

2 Samuel 8

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

What does your name mean? I'm not asking for some pseudo-etymology that you may have come across in a Hallmark card or some obscure corner of the internet.

No. I'm asking, when people hear your name, what do they think? When you hear your name, what do you think?

Perhaps the better question is, what do you stand for? What does your name represent? How much of your life is taken up with the task of making a name for yourself?

This is sort of a distinctively American thing. I actually think it's a human thing that Americans have perfected really well, making a name for ourselves. Many come to New Haven on precisely that quest.

[1 : 28] To spend a few of their years, usually in their youth, striving to make something of themselves. Maybe that's you.

Or maybe you're in the second half of your life, looking back on a youth that has passed you by.

And even my mention of making something of your life ignites a deep bitterness in you. A bitterness of regrets. Lost or misspent opportunities.

Disappointed youthful ambitions. We call this the midlife crisis. The time is tragically past, so you think, for making a name for yourself.

Or perhaps you're in a third category. Life, you think, has dealt harshly with you. And has given you no real opportunity to make anything of yourself.

[2 : 31] And you're far too busy simply squeezing out an existence of finding food and adequate shelter. To be at all concerned with the grand task of making something for yourself.

There are plenty of people like that in New Haven as well. Men and women have a natural craving for making a name for themselves. For glory.

To behold something larger, grander, and greater than they are now. And indeed, to become precisely that thing that they want to behold.

We read in the history books and watch on the movies the lives of great men and women. And our soul longs to be like them. We identify with the protagonist, the hero of the story.

However, we're chastened by the fact that the Bible has no lack of examples of those who desire to make something of themselves. And instead made of themselves a ruin.

[3 : 39] Think of the Tower of Babel in Genesis. Scripture identifies the motivation that underlies their desire to build a tower to be, Let us make a name for ourselves.

Or think in the New Testament of Herod. Who gave a speech. And the people responded to it by saying, The voice of a God and not of a man. Scripture picks up the story and says, Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory.

And he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. Amidst all these stories, one might be surprised, however, to learn that the Bible never categorically rejects the impulse for us to make a name for ourselves.

To seek after glory. Never once has the Bible said the longing for glory is itself a sin. Instead, Scripture depicts the gospel of Jesus coming into our lives and transforming that desire.

Whoever would be great among you, Jesus says, presuming that we desire to be great, must be your servant. And whoever would be first, must be last.

[5 : 06] These are the ways that Jesus transforms, but does not destroy, our desire for glory. So I pose to you then a question. How shall we make a name for ourselves without making a ruin of ourselves?

This is the question answered in our text tonight. Our text for this evening is 2 Samuel chapter 8. 2 Samuel chapter 8. Before we read that together, I want to briefly return to a section in the previous chapter.

So, probably the same page. Turn with me briefly to 2 Samuel chapter 7, verse 8 through 9. For a fuller discussion of this chapter, go ahead and go online into the archives of Trinity.

We've been preaching some sermons straight through 2 Samuel, and you'll find sermon on this passage there. Just a brief reminder on this context. The context here is that David is now comfortable in his palace, having defeated a lot of his enemies.

And he desires to make a temple for the Lord, a house for the Lord. God, however, does not allow him to do this.

[6 : 22] But instead, God honors David for having a concern for his house. Let's read together 2 Samuel chapter 7, verse 8 through 10.

Now, therefore, you shall say to my servant David, thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.

And I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all of your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more.

And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly. Now, skip ahead to 2 Samuel 8. After this, David defeated the Philistines, and subdued them.

[7 : 33] And David took Mepheg Amah out of the hand of the Philistines. He defeated Moab, and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground.

Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David, and brought tribute. David also defeated Hadadezar, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates.

David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left enough for 100 chariots. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezar, the king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians.

Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought tribute. And the Lord gave David victory wherever he went.

And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezar, and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and from Berotai, cities of Hadadezar, King David took very much bronze.

[8 : 51] When Toi, king of Hamath, heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezar, Toi sent his son Joram to King David to ask about his health, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezar and defeated him.

For Hadadezar had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze. These also, king David, dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezar, the son of Rehob, the king of Zobah.

And David made a name for himself, when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

Then he put garrisons in Edom. Throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.

So David reigned over all Israel, and David administered justice and equity to all the people. Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was over the army. And Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, was recorder.

