REJECTING THE LORD’S ANOINTED

2 SAMUEL CHAPTERS 15-19

*[Chaps 15-19 tell a story of one who rejected the Lord’s anointed. We will cover his rebellion over the next 2 weeks – a lot of application for us here but the bottom line is that you don’t want to reject the Lord’s anointed. If you do it won’t end well for you]*

We’re in the middle of a study of Second Samuel, which focuses on the reign of King David. He’s the rightfully anointed king of Israel. David is God’s chosen leader. He is a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14). We see the depth of David’s spirituality, his close relationship with God, in many of the Psalms that he wrote. By and large David is a good king, perhaps even the greatest king in Israel’s history. He unifies his country which had been divided. He conquers the strategic city of Jerusalem and makes it his capital. He brings the ark up to Jerusalem and establishes the national worship of God there. David builds his palace in Jerusalem, the City of David and has a strong desire to build God a house. But God tells David, “No, I don’t want you to build ME a house. That’s for someone else. I’m going to build YOU a house.” God makes an unconditional promise, a covenant promise to David that his house, his descendants, will reign forever and ever.

We know from Luke 1:32 that the covenant promise God made to David would be fulfilled 1000 years later in David’s offspring, that is, in Jesus. The angel speaking to Mary says, “He [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David.” So as we study about King David and his reign we’re mindful of another king who will reign someday from Jerusalem, that of course is the King of kings, Jesus Himself. Both David and Jesus are the Lord’s anointed. In fact the term Messiah means “anointed one” or “chosen one.” God expects His people to honor and to follow them. We’ll see several interesting parallels between David and Jesus in this lesson and this will give us an opportunity to compare and contrast them.

David is a remarkable man and he’s a good king. But just like every one of us in this room, David has his flaws. He isn’t perfect. By no means! The Bible records David’s sins of adultery and murder in 2 Samuel Ch 11. And then in Ch 12 God thru Nathan the prophet pronounces judgment against the house of David because of what David had done.

READ 2 Samuel 12:9-12

By His grace and because God keeps His promises, He doesn’t rescind His covenant promise to David. That’s a done deal. But God does render judgment upon David and his family. Chaps 13-20 detail how this is systematically carried out. God Himself doesn’t do evil – James 1:13 says that “God cannot be tempted with evil, and He himself tempts no one.” But in His sovereign will God allows tragedy to strike David’s house, one bad thing after another. In Ch 13, last week’s lesson, we saw where David’s oldest son and apparent heir to the throne, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar, David’s daughter. It literally ruined Tamar’s life. Tamar’s brother, Absalom, another of David’s sons became upset when he found out what Amnon had done to his sister and he began plotting to kill Amnon. Two years later Absalom carried out his revenge and had Amnon killed. Absalom then fled Israel and was gone for 3 years. At the end of Ch 13 we’re told that “David mourned for his son [Absalom] day after day.” Joab talked Absalom into returning but inexplicably David refused to see Absalom for two more years. David’s inactions – not reprimanding or punishing Amnon, not comforting Tamar, not reaching out to restore Absalom – all of these underscore David’s failure as a father. But as I read thru the narrative of 2 Samuel I focus on the bigger picture, that is, God’s judgment on the house of David for David’s sins. The pervasiveness – the widespread effects of sin – they’re seen here on every page.

Well Absalom grew tired of waiting for David, so he finagled a way to get an audience with his father the king. Absalom has an ulterior motive for doing this. It’s not because he misses dear old dad. Absalom wants to put himself in a position of influence in Israel. But he can only do that from the palace.

