

August 26th, 2018

Scripture:

2 Samuel 7:18-29

2 Samuel 12:1-13

“Sovereign over us.”

7 times in our first reading David uses the term sovereign.

Indeed in the first 5 verses he uses the term 5 times.

It’s ---- “Who am I Sovereign Lord” ---- in verse 18.

And then in 19 it’s --- “And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign Lord...”

Again in 19 it’s --- “and this decree Sovereign Lord, is for a mere human!”

Verse 20 begins with ---- “What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign Lord.”

And then in verse 22 it’s --- “How great you are, Sovereign Lord...”

“How great you are, Sovereign Lord...”

The first 5 sentences all contain the words Sovereign Lord.

And this passage stands as a great example of Biblical prayer ---- David praying.

Our call to worship was a prayer of David --- from 1 Chronicles chapter 29 - ---- and like our first reading it too is all about God.

David knows that God is Sovereign.

And so He claims the Sovereignty of God --- 5 times in 5 sentences and 7 times in the prayer as a whole.

Our ability to do anything of worth --- anything that matters --- anything of value --- begins with our ability to claim the Sovereignty of God ---- and then declare that same Sovereignty.

When we faithfully claim the Sovereignty of God in our lives God blesses us abundantly ----- and we see this in our second reading.

David does an amazing thing in 2 Samuel 12 today.

In an instant he both recognizes and confesses of his sin ---- and he can only do this because of the first reading ----- he can only do this because he has first recognized and proclaimed the sovereignty of God.

But before we carry on --- what exactly does sovereignty even mean?

What do we mean when we declare someone or something to be sovereign?

Sovereign essentially means supreme --- and more particularly it means supreme ruler.

To say someone is sovereign means to declare that they have supremacy in every way.

To say someone is sovereign means they rule over in every way.

Sovereignty includes unmitigated --- or unchallenged --- independent rule over everything.

It is a powerful word --- and a word that in truth ought only ever to apply to God.

To say Sovereign Lord ---- as David does ---- is to claim that God rules over us in every way.

To say Sovereign Lord ---- as David does --- is to claim that God knows best in every realm of our lives.

To say Sovereign Lord ---- is to claim that we trust God with everything.

That's why we started our service today declaring God's Sovereignty.

Including singing Sovereign over us.

To show God --- to remind ourselves --- to take our stand in the world and proclaim our fidelity and our unending trust in God.

That is precisely what David does in 2 Samuel 7 today ---- and that is precisely what enables him to display such humility ---- which in turn enables him to confess --- which in turn gives him liberation and freedom --- salvation even.

It's a powerful thing what David does in our second reading --- and it can only come because of his faithful humble disposition in our first reading.

In 2 Samuel 12 the prophet Nathan comes to David and tells the story of a greedy rich man who had many sheep stealing a poor mans one and only lamb and slaughtering it for a feast when a visitor comes to his home.

David --- immediately recognizing the poor behaviour --- the sinfulness of the rich man stealing from the poor man and says --- in verse 5 --- “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for the lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

And this all makes perfect sense so far --- David recognizes and wants to hold accountable the poor behaviour.

But then comes Nathan's response to David's outburst --- it goes this way --- picking it up at verse 7 ---

“Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man!

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms.

I gave you all Israel and Judah.

And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes?

You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own.

You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.””

And David’s humble response to this truth --- and the even harsher words of punishment in verses 11 and 12 is this.

Verse 13 ---- “Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.””

And everything changed in an instant.

David realizes the he is the villain --- and he owns up to his sinful behaviour.

Because of these words --- “I have sinned against the Lord.” --- everything changed.

And it’s crucial here that David realizes it is the Lord he has sinned against - -- not Uriah ---- not Bathsheba --- not Israel --- not even himself --- but the Lord.

David could have thrown a hissy fit --- and we all know he was quite capable of this --- quick unmitigated fits of emotion.

David was quite good when it came to lashing out --- retaliating --- doing what he wanted to get what he wanted --- that’s what got him in this predicament in the first place --- lust.

But David doesn’t lash out at Nathan --- he quickly --- very quickly realizes that he needs to repent and change his ways ----- because what he did was wrong in God’s eyes.

“I have sinned against the Lord.” --- he says.

How many of us when someone confronts us with a grand mistake we have made --- come to realize in that moment that it was indeed a big mistake? --- a big mistake with only us to blame.