[10 : 06] And Zadok, the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, were priests. And Saraiah was secretary. And Benaniah, the son of Jehoiadaia, was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites.

And David's son were priests. What we have here is God making a promise to David, I will make a great name for you like the great men of the world.

And in this text we see that David has made the name for himself. And I think upon closer reflection, my prayer is that we will find a way from this text to make a name for ourselves without making a ruin of ourselves.

My sermon tonight has one point. David made a name for himself by providing for his followers the means to worship God.

Our text opens in a familiar way.

[11 : 18] David at war with Philistines. We've seen this over and over again in our text. So it might escape your notice that this is actually a climactic moment. The city that he captures, Methed Amah, is difficult to translate.

But that second word, Amah, is probably related to the Hebrew word for mother. In essence, David here is capturing the mother city of the Philistines.

This is the last time we will see the Philistines mentioned until chapter 21. 13 chapters in advance. Which occurs toward the end of David's reign.

The blow he deals here to the Philistines is decisive. And it's the culmination of all the previous battles that went before him. But notice, the conquests of David do not end here.

The text says he also destroyed the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites, the king of Zobah, who reigned near the Euphrates River, which is in modern day Iraq. Perhaps these places mean very little to you.

[12 : 24] The important thing about them is that these are not lands that God promised to Abraham for his descendants to inhabit. What David's doing here is creating a buffer around the land of Israel so that there are no enemies around him to plague him, or more importantly, his descendants.

He hamstring all the horses, that is, he doesn't kill them, so they're still useful for farm work and other types of labor, but they're no longer strong enough and fast enough to be used for military purposes.

He's destroying rival armies all around him while leaving the people intact. He's neutralizing the threats in the area so they will not crop up again in the lifetimes of him or of his descendants.

In many ways, this chapter represents the height of David's strength with his enemies defeated all around him. But look a bit closer.

I think we can observe that this is not simply a chronicle of military conquests. David has just been told that his son, not he, will build a house for the Lord.

[13 : 39] That happened in the previous chapter. In the parallel text in 1 Chronicles 22, we learn that David was disqualified from building the Lord's house, a great honor, because David had shed much blood and waged great wars.

Therefore, David knows that his son will not be able to be a warfaring man if he is to build the house of the Lord. Therefore, it falls to David to create the conditions of peace in which his son will be able to build the Lord's house.

David is preparing the way for his followers to worship God in relative peace and tranquility. Notice another theme that we have in this passage.

Frequently throughout 2 Samuel, and again here in verses 8, 10, and 11, we see David amassing wealth through spoils taken in war and through tribute. Here he wins gold, silver, and bronze.

On one level, this is another indication of David's military prestige. But fascinatingly, we're not told much about what David does with all this riches.

[14 : 51] We're told only that he dedicates them to the Lord, verse 11, but we don't see these war spoils again for plenty of time to come. But then, a generation later, we see Solomon building the temple of the Lord with gold and silver and bronze and wood from all over.

All of these massive resources. And I think it's not too far a jump to think that some of the resources that Solomon used to adorn the temple of the God were captured by David in precisely these raids.

David himself was not able to build for himself a temple, but David made for himself a name by providing the resources for his son to worship God by building the temple.

So David makes a name for himself by defeating the enemies around them and by having enough resources for his son and those who follow him to worship God in the temple.

So let me ask you, who will follow you for whom are you preparing a certain type of world?

[16 : 15] Who is watching you to see what faithfulness to God looks like? Are you making it easier or harder for those who come behind you to worship God?

God? When you think of making a name for yourself, do you think of creating a world in which those who follow you can more closely worship him?

Are you using the influence and power you have to create a world where it's easier for those who follow you to worship God rightly? This is why David made a name for himself.

Not just because he defeated one army in one battle. No, it's broader than this. He was committed to the worship of the true God and he would not build his own house without also striving to build the house of the Lord.

Is this your conviction as well? Do you desire not to have fame and glory in this world unless the Lord has fame and glory in this world?

[17 : 24] This was David's conviction in the previous chapter and that is why God blessed him. David, you see, didn't even seek his own glory. If you go back and look in 1 Samuel in the war with David and Saul, David is frequently reacting, not acting, not scheming for his own glory.

He's letting God work in history to bring about his vindication. Is that your scheme as well?

