

The King Who Had It All
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This is the 13th week of our Sermon Series called “The Story.” As a church family we are going through an overview of the Bible, while focusing on the heart of scripture. You can pick up your own copy of the Story and read selections from scripture in preparation for each week’s study, if you would like to dig deeper into the scriptures you can go to one of our two adult education classes exploring the material further. More information is available on the church website.

Recently we have been exploring the life of David, who God rose up from the youngest son of a shepherd to a mighty King of Israel, God’s chosen people. We have looked at David’ triumphs and struggles, and saw how God used him to bless His people. But we are now moving past David and into the reign of his successor. As we do this we need to keep in mind the covenant that was made between David and God.

1 Chronicles sums up this covenant best when it records the prophet Nathan speaking to David on behalf of God, Nathan Says **“For when you die and join your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, one of your sons, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for me. And I will secure his throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my favor from him as I took it from the one who ruled before you. I will confirm him as king over my house and my kingdom for all time, and his throne will be secure forever.”** (1 Chronicles 17:11-14 NLT)

This is the promise for the successor of David’s throne, a strong kingdom, a temple, a secure throne, a personal relationship, God will be his father. This makes succeeding David as King pretty attractive.

First Kings Chapter 1 presents to us two possible successors to David’s throne: Adonijah and Solomon.

Adonijah was, at least in human terms, the most likely candidate for the job. He was the oldest living male child, he was physically attractive, and he had the support of the leading political officials in the kingdom.

Adonijah was really confident...

1 Kings 1:5 tells us that Adonijah **“began boasting, “I will make myself king.” So he provided himself with chariots and charioteers and recruited fifty men to run in front of him.”**

Like I said... Confident. He's playing the part of King before he even becomes King.

Solomon, on the other hand, did not measure up to his older brother. In fact, Solomon's very status as the son of a King was rooted in scandal. His mother was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. David spotted her bathing, slept with her, impregnated her, and then had her husband murdered to cover up his sin. Solomon's mother had become a royal through David's acts of adultery and murder.

But Solomon did have something that his brother did not. He had a promise. At the end of David's life, the prophet Nathan, goes to Bathsheba and tells her that Adonijah has assumed the throne for himself, and pleads with her to save her own life, and Solomon's by going to David.

1 Kings 1 beginning at 15... **"So Bathsheba went into the king's bedroom. (He was very old now, and Abishag was taking care of him.) Bathsheba bowed down before the king.**

"What can I do for you?" he asked her.

She replied, "My lord, you made a vow before the Lord your God when you said to me, 'Your son Solomon will surely be the next king and will sit on my throne.' But instead, Adonijah has made himself king, and my lord the king does not even know about it. 19 He has sacrificed many cattle, fattened calves, and sheep, and he has invited all the king's sons to attend the celebration. He also invited Abiathar the priest and Joab, the commander of the army. But he did not invite your servant Solomon.

I told you Adonijah was confident. Adonijah is throwing his own coronation celebration and has invited the whos who of Israel... Verse 20

20 And now, my lord the king, all Israel is waiting for you to announce who will become king after you. 21 If you do not act, my son Solomon and I will be treated as criminals as soon as my lord the king has died."

Then in verse 29 **The king repeated his vow: "As surely as the Lord lives, who has rescued me from every danger, your son Solomon will be the next king and will sit on my throne this very day, just as I vowed to you before the Lord, the God of Israel."** (1 Kings 1:28-30 NLT)

Solomon's claim to kingship was not based on his status or position as the rightful heir but rather on the promise of his father. And Solomon would become king according to the promise of his father, *by grace alone*.

This shouldn't surprise us. God is not looking for the best looking, he's not looking for the strongest, he's not looking for the most politically connected. God is looking at something deeper. When Samuel was searching for the successor to King Saul, God told him, **"Don't judge by his appearance or height... The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."** - 1 Samuel 16:7.

God's choice of Solomon is something more than just picking the unexpected candidate; David was unexpected, but Solomon is both unexpected and marred by scandal. By selecting Solomon to be King, God is displaying grace in Solomon's life. Solomon is King by Grace Alone.