Absalom has some very high political aspirations. As we’ll see he wants to be the king. His ultimate goal is to replace his father David on the throne of Israel. Absalom looks every bit the part of a king – like Saul the past king Absalom is handsome. Ch 14 v 25 says that “from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.” He also has a lot of hair. Once a year he had his hair cut and when it was weighed it was about 5 pounds. That’s a lot of hair! So that’s Absalom. He will be the antagonist in our story, the one who rejects the Lord’s anointed. So lets read from Chapter 15…

READ 2 Samuel 15:1-6

Absalom, like many politicians, is full of himself. To promote his super image he hires a chariot and horses and 50 men to run along beside him. Absalom is really something! Just picture the scene – his long hair waving in the breeze as he rides along in his chariot with his entourage running alongside him thru the streets of Jerusalem. He wants to be noticed. He draws attention to himself. He’s quite the celebrity. Absalom, the prince of Israel, with his long hair, charisma and good looks presents himself as a regal kingly figure for all Israel to behold.

Notice his political savvy, his strategy. As people arrive in Jerusalem from all over Israel to have their cases heard before King David he intercepts them at the gate. You could say that he works the crowd. He greets them, engages them in conversation. He asks them where they’re from and what they are there for. They tell him their issue. Absalom says, “Why you have a great case! Isn’t it a shame that there is no one designated by the king to hear it?” Absalom is lying of course. Back in Ch 14 David hears a case from a woman of Tekoa. So King David is doing what he, the king, is supposed to do, which is among other things to hear cases and administer justice. Absalom arouses dissatisfaction with the current regime by deceiving the people with false information, all for his own political gain. His goal is to make his political opponent, in this case his father the king, look bad while at the same time he makes himself look good. That’s what politicians do. He tells the people, “If I were the king I would give you justice.” Basically he’s implying, “I’d be a better king than King David! I should be king.” And according to v 6 his plan to usurp the throne from David appears to be working as he slowly steals the hearts of the people of Israel.

The Bible doesn’t paint a particularly nice picture of Absalom. In Ch 13 he’s a vengeful murderer. In Ch 14 he’s a master manipulator. Here we see him as an arrogant liar, a schemer, a deceiver and a false accuser. Absalom’s desire is evil. He wants to subvert God’s kingdom and God’s king. He’s not a good guy! David is God’s chosen and anointed king, not Absalom. David was willing to wait on God before becoming king while Absalom schemes a way to be king, to seize the throne. David sought God. Absalom never does. David did things God’s way and in God’s time. Absalom does things his way. David when he was wronged by Saul continually was never vengeful. Absalom when he perceives that he has been wronged is filled with hate and vengeance. What a contrast we see between the characters of David and Absalom – David the true king of Israel and Absalom the wanna-be-king.

After 4 years of gaining political influence Absalom is ready to make his move and to seize the throne of Israel from his father. In v 7-11 Absalom in the guise of spirituality (to offer sacrifices), using religion for his own ends, moves from Jerusalem south to Hebron – David’s former capital. This allows Absalom the freedom to organize his political coup. He sends out spies, secret messengers, throughout all of Israel to circulate the story that Absalom has been crowned king in Hebron [modern coups might take over the radio and TV stations]. In a bold and brilliant political move Absalom convinces Ahithophel (this is David’s most trusted counselor, I like to view him as David’s secretary of state, his right hand man)… Absalom persuades Ahithophel into leaving David and joining up with his side. V 12 says, “And the conspiracy grew strong and the people with Absalom kept increasing.”

This is all a part of God’s judgment on David and I believe David, based on the way he will react, knows this. But I must emphasize again that Absalom’s sin, his treasonous actions against the Lord’s anointed, is his own willful choice which he will be held personally responsible for. How does God’s sovereign will and man’s free agency work together? I can’t explain it. But we know this IS the case. For example the death of Jesus on the cross was all part of God’s redemptive plan, right? Does that mean the people responsible for crucifying Jesus, the sinless Son of God are off the hook? No, not according to Peter. Listen to what he says in his sermon at Pentecost. In Acts 2:23 he says, “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God [the sovereignty of God], you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. [you are responsible]” So in our narrative today nobody is holding the proverbial gun to anyone’s head and forcing them to act against their will. Absalom’s sin is his own willful action, but God allows it, He uses it, as a part of His judgment against David.