I don’t know about you but more often than not when I have made a mistake that takes someone else’s pointing it out to me ----- I need a day or two or even three ----- to come to the realization that I have erred --- before I can

even consider owning up to it I have to think about it for a while --- and I come around gradually ---- very gradually.

Many times it's taken me a few days to come to terms with what someone has said to me regarding a particular shortfall of mine --- rarely do I instantly --- in the moment --- on the spot come to realize my foolishness.

But David does.

Here today David does.

In an instant he realizes the person that moments ago he had this to say about ---- "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for the lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." --- is himself.

As quickly as David says these words ---- he also realizes they apply to Him and so he then says ---- "I have sinned against the Lord."

And he is able to do this --- he has this quick turn of heart precisely because he has a profound --- supreme trust in God.

He is able to do this precisely because ---- he has claimed --- God Sovereignty over his life.

David knows that the great liberation that comes through confession is a gift from God and that the supremacy of God ---- the sovereignty of God matters most --- and enables him to live into the freedom of forgiveness that he so desperately longs for.

Psalm 51 is David's profound confession for this sin that he committed stealing the one lone ewe lamb from the poor man --- stealing Bathsheba from Uriah.

And David has such great trust in God's goodness and grace and mercy and compassion that he is able to own up to his sin and confess before God --- the one he knows as Sovereign ----- Sovereign over all ---- including himself.

It is God's goodness that enables David to pivot --- and turn on a dime.

It is God's goodness --- God forgiveness whatever the cost ---- read verses 11 and 12 from our second reading today --- forgiveness comes but it has a cost for David.

David isn't seeking a free ride ----- David is seeking the liberation and cleansing --- washing away of the effect of sin --- freedom in God --- freedom in Christ.

David knows there is accountability in the Sovereignty of God --- he's not looking for a free ride --- but he is looking for freedom from the grip of sin.

It is the liberation from the darkness of sin David seeks not liberation from accountability ---- and there is a huge difference.

Declaring the Sovereignty of God --- and really meaning it ---- demands a profound level of trust on our part.

John Calvin has some very helpful comments on this passage from 2 Samuel 12 today.

He writes ----

“Nevertheless, we should note that if God treats us sharply at the first encounter before making us feel his mercy --- we should not find it strange, but subject ourselves to it willingly.”

And he goes on to say ---- “Let us learn therefore, when God comes to us in such force --- (as he did to David through Nathan) ---- when God comes to us in such force ---- (we are) ---- to bow our heads and recognize that we need chastisement.”

Again --- let's hear these careful words from a wise theologian --- how many of us will have words that last over 500 years --- Calvin on 2 Samuel 12 ----

“Nevertheless, we should note that if God treats us sharply at the first encounter before making us feel his mercy --- we should not find it strange, but subject ourselves to it willingly.”

And he goes on to say ---- “Let us learn therefore, when God comes to us in such force to bow our heads and recognize that we need chastisement.”

This is precisely what David did ---- when God came to him --- David ---- sharply --- before making David feel his mercy --- David subjects himself willingly --- and when God comes to him in such force --- Nathan calling him on his grand mistake ---- David bows his head recognizing that he needs chastisement --- help ---- guidance --- correction.

And this is not a story ---- or an event in the life of a man who had a heart for God --- that is about praising the man.

Rather this is a passage that truly speaks to what the Sovereignty of God means --- this is a story about the glory of God.

David is able to do what he does because he recognizes --- and proclaims --- and claims the Sovereignty of the God of Abraham --- and Isaac --- and Jacob in his life.

David is able to do what he does because he recognizes --- and proclaims --- and claims the Sovereignty of the God of Moses --- the God of the burning bush --- the great I am --- in his life.

And the very same blessing from God is availed to us when we too recognize --- proclaim ---- and claim the Sovereignty of God in our lives.

That’s the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for us today.

When we claim the sovereignty of God through Jesus Christ our Lord ---- we are changed and goodness and mercy flow forth.

When we claim the Sovereignty of God ---- we are forgiven --- saved ---- blessed ---- and God is glorified.

And this is a good and beautiful thing in God’s eyes --- and heaven rejoices.

And satan recoils back into his dark little hole with his tail between his legs -- powerless.