What's remarkable about Solomon is that when he comes to the throne, he doesn't eliminate his brother, as would have been the custom at this time. Generally rivals to the throne were executed, but instead Solomon sends his brother home in peace. Solomon, who came to the throne by grace, exhibits grace to his brother.

So what does this have to do with us? What does this have to do with you and me? Why do we care about the political drama of ancient Israel? We care because this political drama is played out to reveal the character of God. And just like Adonijah and Solomon, we are heirs to a kingdom. Through Jesus we are heirs to the Kingdom of God, not because of what we have done, or who we are, but by grace offered to us by Jesus. We are like Solomon, given a Kingdom we don't deserve, by a God who loves us.

And how does Solomon respond to the grace he's been shown? By extending Grace to his brother. You and I, who have been given so much, now have the responsibility to extend grace into the lives of others. To love as we have been loved.

Okay, Solomon spares his brother's life... but then Adonijah goes and makes a treacherous request and Solomon ends up executing Adonijah, anyway—at least he tried – Solomon executes his brother along with Adonijah's political supporters, bringing about a new commander, a new priest, and a new regime under the leadership of Solomon.

Solomon at least gets points for trying to be graceful. Which brings me to a point, it is easy to take these biblical figures and paint them as heroes, but the reality is they're flawed heroes at best. Abraham is a horrible husband and Jacob is a horrible father, David has a lust problem, and Solomon is no angel either. These are great men, but flawed men. They are only a part of the lineage of Jesus because of God's

grace, not because they have earned their position. Just as you and I are a part of the family of God not on our merits, but despite them, by grace alone.

More often than not, the early years of Solomon's reign are marked by obedience and wisdom, all things considered he has a really great start. Perhaps his greatest moment comes in chapter 3 of 1 Kings, but in this chapter his greatest weaknesses are also present, in fact, the author points them out right from the start.

Verse 1: Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and married one of his daughters.

Sin 1: He intermarries. The word for marriage alliance used in verse 1, also used in Deuteronomy 7 as "intermarry." That verse reads:

You must not intermarry with them. Do not let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters, for they will lead your children away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and he will quickly destroy you. Deut 7v3-4

God doesn't want a member of his covenant people to marry outside of the Hebrew nation, because God doesn't want his people to turn from worshipping him to worshipping others.

Which brings me to Sin 2, Verse 2: Solomon compromises on his worship of God.

Verse 2 reads: At that time the people of Israel sacrificed their offerings at local places of worship, for a temple honoring the name of the LORD had not yet been built.

We continue in verse 3: **Solomon loved the LORD and followed all the decrees of his father, David,**

so far it sounds good, right? Let's keep going. Except.

Except, that Solomon, too, offered sacrifices and burned incense at the local places of worship.

You see, God wanted centralized worship. From the time of the Tabernacle where God's presence dwelled in one spot amongst the nation of Israel God wanted his people to come together, all together, and worship him.

Deuteronomy 12 reads, **“When you drive out the nations that live there, he means Israel, you must destroy all the places where they worship their gods—high on the mountains, uh-oh up on the hills, and under every green tree. ³ Break down their altars and smash their sacred pillars.**

I think we have a problem.

Burn their Asherah poles and cut down their carved idols. Completely erase the names of their gods!

⁴“Do not worship the LORD your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods.

Yeah. We have a problem.

⁵ Rather, you must seek the LORD your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes—the place where his name will be honored.

When Solomon, and everybody else in the nation of Israel uses these High Spots to sacrifice to God, they’re using interfaith alters in interfaith temples to worship God. They’re worshipping God in the manner of pagans, where pagans are worshipping their gods. This is a super slippery slope into apostasy, or abandoning of one’s faith.

So, Solomon has married a woman outside of the nation of Israel, and he’s worshipping like pagans. But at least he loves the Lord. Good thing he didn’t have to earn that throne...

Okay, let’s talk about something positive that Solomon does...

⁴ The most important of these places of worship was at Gibeon, so the king went there and sacrificed 1,000 burnt offerings. ⁵ That night the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!” – 1 Kings 3:4-5

And Solomon said, I want three more wishes. – No, no.

⁶Solomon replied, “You showed great and faithful love to your servant my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued to show this great and faithful love to him today by giving him a son to sit on his throne.