Well at this point David realizes the gravity of the situation and he goes into exile *[comment at this point about how David was filled with the Spirit of God which gave him discernment and wisdom to do the right thing]*. He and his royal household head east toward the wilderness. We’ll get back to Absalom and what he’s doing a bit later. For now I want to spend a little time pointing out some key figures that David encounters during his exodus from Jerusalem. These people are mentioned in scripture by name for a reason.

The first is a man called Ittai the Gittite. That means he is from Gath (Goliath’s home town). He’s a Philistine, a Gentile. But Ittai has chosen to come and to live in Israel and to follow David and David’s God.

READ 2 Samuel 15:18-23

Ittai supports David, the Lord’s anointed and not Absalom. He is loyal to the true king. He is faithful to God. Meanwhile David’s own flesh and blood, Absalom, has been disloyal to him, treasonous. David’s trusted advisor and close friend Ahithophel has betrayed him. The people of Israel as a whole have rejected David and have embraced Absalom. But here we have this man, Ittai, and 600 of his fellow Gittites following after David at the lowest point of his reign as king. They aren’t sure what the future holds for them but they know who to follow. This is a foreshadowing of what Jesus would experience when He came. John 1:11 mentions the rejection of Jesus. “He came to his own, and His own people did not receive Him.” As you read the Book of Acts by and large it’s Gentiles who eagerly embrace the gospel message when it is preached. It is mostly Gentiles who willingly receive and follow after Jesus, not the Jews. Anybody can call themselves a God fearer or a Christian. But you cannot be faithful to the Lord while at the same time rejecting the Lord’s anointed. What a testimony by this man Ittai, a non-Jew. What an encouragement Ittai must have been to David at a time when David needed it the most.

V 23 describes how David and his band of followers cross the Kidron Valley. They head up the Mount of Olives and then east toward the wilderness. There’s deep sadness. David gets word of Ahithophel’s defection to Absalom’s side. He feels the sting of the betrayal by his close friend, Ahithophel and the pain of his rejection as king by his own people. David is fully aware that this is all the direct result of his own sinful action but it still hurts. Up on the Mount of Olives, overwhelmed with grief and deeply hurt, David prays to the Lord.

READ 2 Samuel 15:30-31

David’s prayer is short and to the point. It is not eloquent like many of his psalms. He doesn’t call down fire and brimstone or plagues upon Ahithophel. David knows the wisdom of Ahithophel and what he prays, bottom line, is that Absalom will not follow it. We will see later that God honors David’s prayer.

This reminds me of a similar experience by Jesus 1000 years or so later. Jesus, our Lord, departs the upper room with a handful of His disciples. He, like David, feels rejected by His own people. And He too knows the bitter feeling of betrayal by a close friend, Judas. Jesus crosses this same Kidron Valley with His disciples and goes up the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. There He too under great stress prays. “Father, not My will, but Yours be done.” And God honors His prayer. But unlike David, Jesus is not going to carry the burden of His own sins but will lay down His own life, submitting to the Father’s will, experiencing the humiliation and agony of the cross. And there He bears the weight of our sins – yours and mine.

Well, let me now introduce you to a second man whom David meets. His name is Hushai the Archite.

READ 2 Samuel 15:32-37

Hushai, we are told, is David’s friend and he is a loyal friend. He agrees to go back to Jerusalem and to plant himself in Absalom’s inner circle of influence. Hushai will pretend to be loyal to Absalom. After all everyone else seems to be rushing to Absalom’s side so this defection will not appear to be that unusual. Hushai agrees. He will keep David informed of Absalom’s plans. David already has 4 others on his side that are planted in Jerusalem as his informants – 2 Levitical priests, Abiathar and Zadok, and their 2 sons. These men will become Hushai’s connections in getting information to King David. As we’ll see Hushai is going to play a key role in Absalom’s eventual defeat. So this proves to be a very wise move on David’s part. I believe it was God-given wisdom. More about Hushai later.

As we move into Ch 16 David encounters several other guys. One is a scoundrel named Ziba. He’s a man with evil motives who misleads others. By the way we have these same kind of people in our lives. They are hard to spot. They don’t wear a sign around their neck telling us they have wrong motives and are liars. Like Ziba they are convincing and might even fool us for a while, but eventually we find out the truth. Eventually their lies are exposed. Now this man Ziba is a man we have come across before, back in Ch 9. He’s the servant of Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son whom David had shown grace to and adopted as his own son. Ziba was at one time a servant of King Saul’s but he apparently doesn’t particularly like being the servant of Saul’s grandson. When David asks Ziba about Mephibosheth, Ziba lies to David. He makes up a story about how Mephibosheth wanted to hang back in Jerusalem and welcome Absalom as the new king. Ziba tells David that Mephibosheth thinks that Absalom will restore to Mephibosheth the kingdom that David had taken away from that family. We find out later, Ch 19, that what Ziba is accusing Mephibosheth of is completely false. But at this time Ziba’s report seems to be convincing to David. Ziba offers David some donkeys, bread, fruit and wine for the journey. No Ziba is really not concerned so much about David’s welfare. He’s buttering David up in hopes that he will later profit financially from David. Despite Ziba’s wrong motives, what you need to see is that God uses him in order to bless David with much needed supplies for their long hard trek eastward across the wilderness.

The next man David meets up with is Shimei. And he’s a nut case…

READ 2 Samuel 16:5-8

First of all Shimei is crazy. Second he has a bad theology. His facts are all messed up. He’s extremely angry at and critical of David but for the wrong reasons. David is NOT guilty of any of the accusations Shimei is shouting at him. If you will recall from 1 Samuel David had purposely held back and not killed Saul, the Lord’s anointed at that time, when he had the opportunity. He had spared Saul’s life twice. It was the Philistines who killed Saul, not David. And it was all part of God’s judgment against Saul. Notice the restraint that David exercises as this crazy man shouts profanity and insults and throws rocks at David and his men. David refuses to take offense. He doesn’t even respond to Shimei’s ridiculous banter. Why doesn’t David, the king, react against this rock-throwing lunatic? We’re getting ready to find out why.

It’s at this point that Abishai, Joab’s brother, who has been accompanying David, speaks up.

READ 2 Samuel 16:9

Abishai’s advice is “Let me just kill this idiot!” Abishai is well meaning but he’s giving David bad advice. And David is discerning enough to realize this. So David rebukes Abishai. [parallel with Peter wacking off Malchus’ ear]

READ 2 Samuel 16:10-14

David entertains the possibility that the Lord might just be speaking thru this crazy man. The ESV translation of V 12 is not the best – “It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me” is better translated the way the NASB says it – “Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction,” [all that is happening to me which is the result of my own sin] and restore me and avenge the wrong done to me. So the bottom line here is that David regards Shimei’s cursing as very possibly being ordained of God. That’s why he doesn’t do anything to Shimei.

One last thing about Shimei. Whether he was actually being used by God or not is debatable. The fact is that God can sometimes use idiots, jerks, people who are clueless, to speak thru. Case in point, Job’s friends.

David’s restraint shows God-like character. Remember Jesus while He was hanging on the cross in a travesty of justice being executed for a crime He did not commit. He was being scorned, insulted, spat upon. Jesus exercised such restraint. He doesn’t call down angels to save Him. Instead He says, “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.” Again the words of Peter speaking of Jesus and how we should follow His example: “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:22-23)

So, here again in our narrative David points us to Jesus.

Meanwhile back in Jerusalem, Absalom is entering the city. David is gone, is on the run and Absalom takes the throne of his father at least for a while. We will pick up the story here next week and see how it is that Absalom is defeated. He will have a rather hair-raising experience. But we will talk about that next time.

So how are we to treat the Lord’s anointed? How are we to treat Jesus? We are to believe Him and follow Him wholeheartedly and without reservation. We may not know where the path will take us but we are to be His loyal and obedient followers.