Make no mistake about it. You can make a name for yourself in this world and go straight to hell. You can make something of yourself, have biographies written about you, have a grand and glorious tombstone, have your name on t-shirts, then burn in hell and bring many who follow you with you.

It's possible. Dare I say it may even be frequent. Parents, what name are you making in the eyes of your children?

Do they know you as one who is desperate to climb a career ladder or a social ladder and apathetic about leading your family in God's way?

[18 : 50] Future parents, what will you do? What habits are you making now to make it easy for your children and the children of Christians around you to follow the Lord?

My father is a pastor in Pennsylvania. I've listened to him give hundreds of sermons. I don't remember almost any of them. But there's nothing that he has said from behind a pulpit that has ever struck me more profoundly than this one sentence.

He says, if this church grows to be a thousand people and you all in these pews think I'm the greatest preacher you've ever heard and a rousing success, but that woman, my wife, in the front row and those children who sit next to her, my children, think that I'm a phony, then I am an abject failure.

Irrespective of what you all think of me. I'll never forget my dad saying those words. parents, can you say that about your career?

That if employer and employee, if the bottom line for the company all says that you are a rousing success and your family, those who come after you say you are a phony, then you are indeed a failure.

[20 : 09] Can you say that? Can you say that in the hearing of your children? I think your children want to hear you say that.

I think they want to know that your foremost concern is that you will follow the Lord and will help them in following the Lord. This is how you can make a name for yourself.

This month, the Steve Jobs movie came out in theaters. Steve Jobs is renowned for his part in making Apple into the technology behemoth it is today.

No one can deny that Steve Jobs has made a name for himself. He's almost as equally renowned for being an utter failure at his relationships. At one point in the trailer for the movie, someone close to him says, Steve, what you make isn't supposed to be the best part of you.

When you're a father, that's supposed to be the best part of you. And you can tell, if you've read the biography, if you've heard stories about him, that it seems like he was very willing to sacrifice his children and those who came after him for his own name.

[21 : 24] So parents, are you like Steve Jobs? Are you like the ones building Babel to reach for heavens yourself? Or are you giving your children the resources to build God's temple in their midst?

God's you can make a name for yourself by helping those who come after you serve the Lord. So there's parents.

Perhaps you're single. I want to ask you, what does your family name mean? Your last name? Where do you fall, if at all, in a lineage of faithfulness?

How many generations back in your family can you trace the hand of the Lord? mine doesn't carry that sort of weight. I'm a second generation Christian.

Both of my parents were miraculously converted out of very nominal, mostly apathetic, perhaps pretty dysfunctional families. And it's amazing, in my family tree, you can trace, there's a one-to-one correlation between love of Jesus and degree of functionality.

[22 : 32] And it's a pretty precipitous decline, man. But this means that God has placed me providentially in this moment in history, in my family tree with a decision.

What will it mean to be of the Hawkins family? Will our name be associated with a generations-long effort to strain every nerve for our own kingdom?

Think Rockefeller. Think Vanderbilt. Or will the family name be known as one that has a consistent and persistent lineage of striving to realize the kingdom of God?

If you do not come from a lineage and a heritage of faithfulness, it can start with your generation. You can make a name for yourself and your family by helping those who come after you serve the Lord.

another way David helped provide for his followers to worship God.

[23 : 43] In verse 15, we see that he administered justice and equity to all of his people. Afterwards, it's going to become much more problematic and you're going to see that kings don't do this to Israel and that people fall.

The true worship of God declines with the decline in justice and equity. David helped those who followed him follow the Lord by ruling, by exercising his authority with righteousness and justice.

What authority do you have? Are you an employer? Are you anywhere other than the bottom in a hierarchy? Do you use your authority in such a way that those who follow that authority, those who see that authority, are quickened in their path of following the Lord?

Or stopped? If you're an employee and you're providing services to people, do you have a reputation for both good service and care for your clients that befits Christ and one who bears his name?

Do you make it easier for the people around you to worship the Lord or not? So we have parents, we have singles, and we have employers, those with authority.

[25 : 05] But in my introduction, I mentioned also that there is something in this passage for those for whom life has been hard. And at every turn, they have been barred from the opportunity of making a name for themselves.

Perhaps you don't have any influence, any authority, any family, and it seems as though you can never have a name for yourself.