Every time we claim the Sovereignty of God ---- satan recoils back into his dark little hole with his tail between his legs --- powerless.

The truth is -----

God is forever preparing and shaping us --- even as we continue to mess things up ---- even as we continue to sin --- and fall short ----- God is forever preparing and shaping us to be a light in the sometimes darkness of this world.

That's what sanctification is all about --- our growing in Christ likeness ---- our ability to declare and claim and own the Sovereignty of God --- not seeking a get out of hell free card but seeking the glory and goodness and beauty of the will of God whatever that may look like.

The liberation that God grants us through the confession of sin --- the admission of our messiness and sinfulness is all about the glory of God's goodness.

The liberation God grants us in His mighty Sovereignty comes because of God's glory and is all about God's glory.

David knows there will still be accountability for what he has done --- it isn't a free ride he seeks --- it's rightness with God that he seeks at whatever the cost.

When he realizes he has messed up this is what he says ---- "I have sinned against the Lord."

That's a profound statement ---- that's a profound owning up ---- that's a profound confession --- that's profound trust.

David knows that with God at the wheel --- with God as Sovereign Lord over his life --- it will end well --- no mater what.

David --- recognizing the Sovereignty of God --- isn't overly concerned with the details of the process --- because he knows it will end well even as there are setbacks along the way.

And again look at verses 11 --- and then 14 and 18 just past our second reading --- David loses a son over this.

But David trusts and welcomes the Lord into this profound process of healing --- forgiveness ---- and reconciliation.

That is some profound trust --- that is some profound sense of Sovereignty that David claims.

And so we learn as we read the passage --- not so much about David --- but about God.

God forgives ---- sometimes there is a cost --- thankfully for us we have Christ ---- stepping in and covering the cost ----- David didn't have Jesus to turn to we do ---- and so God forgives just as fully now as then --- but now we have Christ --- thank God now we don't have to lose a son like David did --- we have Christ.

That's why we read these ancient texts --- precisely because they reveal things to us about the goodness of God --- forgiveness.

They still speak to us today as relevant as they did thousands and thousands of years ago to those who first heard them and shared long before they were ever written down.

God has not forsaken --- or forgot --- or neglected His creation --- His people --- our world --- us.

God is just as intimately involved in His creation now as he was when he first lifted His finger eons ago shaping our planet and the vast expanse beyond us as well.

When we recognize His Sovereignty --- when we proclaim ---- when we claim His Sovereignty --- things change --- in Him ---- in us --- in the world.

David --- the scriptures today ----- God's word for us today ---- reminds us of the importance of trusting in Him.

Trusting in Him regardless of the mess we may have made of our lives --- killing another man just to steal his wife --- like David did ---- is probably far more grave a sin than any of us have committed.

“I have sinned against the Lord.” --- David says.

And so ought each and every one of us too --- I don't know about you --- but like David I too have sinned against the Lord.

Unfortunately too many times to even count --- I have sinned against God.

But thankfully I'm forgiven --- because He was forsaken.

But like David --- I too --- we too ---- must first own up to it ----- and trust God to make it right in Christ precisely because we cannot make it right on our own.

We have to confess --- like David ----- and --- also like David we have to claim the sovereignty of God --- and all will be well.

And all will be well because of the beauty goodness and truth of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Oh David ---- God used you to teach us so many things.

Oh God --- thank you for David --- what a wonderful help David so often is.

And --- oh God thank you for Jesus --- what a wonderful Saviour He is.

Because of people like David --- because of David we get glimpses of God's goodness --- beauty ---- truth --- and Sovereignty.

Because of David ---- we are reminded that the world is changed and He is glorified when we claim Him Sovereign Lord of our lives.

May we dwell in this goodness --- and beauty ---- and truth ----- this liberating Gospel --- this Good News ---- of the Sovereignty of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

From our first reading ---

“Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant—and this decree, Sovereign Lord, is for a mere human!”

From our first song of praise -----

“There is strength within the sorrow
There is beauty in our tears
And You meet us in our mourning
With a love that casts out fear

You are working in our waiting
You're sanctifying us
When beyond our understanding
You're teaching us to trust

Your plans are still to prosper
You have not forgotten us
You're with us in the fire and the flood
You're faithful forever
Perfect in love
You are sovereign over us.”

You ARE Sovereign over us Lord --- and we are blessed.

Amen.