⁷“Now, O LORD my God, you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn’t know his way around. ⁸And here I am in the midst of your own chosen people, a nation so great and numerous they cannot be counted! ⁹Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?”

Solomon’s request for wisdom is admirable. I wish I was smart enough to request this more often. What’s really great about Solomon though is that he is smart enough to recognize that the wisdom he needs comes from God. I mean, it wouldn’t be that surprising if Solomon went to his Egyptian father-in-law and asked for their wisdom. But no, he realizes he needs the wisdom of God, the God who sustained his father’s kingdom, and shows him tremendous grace.

¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. ¹¹So God replied, “Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies— ¹²I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have! ¹³And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! ¹⁴And if you follow me and obey my decrees and my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life.”

He gets the three extra wishes after all. This is the embodiment of Jesus’ Kingdom teaching in Matthew 6. **“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”**

God uses Solomon to do some amazing things. Solomon takes his great wisdom and writes three Old Testament books, the Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Solomon will take up building the Temple of God, a grand Palace and the outer walls of the city of Jerusalem. Solomon is wiser than any King, richer than any king, more famous than any King. Solomon is a big deal.

Unfortunately, Solomon does not bank on the promises of God, who promised him this great wealth and fame. And instead he forced his people to work for him, forced labor friends, forced labor to build the temple, forced labor to build a great palace, and forced labor to acquire great wealth that God would have given him. All of this is a mark against Solomon, all of this is disobedience and lack of faith. Lack of faith in

God to keep his word. And I told you, Solomon doesn't end well... it gets worse friends.

Let's skip ahead to chapter 11.

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women. *I told you this was going to be a problem.*

Besides Pharaoh's daughter, he married women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and from among the Hittites. ² **The LORD had clearly instructed the people of Israel, "You must not marry them, because they will turn your hearts to their gods." Yet Solomon insisted on loving them anyway.** ³ **He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. And in fact, they did turn his heart away from the LORD.**

In Solomon's old age, they turned his heart to worship other gods instead of being completely faithful to the LORD his God, as his father, David, had been.

⁹ **The LORD was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.** ¹⁰ **He had warned Solomon specifically about worshipping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the LORD's command.**

You need to know that the King of Israel is a special role, he's not just King of a nation, he's King of God's covenant nation, and he has a responsibility of covenant obedience.

When King Saul disobeyed God his royal dynasty was destroyed. When King David disobeyed God and took a census, 70,000 men in Israel died.

And now, Solomon, disobedient Solomon is going to be punished, but it's not Just Solomon who will be punished, no... as King his actions bring punishment to the entire nation.

¹¹ **So now the LORD said to him, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants.** ¹² **But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from your son.** ¹³ **And even so, I will not take away the entire kingdom; I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city."**

Solomon's disobedience would divide the kingdom of Israel. A king's obedience and the security of his people went hand-in-hand. Given this track record, our angst about our leaders is warranted.

Luckily, we have Jesus as our King, and he has been perfectly obedient. Our obedient King Jesus reigns eternally at the right hand of God the Father, giving us unending blessing and security.

King Solomon, and King David, and King Saul, and many of the Kings who will follow provide for us a contrast, where ultimately we see how good Jesus is which serves to remind us of why we worship Jesus as our King.

And what else do we have to learn from King Solomon? King Solomon is a cautionary tale. Sin in our lives, if unattended, can grow and cause our destruction. Solomon begins with a few compromises, but these compromises grow and destroy the faith that marked his early years.

My hope is that our faiths will not be marked by compromise, complacency, but that we will live the instructions of Colossians 3:5, that we will **“put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within [us].**

And that just as Solomon recognized that wisdom comes from God, may we recognize that the strength to do this comes from God as well. We are not alone in battling our sin, but God provides his Holy Spirit, as a helper **who has freed [us] ^[b] from the power of sin that leads to death.**

And we get all of this because of King Jesus.

- Like Solomon, King Jesus would be known for his wisdom.
- Like Solomon, King Jesus would serve God's people.
- Like Solomon, King Jesus would build God's kingdom and make known his name.

But this King would also become the temple of God and he will provide eternal rest for all of God's people.

King Jesus would not be crushed under the pressure of his throne, but rather he would be crushed under the weight of *our sin*. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.