The Bible, I think, has glorious news for you. Whereas in the Old Testament, one's name was quite intimately connected with how well established their family was and how many children it had to carry on the name, in the prophets.

They foresee a day when all of this will be changed. Isaiah, speaking of outsiders, says this, Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, the Lord will surely separate me from his people.

And let not the eunuch say, behold, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my wall a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

[26 : 24] I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. An everlasting name that shall not be cut off, promised to those who are foreigners, who are poor, who have no family to speak of.

How is this possible? Because in God's economy, in God's organization of the world, greatness does not have to do with earthly prestige.

Sometimes the two come together and we ought to be both thankful and somewhat worrisome, worried when that happens. We ought to be very careful when advancement in the kingdom and advancement in the world seems so closely tied together.

It's always difficult. It's always dangerous. It's always possible for us to slip over from seeking the kingdom of God to seeking our own kingdom. But to those for whom there is no possibility of realizing their own kingdom, making their own name on earth, rejoice that the Lord has not organized the kingdom of heaven the way he has organized our sinful, our sinful natures have organized the kingdom of man.

An eternal name that will never be blotted out. An everlasting name better than sons and daughters. How can this be true?

[27 : 57] How can this be true? It's true because God has intervened in history in such a way as to disrupt and upset it.

He has seen the brokenness and the sinfulness of the world and he has come to make all things new to turn it on its head.

He does this in Christ. Christ who comes into the world and takes away the sins of the world. And in replacement for those sins he gives us his righteousness but not only his righteousness he gives us his name.

Christians are those who bear the name of Christ. And this was promised in the Old Testament over and over. After the Lord gives the blessing that Aaron is supposed to give over the people he says so they shall put my name upon the people of Israel and I will bless them.

When Isaiah is looking forward to the bringing in of all the nations the Lord says I will say to the north give up and to the south do not withhold bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

[29 : 18] Everyone who is called by my name whom I created for my glory. whom I formed and made. The Lord gives us a glorious name by giving us his glorious name.

Just as David was concerned first to build the Lord's house and then the Lord established his house. This is the way of making a name for ourselves as Christians.

This pattern is frequent in the Bible. Humiliation and exaltation. Think of Philippians 2. The son, the identical copy of the father, does not esteem equality with God for him to be grasped onto.

But instead he empties himself, makes himself like a servant. Therefore the Lord has highly exalted him. Over and over those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

So I urge you to seek for yourself a name. A great name. By helping those around you worship the Lord rightly.

[30 : 39] By humbling yourself. Saying not to us, O Lord, but to your name give glory. And do you know what the Lord does to those who say not to us, O Lord, but to your name give glory?

He gives them a name. He gives them glory. Corinthians says that when we behold the glory, we are transformed into that image of glory.

Think of all the promises of reward that are held out in the New Testament for those who would humble themselves, take up crosses, and follow him. Jesus says you will be given crowns and robes and authority over angels forever.

But the cross comes first. And bearing the name of Christ comes first. Bearing witness to him comes first. Christ. This is the lesson to take from David.

David did not seek his own glory first, but rather sought the glory of God. And as Jesus says, all these things were added unto him.

[31 : 56] May it be so with us as well. May we make a name for ourselves without making a ruin of ourselves by helping those around us worship God rightly.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this example of David. And I thank you for your Holy Spirit, without whom all of this would be impossible.

We thank you that you have given us a promise of glory that has been held out for us. And we pray that you would give us the grace to attain that glory.

Give us the assurance that when we say, not to us, O Lord, but to your name, give glory. We are placing our good into your hands, and there is no better, safer hands to put that into than yours.

Lord, we do pray that your people in New Haven and beyond who are called by your name would be glorious in heaven because of the great works that you've done in and through us on this earth.

[33 : 15] In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen. In our evening services, we have the, oh, you may be seated.

We have the opportunity in the evening services to stump the preacher. So if you have any questions on the text, the application, anything of that nature, feel free to ask and I'll do my best to answer.

Any questions on this? Yeah, Darcy. Darcy. The last verse. Chapter 18 of what? Chapter 18. Yeah.

18 verse. Verse 18. It says, and David's sons were priests. So who and how did they become priests if they were not in the line of Aaron?

Or, how did David's sons become priests if they were not in the line of Aaron? I have no idea. Good question.

