

## **In Nomine Iesu**

### **Who can reign on the throne of David? Not Amnon, but Christ, whose love does not fail – 2 Samuel 13:1-21**

Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.

Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up! Go!" But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her." Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, great David's greater Son. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

When Saul died, David became king and moved from Hebron in southern Judah to Jerusalem. He brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem with the intention of building a house, a temple, for the Ark. In prayer he asked the LORD for permission to build such a house for Him. In answer God turned David's thinking completely on its head – as so often happens to us all when we hear the word of God, and it changes us. No, God said, "I will make you a house." (2 Samuel 7:11) He said, "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a Son ... Your throne will be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-14, 16)

David's house, his royal dynasty, would endure forever. David's throne would never lack a blood descendent of his. His Son would reign forever. That was the promise of God to David. And David believed Him.

What is more, David understood the identity and nature of the King who would come after him and reign forever. We know David knew and understood all this from the psalms he wrote. David's son would be the promised Messiah, the Savior of Israel and of all the families of the earth. David knew, because it had been revealed to him by God. That is why he composed the psalms as he did. The Messianic psalms were written out of David's great joy for himself and for all people. They were written for the purpose of sharing that knowledge, that joy, with all who heard them, not only the people of David's day, but of all succeeding generations until that great day when the Messiah would Himself appear to those who still sang the words of David's psalms, believing them as David did, believing in great David's far greater Son even as David did.

That day came on a spring Sunday in Jerusalem many years after David's time. You know the story. You see the picture in your mind. Thousands waved palm branches in the air before the gates of Jerusalem, and cried out, "Hosanna," "Save us now," to the Son of David. Yes, it is clear how much David understood and knew about the One promised Him as His everlasting Son, and far greater successor.

But there is one thing David did not know. And it troubled him. Which son would it be to sit on his throne? Which one would be the Promised One, or at least the father or grandfather of the Promised Messiah? Through which one would the promise be fulfilled? David wondered, because he had many sons. In fact, he had at least 21 sons. He had so many because he had so many wives. And so, we begin to see the problem.

This probably troubles us. It troubles us especially because of what God told Samuel to say to Saul on the day he rejected him as king of Israel: "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out **a man after His own heart**, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:14)

David had more than one wife, many more than God had said he should. So, it hardly seems to us that David could be a "man after [God's] own heart." And then there is

the matter of his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband. Well, we are troubled by these things, aren't we?

What is amazing about God's word is its honesty. The people it speaks of, the people of God, are so often less than admirable. They are hardly saints in the way the world thinks of saints. They are most definitely sinners. And the Bible honestly shows us this. David is no exception. He is a sinner. And so are we.

So, what distinguishes David from Saul? Very simple. David believed the promises God gave him as Saul did not. He believed God would put a son of his on his throne forever and ever, a Son who would take upon Himself David's own sins and redeem him. Let us consider then, who could reign on David's throne?

Amnon? He was David's firstborn, the obvious heir to the throne. Amnon was, let us say, an apple that did not fall far from the tree when it came to marriage, faithfulness, and love. He loved – lusted would be more accurate – his half-sister Tamar, who was the full sister of Amnon's half-brother Absalom. What Amnon did to Tamar before, during, and after his adultery with her was despicable, each act being crueler and more heartless than the previous one. How could such a man sit on David's throne? How could one whose love was so changeable, so selfish, so unreliable, so faithless, be the One whom God promised? Such a one as Amnon could not. And it grieved David.

It is hard to imagine what envies and grievances must have existed between the sons of David's wives, between the oldest of them, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, who, humanly speaking, had the strongest claims to succeed him as king. But it is not hard to imagine what is said of David after this: "When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry." Yet, he did nothing. Why? Put yourself in David's place. Why might he have done nothing to Amnon, his firstborn son? Did he see himself in his son? Did he see himself as the author of all the trouble in his own family and even in his kingdom? Surely he did. And his troubled heart became a tormented heart.

David would have agreed with the Apostle Paul, who said, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." (Romans 7:18) And, dear friends, not only would David have agreed with Paul, he did agree. For David prayed in his psalm: "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight ... Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:3-4, 11)

David was called "a man after God's own heart," not because he was righteous and just as God is, no. He was the very opposite. But he knew what was **in the heart of God**. He knew what the promised King, His far greater Son would one day say: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) David knew and believed His promised successor would not be, could not be, like any of his sons, but instead like His true Father in heaven.

David's psalms are full of his confessions of sin, his recognition of the evil caused by men, **including himself**. But so too are his psalms full of the grace and mercy of

God, the God who so loves us and forgives our sins, the God who is so worthy of our trust, the God who promised a Savior to all, even to David. David, who sinned much and painfully, who saw their consequences in his own children and in his own life, loved and trusted the God who had forgiven Him of so much.

Who can reign on the throne of David? Not Amnon, but Christ, whose love never fails.

Dear Father in heaven, as we make our way through the Wednesdays of Advent, looking for who can reign on David's throne, let us more and more see what David himself came to see and proclaim in the psalms: the coming Christ, the Son of God and Son of Mary, who would give Himself in our place to take away our sins. Let us too, like David, be people **after Your heart**, trusting completely in Your grace and mercy for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**