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David Returns, 2 Samuel 19:16-40

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Introduction

- King David returns to a fragile kingdom. Anxiety among the people is high. There are many untrustworthy characters ready to seize the fragile moment.
 - Upon his return, we see three encounters that are parallel to his departure (2 Samuel 16).
 - Let's observe how David behaves in the complexity of knowns/unknowns, friends/enemies, and rebels/loyals.

A Loyal Friend

- Let's begin at the bottom and work our way up (31-40).
 - David had a wealthy benefactor named Barzillai when he was in refuge.
 - He intends to show him his gratitude by welcoming him to Jerusalem.
 - Barzillai was old and desired to spend the rest of his days in his home. He sends Chimham, most likely one of his young sons, with David.
 - This is familiar behavior with David. He was generous towards his friends and those who helped him.
- **Point:** Show kindness and generosity to loyal friends in the kingdom.
 - There are people in your life who deserve your kindness. They are co-laborers in the gospel, fellow citizens in the kingdom, and even more are friends.
 - "When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it belongs" (Prov. 3:27).
 - "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:10).

An Unknown Friend

- Moving up, we see that David encounters a familiar face—Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth.
 - The last that we heard about him was from his servant Ziba (2 Sam. 16:1-4).
 - Mephibosheth is contradicting that account claiming that Ziba slandered him.
 - What is David supposed to do? He doesn’t have sufficient evidence to know without a doubt what happened. Moreover, Ziba had done him a great service.
 - He makes a judgement that is best in line with what he can know. Furthermore, it doesn’t require him to fully commit to either Ziba or Mephibosheth’s stories.
- **Point:** We cannot read hearts and cannot always make final judgments.
 - Is this person a friend or foe to the kingdom? Is that person someone that I can trust? The best practice is to neither make a rash judgment nor an unqualified acceptance. Do not entrust yourself to someone untrustworthy.
 - Examples:
 - Singles, date with an eye towards marriage. You are learning and testing your partner’s reliability as a spouse. Guard your heart and withhold intimacy for the appropriate level of trustworthiness.
 - Abstain from making judgments about your fellow church members or other believers in the kingdom.
 - Don’t work for someone that you cannot trust. Maintain healthy finances so that you aren’t dependent on a single job.
 - When you vote, it often feels like trying to choose between Ziba and Mephibosheth... Intelligently consider both options and make a humble decision (“This is my candidate... let’s hope for the best.”).
 - Don’t entrust your life to your chosen candidate. This means they can lose your vote and support. Moreover, support republicanism and checks-and-balances so that your candidate can be defeated, if necessary.

A Known Enemy

- Lastly, we see the first encounter on David's return. This man was a sworn enemy and cursed David as he fled the city (2 Sam. 16:5-14).
 - Abishai again suggests that they execute this scoundrel. David says no.
 - Shimei expresses a sincere repentance and David forgives him, "You will not die" (23).
 - These are the same words said to David after his sin. He had experienced God's grace/forgiveness and now extends it to his enemies.
- **Point:** Those who have been forgiven will forgive.
 - Jesus taught this to his disciples in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:21-35).
 - "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Matt. 18:32-33).
 - Forgiveness is one of the most crucial and needed values for a healthy society.
 - Forgiveness cuts off the feedback loop of sin: sin—retribution—sin.
 - It's necessary from the smallest society—the family—to the largest—the nation.
 - When the gospel transforms the hearts and minds of individuals, then that can lead outward to transforming entire nations.
- The gospel is the good news that we have the opportunity to hear, "You will not die," from God.
 - "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus..." (Rom. 8:1).

End Notes