[34 : 16] Yeah. The priestly, kingly system is confusing to me, to be entirely honest with you. Any of the pastors have a better answer than that? Nope. Okay.

I'm getting the nod. I'm getting the no. All right. Great question. So the first question, the first stump. Great job, guys. All right. One for one. Any other questions? Any other questions?

Yeah, you first. Yeah, great question.

Yeah, great question. So the question was, how do I connect the idea of David making a name for himself by helping others worship him with Jesus' idea that if you want to be first, be last? The way I do it is this.

First of all, if this is a pressing question for you, or even if it's not, go read an essay by C.S. Lewis called The Weight of Glory. It's in a book conveniently called The Weight of Glory.

[35 : 27] You can find the PDF online. The general argument is this. Human beings are given this desire for glory.

And that desire connects up with the glory that we will behold and will become in heaven. Our temporal desires for glory, the desire is there, but now it's attached to a different object.

So we still want to have and behold glory, but we are connecting that now to our own ambition, to career advancement, to other things.

So the desire is there, but it's now aimed at the wrong object. So what Jesus comes along and does, he says, what he comes along and says, look, the answer is not to cease being great or desiring to be great.

The answer is to be great in the way the kingdom of God operates. And the way the kingdom of God operates is that greatness is marked by self-emptying.

[36 : 40] And on earth, my argument here from this passage is that one major way that self-emptying works is that you use your life so that those around you can worship the Lord more fully and more adequately.

There is a Trinitarian analogy here where what the members of the Trinity do is they exist in a perfect self-emptying love for each other.

And the amazing thing is that they're continuing to give love, give love, give love, and they never run out. Why? Because they're being filled with love from the other members of the Trinity.

And I think you can run this analogy down through a number of human relationships. If you're in a marriage, one way that you can try to be happy is to seek your own happiness.

And then you have two people who happen to have wedding rings and share a house seeking their own happiness. Or you can seek your happiness in the happiness of the other. And you empty yourself to try to love the other person.

[37 : 44] And if it's working correctly the way it works in the Trinity, both members of the marriage are doing this for each other. Such that they never run out of energy. What you have is the husband loving his wife self-sacrificially and the wife loving her husband self-sacrificially.

And now what you have is they're not only having their own happiness, they're also intimately connected. Like this. And I think the answer is, the way this dynamic works is it's similar to the Philippians 2 passage that I mentioned.

Where the pattern in the Christian life is humiliation and exaltation. So Jesus, the son did not consider equality with God's men to be grasped.

He emptied himself. Therefore the father highly exalted him. I think this is the way the greatness thing works in the Christian life. You become great by emptying yourself.

And that's what's meant by the first shall be last and the last shall be first. First, those who are first by the standards of this world, which is in fact upside down, turn out to be last.

[38 : 48] And those who are last, those who seek the good of others and those who do not care for their own standing, end up, when the universe is flipped right again, being on top. Does that answer your question? Excellent.

Thank you. Great question. Back of the soundboard. Great question.

How should we view the examples in the Old Testament where worldly things like the wisdom of Solomon and all of his riches that accompany him are held forth as a reward?

There are two parts to this answer, I think. The first one is when it comes to the kings in the Old Testament, they particularly and strangely represent the people of God in a way we don't have an analogy for in the New Covenant.

So the earthly success of Israel is in some ways a marker of the Lord's favor upon them, but interestingly, not always.

[40 : 03] And I would contend that even like all the riches that Solomon had were deeply ambiguous. So in Deuteronomy, interestingly, before they have a king, there are rules given for a king.

And some of the rules say he should not do three things. He should not amass much wealth. He should not amass for himself many horses. And he should not have for himself lots of wives.

What three things does this represent? High taxation, high standing army that could become tyrannical, and high foreign entanglement. When Solomon is introduced, it says, and he got for himself much gold, many horses, and lots and lots of wives.

And if you know the story, all those things become his downfall at the end. So I think there is this implicit warning, actually it's an explicit warning in the Old Testament about those earthly riches.

There's a way of stewarding those things well, but it's deeply difficult. So does that answer your question? All right. Okay. Good? I'm sure we could go on.

[41 : 13] These are great questions. Thank you, Justin, for bringing that. Friends, our worship evening comes to its conclusion, but our worship of God does not as we go out.

So I pray that as you go, you will do that. Let me briefly point you to your bulletin for a few announcements.