

Sermon Given by

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2 Samuel 5 - "King at last!"

I don't know if you saw it but at the start of the BBC's coverage of the last Olympic Games in Beijing, you may have seen their attempted interview with a Chinese pastor of a non state-registered church.

The BBC had followed the authorities' rules and agreed a place and time to meet. But still the Chinese police got to the pastor first and so all the reporter could do was shout a couple of questions up to the window where the pastor was being held.

One of the questions was, "Why won't they let you talk to us?" The pastor shouted back, "Because of what I might say about their record on human rights and religious freedom." The police then took the pastor away and held him for seven hours before letting him go. One wonders what would have happened to that bold church pastor if the cameras had not been there.

Our readings from 2 Samuel 5 and Psalm 2 must be a great encouragement to pastors like him and to persecuted Christians all over the world, because they declare loud and clear that God's chosen King is enthroned. He is the one who is ultimately reigning and in control and who will triumph.

It is possible to sometimes strain the link between King David as the type or foreshadow of Jesus but here in 2 Samuel 5 – the link is a strong one. The Bible says very clearly and in several places that David's installation in Jerusalem is a picture of Jesus' enthronement in heaven.

There are three key events in this great chapter, and the first is this:

1. God's people wisely humble themselves (vv 1-5)

In v1-5 we're looking at the moment when all Israel accepts David as its king.

You'll remember how it's been a long road to this point. David had first been anointed by Samuel at God's direction as a teenager. He'd then had to wait about 13 years – years of loyal patient waiting for King Saul to finally die. But even then only one tribe would have him as king; the tribe of Judah.

Another 7½ years of civil war had followed with the other 11 tribes fighting against him but now the rival king, king Ish-Bosheth was dead. And so we have this great moment when David finally becomes King over all Israel.

As they give their reasons for accepting David, we might expect them to put it like this: 'After all, you are our own flesh and blood . . .' In other words, 'there are good reasons for us to accept you.'

But that's not how they put it. They say rather, 'We are your flesh and blood.' In other words, v1-2 aren't the reasons for them to accept him; they are the reasons for him to accept them. He's the one in control here, which is why in v3 they come to him, and he sets the terms for them, and in v4 he reigns.

What these verses are describing is God's people humbling themselves before David: saying to him, 'Please take us, for the sake of God's purposes; just as you led us in the past into battle, so lead us now; we come to you on your terms: please take us.' Well it's not surprising that they come to him like this, because in chapter 4, which we were looking at last week, they saw two things about David.

First they saw that he'd won. This seven and half year civil war was over, because David had beaten them. They couldn't fight him any longer.

But they also saw that pardon was available. The way David had responded to the murder of Ish-Bosheth told them that he was a good king, a fair king and a merciful king, and they would be safe if they came back to him.

David saw that justice was done for his enemy, his rival king, King Ish-Bosheth. Look at that last sentence in chapter 4: "But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron." He showed justice and graciousness.

So it's not surprising that they humble themselves before him, because on the one hand he is too strong to oppose and on the other hand he is too good to oppose.

And here's the first way that David provides us with a picture of Jesus. The way someone enters Jesus' kingdom (becomes a Christian in other words) is just the same: we need to humble ourselves before Him.

There's a retired minister in London called Dick Lucas, and I gather that when Dick is getting to know a younger Christian, he doesn't ask them, 'When did

you become a Christian?' He asks them, 'When were you humbled?' Many of you grew up in Christian homes and can't remember when you began to trust in Jesus.

But perhaps we can remember when we first realised that we were not the centre of the world, Jesus was and that we should not be running our lives, he should be; that Jesus was too strong and too good to keep opposing. Just like David with these people, Jesus is not going to compel us to do that.

It's interesting, the New Testament doesn't generally say God will humble us. It tells us to humble ourselves. Can I ask you have you done that? Have you humbled yourself before King Jesus?

Jesus' first command in the Bible is to 'repent': to think again about who he is, who we are, and humbly to come back to him. If you've never truly done that but you know you should and you know you want to please come and grab me afterwards – I'd love to explain how you can take that step and receive him as your Lord.

I said that God's people wisely humble themselves. And it's wise because of the following verses, where...

2. God installs his king in Zion (vv 6-16)

Zion is another name for Jerusalem—specifically it's the name of the hill upon which Jerusalem is built. And the taking of Jerusalem is a great story, isn't it?

Just to give this some context, the Jebusites have been a right pain in the South of Israel's territory. All the way back in Genesis 15, God promised that they'd be ousted, but Joshua had tried and hadn't succeeded, the generations after him had tried and hadn't succeeded, and the Jebusites, after a couple of centuries now, were feeling understandably a little confident. That's pretty clear when we read v6.

“The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there. The Jebusites said to David, You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off. They thought, “David cannot get in here.”

Even the blind and the lame can ward you off. It was an arrogant put down: sightless eyes and helpless legs are enough to repel any attack of yours David. It was a good line; memorable words – unless you had to eat them. V7 tells us that eat them they did.

V7: “Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.”

He somehow uses the watershaft v8, and the Jebusites' mocking is turned back on them, and David is installed and Zion now becomes his impregnable fortress: soon made even stronger a stronghold than it was for the Jebusites.

V9 “David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the supporting terraces inward. And he became more and more powerful.”

There David is installed, and how is he so strong? In part it's because he's a brilliant commander and a clever strategist and self-controlled enough to shore up his position; and it's in part because of his alliance with Hiram the King of Tyre.

But those are just the means. The reason that David will never be dislodged from Zion is because God has installed him there. So v10: ***And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.***

And David knew this v12: ***And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.”***

God has established his king—and that’s why the king will never be budged. And this is precisely the point that the New Testament makes about Jesus.

