

In Nomine Iesu

The Fifth Sunday after Holy Trinity 2026 The two kingdoms God has instituted for our good – 2 Samuel 15:1-15

“After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, ‘From what city are you?’ And when he said, ‘Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,’ Absalom would say to him, ‘See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.’ Then Absalom would say, ‘Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.’ And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, ‘Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron. For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, ‘If the Lord will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the Lord.’ The king said to him, ‘Go in peace.’ So he arose and went to Hebron. But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, ‘As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, “Absalom is king at Hebron!” With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing. And a messenger came to David, saying, ‘The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom.’ Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, ‘Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.’ And the king's servants said to the king, ‘Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, King David’s Savior and also ours. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

We all witnessed yesterday’s 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation; today we begin to turn our eyes from the past to the future. So, it is appropriate for us to consider the nature of government in God’s order of creation to see what it is and **what it is not**. We will use the text before us to do so.

I

We see before us this morning what seems to be another of the seemingly disconnected stories of the Old Testament, disconnected, that is, if we do not look at it - as we should - in light of the promise God made to our first parents to give them a Savior who would crush Satan and redeem them and all their descendants from sin and death, and at the same time in the light of the fulfillment of God’s promise in Jesus Christ.

David is a type of Christ in the Old Testament, that is, he is a picture or foreshadowing of the Messiah, the Christ, whom God promised to send to His people to redeem them from their sins. Some people have trouble with this in light of what God said to Saul about his failure as king and about the one God chose to be his successor as king of Israel. Samuel put it this way to Saul: “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) But, you say, David’s sins of adultery and murder are not compatible with a man “after [God’s] own heart.” If you are one of those who has trouble with this, the text before us this morning will not improve David’s godliness in your eyes.

Let’s gather the facts about David and his family before us as we consider the account of Absalom and his rebellion against his father. Absalom was the third of David’s sons. His mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, the king of Geshur, a small city state north of the Sea of Galilee. David had at least 20 sons and many daughters from his 16 named wives. Can you imagine the family dynamics? Within David’s family were to be found adultery, rape, murder, rebellion and more. In other words, David was not all that different than the kings of the nations around Israel, except in one respect. His was not a kingdom like theirs, nor was his kingship like theirs. And he knew it! Sadly, this is what some of David’s sons did not understand, Absalom being the best known example.

We saw last week how Saul’s son, Jonathan, truly understood the nature of the kingship in Israel as he struggled to remain loyal to his father Saul, the legitimate king, even as he honored David, whom he knew to be the future king of Israel by the will of God. We saw how his son, the crippled Mephibosheth, although he had a clear hereditary claim to the throne of his grandfather Saul, never wavered in his loyalty to David, God’s choice to be king in Israel. In their own way both knew that David was a type, a picture of the Messiah who was to come, together with His kingship and kingdom.

David was a type of the coming King, whom God’s people would welcome by faith into Jerusalem as they cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” David was a type according to his office, **not his person**. This is the answer to why God said to Saul through Samuel that God would choose as king one who “was after His own heart,” that is, one who knew Him by faith, knew Him to be the truly gracious and loving God who had promised to deliver mankind from sin and death as He promised our first parents. To be sure, David was a deeply flawed individual, just as we all are – **“there is none righteous, no, not one!”** St. Paul cries out to us. David’s righteousness was not a righteousness that was actually his. It was even as ours is, an alien righteousness, a righteousness that God, by grace alone, confers upon all whose trust is in Jesus Christ. The only difference between David’s God-given faith and ours is that he believed in the promised One who was to come and we believe in the One who has come in fulfillment of the Father’s promises. But David’s Lord is the same Christ as ours, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

II

In a similar way all the prophets of the Old Testament were types of Christ and all the priests also. They were all flawed men, but according to their office they were types of Christ. They all pointed to the One who would come bearing on His shoulders and heart the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, as you learned in the catechism, the office only the Messiah Himself could fill. He alone would proclaim the truth to people in his office as Prophet. He alone would offer the perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of all. He alone would rule His eternal kingdom of grace and glory forever and ever.

So, when Absalom came along, seeking the office of king in Israel, an office that was not his to take, but only God’s to give, he either did not understand the office or decided to ignore all that he had learned from the priests of Israel and from his father as he sat at the king’s table as one of the king’s sons. How different he is from the lame grandson of Saul, Mephibosheth, who also sat at the king’s table as one of the king’s sons, as we

heard last week. Mephibosheth treasured the privilege of sitting at the king's table more than of being the king, while Absalom coveted the office of the king whose table it was.

Jonathan, the son of King Saul, never attempted to take the kingship from his father even though he knew that Saul was corrupting the office of king. God had placed his father in office and, Jonathan believed, God alone could take the office from him, as He indeed did. Again, how different was Jonathan from Absalom, who appointed himself the authority to remove his father from the kingship and appoint himself in his place.

Here is the difference between all the types of Christ in the Old Testament and the true Christ, the Antitype. All the types reflected only aspects of the promised One so that God's people would see in them the nature of God's kingdom of grace in contrast to the kingdoms of the world. To be sure, the kingship in Israel also had a divinely appointed purpose in the world and for the world, something even Absalom probably understood as he positioned himself before the city gate, promising the people a kingdom where justice would be apportioned fairly, which is indeed one of the legitimate purposes of earthly government. The trouble is that he saw that as the **only purpose** of the kingship in Israel and was convinced that he would be a better king than David. But the kingdom he wanted to establish as king in place of his father would not have been one that would have continued forever, and it would not escape corruption and evil, as all governments throughout history do to a greater or lesser degree.

We live in an era when, seemingly, the majority of people no longer understand the purpose of government or the purpose of the church as God Himself has instituted them. They do not grasp the wisdom of our founding fathers in separating the authority God gave to the government on the one hand and to the church on the other. They do not understand that each has its own purpose and responsibility before God and that each has authority from God. God gave the sword, the power of life and death, to government alone to rule over the bodies of men; and He gave the keys, the power of God unto salvation, to the church alone to rule over the souls of men. The first is a coercive power that we see and know everytime we come to a red octagonal sign that says, Stop! The second is a gracious power that we see and know everytime we stand before the sign of the cross and hear, "Your sins are forgiven you, go in peace."

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The types of Christ in the Old Testament reflect aspects of the true Christ, the antitype, as we said before. They do so according to the office they hold, whether as prophet, priest, king or in any role they play in the written revelation of God's will and work, the Bible. But they do not reflect the Christ **according to their person**, because none of them were righteous, "no, not one!" When the Christ appeared, He not only had the vocation, the calling, the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, He was in His person what they were not, are not, and never could be, righteous and holy in thought, word, and deed from beginning to end. With His perfect life the Savior covered all the flaws of all the types of Christ we have heard of in the last weeks, David, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth, all of the others throughout the Old Testament, and all the people of the New Testament, including you and me. And then with His sacrificial death in our place, He took away the penalty of all those flaws leaving us with only His righteousness. That is our Savior King. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria