doesn't change that. And so today, rejecting Jesus as king doesn't change the fact that he is the one before whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.

[32 : 02] The question is, will we do it willingly now or unwillingly then? Friends, if you see yourself in Abner tonight, know that there's still time to put an end to your rebellion, to cast those false lords from the throne of your life and to bow before the one who's the true king, who's actually patient and kind and good.

There's one last group of people in this chapter. Right in the middle between these two responses are the people of Jabesh Gilead. These are the ones, remember, who receive the message of David's kindness.

David has ascended the throne. His words going forth, come to me, let me do good to you, he says. Friends, you need to know that that is the same word of the ascended Jesus that's going forth tonight.

That is the same thing that Jesus is saying right now through the preaching of his word that he's saying through the elements on this table, he's saying, come to me and find the kindness of the Lord.

Let me be the one who mediates all of your creator's blessings to you in forgiveness and in covenant faithfulness. So friends, receive his kingship and receive his kindness.

[33 : 38] You know, it's an interesting thing that we don't know how the people of Jabesh Gilead responded to David. The narrator just doesn't tell us. But the more important question is this.

How are you and I going to respond? That's what really matters. How will you respond to God's rightful king? Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the picture that we have in this chapter of the glory of your son. thank you that you have sent your son to be a perfect, good, loving king.

God, would you work in all of our hearts that we might turn from the false things that we put on the throne and that we might receive him as Lord.

Lord, we pray this in his precious name. Amen. God, who impressed you