The story of Jesus is that he was opposed at every step; his enemies plotted and planned and united to kill him, and yet Jesus won: he rose again and was raised to God’s right hand on high, and he is installed in the ultimate Zion, the spiritual stronghold of heaven.

As the New Testament writers reflected on that, they thought ‘Well, isn’t that like David only more so?’ So they quoted from the psalms David wrote about 2 Samuel 5, and they applied them to Jesus. And what they were saying to everyone as they preached the resurrection was: ‘This is news of an objective, reality-changing event, and you’d better reckon with it. Because we’re not going to depose Jesus. We can’t even reach his stronghold, let alone breach it. So we’d better do business with this king.’

That was their message, and of course it was right they warned people, if this is true.

It’s a popular idea nowadays that it’s OK for Christians to believe in Jesus, we just shouldn’t go around trying to convert people, because that’s intolerant. People say that because in their view of the universe, Jesus is not enthroned in heaven. And on that basis, they’re right to say what they say.

But the Christian view of the universe is different. The gospel is that Jesus is the king God has installed, and we must humble ourselves before him. If that’s true, don’t we see we have to try to tell other people?

When friends say, ‘Don’t convert anybody’, they’re not being any more tolerant than we are. They are telling us to abandon our view of the universe and adopt theirs. In a sense everyone is trying to convert each other.

To say ‘don’t convert people’ is itself to try to convert them. The key question is this: ‘Has God installed Jesus in heaven?’

And the resurrection and the ascension shout to us that he has. The wise course is to humble ourselves before him and tell others to do the same—and that’s what God’s people do. But there is another response open to us, and the following verses reveal it:

3. God’s enemies foolishly fight (vv 17-25)

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David enquired of the LORD, Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me? The LORD answered him, Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you. So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, As waters break out, the LORD has broken out against my enemies before me. So that place was called Baal Perazim. The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off. Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David enquired of the LORD, and he answered, Do not go straight up, but circle round behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as

you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the LORD has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army. So David did as the LORD commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.”

How do the Philistines respond to David’s installation? They fight it. It’s the first thing they do, as soon as they hear.

They then fight him again, and again. No matter that they fail, no matter that they take a beating in the process; God’s enemies have an implacable hostility towards his king. That is so disastrous because David does have God behind him. And we see that in these verses. God warns David, he guides him, he hands the Philistines into his hands, he even fights for David. Fighting against this king is fighting against God.

The Book of Revelation describes Jesus as that kind of king: a king who has God behind him and has the power of God to defeat his enemies. It’s tempting to think of Jesus as meek and mild. You’ve probably seen those posters with two little kittens cuddling each other or two baby rabbits side by side and above the caption runs something along the lines of: “Jesus is your friend forever” or “Jesus loves you.” Yes, if we trust in Him he is our friend forever, He does loves us but there’s a danger that we begin to think of him as all sugary sweet and cuddly and fluffy like a little kitten.

Listen to this description of King Jesus from Revelation 19:

‘With justice he judges and makes war . . . The armies of heaven were following him . . . out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations . . . on his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORD.’

The first time Jesus came into the world, he didn’t destroy his enemies. That wasn’t his purpose. But it will be the second time he comes. All God’s enemies, sin, Satan, death, and the people opposed to him, will be destroyed on that day.

It will be as much a walkover for Jesus as it was for David against the Philistines. That’s why we need to make sure we’re on his side, and do what we can to get others on his side too. It is foolish to fight this king.

In Psalm 2—David reflects on his installation in Zion—and his application to the nations is as follows: ***“Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”***

How do the Jebusites get on with opposing God’s king...destroyed like pottery. The Philistines: struck down all the way from Gibeon to Gezer. Therefore, you kings, be wise: humble yourselves before this king.

The thing is that David wasn't an eternal king, he wasn't in fact a universal king, and the reason why is hinted at in v13-16: '**After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him.**'

That shows David's strength, but also his stupidity. It shows that in certain respects David was more swayed and controlled by human culture than by God's law. Deuteronomy 17 forbade him from taking many wives, and within six chapters, this sexual weakness was to prove his downfall.

So it is with any normal human leader, and we are foolish to place too much trust in them: whether it's a political leader like Barack Obama (whom some might present as a Messiah figure, but he isn't one) or a church leader like Dick Luca or Nicky Gumble, Tim Keller or whoever.

Only one king has ultimately been installed by God. But he has been installed and we need to be wise: to humble ourselves before him and to keep humble before him, by serving and obeying and fighting for him; for there will come a time when it is too late.

For rebels and traitors who do humble themselves before him, there's good news: the king will always take us back.

To see that, let's contrast King Jesus with another king that was rebelled against: King James I: 'Remember, remember the 5th of November: gunpowder, treason and plot'. You'll know the story: how Guy Fawkes is taken alive, he's brought before James I, he's found guilty of treason, he's sentenced to death by hanging, then drawing, then quartering, and all that is just.

But imagine James I says at that point, 'I'll tell you what: let me take your place!' It's ridiculous, isn't it, that James would be hung, drawn and quartered for this traitor.

But that in one sense is what King Jesus did. He came into the world to go to the cross, to die for treason in our place. We were the traitors. He was the king. Yet he died for us, for he is the shepherd king, the servant king, who lays down his life for the sheep; a king we can trust, a king we can always come back to for forgiveness.

Audio versions of the sermons can be freely downloaded from the All Saints Little Shelford website, <http://www.allsaintslittleshelford.org>. These are available in two formats, mp3 and wma.