

The Mighty Man

Text: 2 Samuel 23

Introduction: Last words are special words. I will always remember the last time I saw my grandmother in this life. I was in college at Liberty, and she was dying of leukemia. She had just come home from the hospital, having made the decision to no longer seek treatment for her cancer. So, on that Saturday, I went to spend the day with her.

Grandma always made a fruitcake every Christmas. And since it was the beginning of December, she was determined to get in the kitchen and make her fruitcake. So, that's what we did. We both knew it was likely the last time we would be together in this life. The last fruitcake she would make. And every word spoken would be among her last words. I don't remember her imparting any particular word of wisdom. But what I do remember is the love we shared together two days before she died.

We come this morning in our study of 2 Samuel to what is described as the last words of David. David is nearing the end of his life. He knows that he will soon be with the Lord. And with that in mind, he has some things to say.

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to 2 Samuel 23 if you haven't already. It begins on page 257 in the black pew Bible in front of you. 2 Samuel 23. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read 2 Samuel 23...Pray)

2 Samuel 23 is about David and his mighty men. We're going to see this morning that while **David was a mighty man who had his mighty men, we serve one who is mightier than he.**

So, let's begin where the text begins, with David who was...

I. A mighty man (2 Samuel 23:1-7).

A. We're told at the outset that "these are the last words of David" (vs. 1a).

1. Now, the author can't mean that these are the actual last words of David before he dropped dead.
2. Rather, this is his final public statement before he died.
3. David's death isn't actually recorded in the Bible until the beginning of 1 Kings. And there we find more last words from David to his son Solomon.
4. So, after all this time in 1 and 2 Samuel, we are going to conclude our study next Sunday with David still alive.

B. The next thing we find in verse 1 is a four-fold statement about who David is (vs. 1b).

1. The text says, "The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel."
2. It's hard to say for sure whether these words are part of the last words of David or is an insertion by the author of 2 Samuel.
3. Either way, this four-fold description presents David as the remarkable person we have come to know through our study.
4. The first thing to note is how unremarkable David's origins were as the "son of Jesse."
 - a. On the one hand, David's ancestry as a descendent of Judah made him eligible to fulfill the prophecy of Jacob in Genesis 49 that the royal "scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Gen. 49:10).
 - b. On the other hand, we know that Jesse was an obscure man of small importance.
 - c. On top of that, David was the youngest and least among Jesse's sons.
 - d. There was nothing particularly impressive about David when we were first introduced to him back in 1 Samuel 16.
5. But, as we also see here in verse one, David was "raised on high."

- a. **Meaning that according to the sovereign purposes of God, the lowly son of Jesse became Israel's king.**
 - b. **We should briefly point out that while none of us will likely ever rule a nation, God has done something similar for us. We were low and despised in the world (1 Cor. 1:28). But God chose us. And brought us into relationship with Himself by the blood of His Son Jesus. We were "not a people," but now, we are "a people for [God's] own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9-10).**
 - c. **We can also note that Jesus, who took "the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men," has now been "highly exalted" and given "the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:7-9). Even more significantly than David, He has been "raised on high."**
6. **David is also called "the anointed of the God of Jacob"**
 1. **This connects David back to God's promise to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2).**
 2. **God had made of Abraham and his descendants a great nation. The nation of Israel.**
 3. **And David was Israel's king. He was the "anointed of the God of Jacob."**
 7. **And David was "the sweet psalmist of Israel."**
 1. **We know that David wrote many of the Psalms.**
 2. **He was a man whose heart was turned toward God in worship. He knew and understood that God is worthy of worship.**
 3. **And we are now the beneficiaries of David's heart of worship through his Psalms that are recorded for us in the Bible.**
- C. After the four-fold description of David, then begins David's oracle from the Lord (vs. 2).**
1. **An oracle is a special utterance that originates with God.**
 2. **David makes clear that his words come from the Lord when he says, "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue" (vs. 2).**
 3. **In his brief statement, David articulates what we understand as the doctrine of divine inspiration. The Bible is breathed out by God. Men spoke and wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**
 4. **We might ask, "Are these David's words? Or are they God's words?" The answer is "yes." They are David's words. AND they are God's words.**
 5. **And this is true not just of these opening verses of 2 Samuel 23. This is true of the whole Bible. Each book of the Bible has a human author or authors. And the Bible has God as its author. It is His Word.**
 6. **So, here we have the words of David AND the words of God. The Spirit of the LORD spoke by David. His word was on David's tongue.**
- D. And what does the LORD say through David? He speaks of one who "rules justly over men," who rules "in the fear of God."**
1. **Look at verses 3-4. (Read vs. 3-4)**
 2. **We live in a day when leadership and authority are almost looked at as a bad thing. And I think that's because we've seen so much bad leadership and abuse of authority.**
 3. **But the Lord says through David that "when one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth."**
 4. **Leadership is God's idea. Authority comes from God. And God says through David that those who exercise authority are to rule justly.**
 5. **But if we go all the way back to the beginning of 1 Samuel, we are quickly reminded of Eli's failures as a leader and the ways in which his sons abused their authority as priests to gratify their flesh.**

6. Then as Samuel was nearing the end of his life, the people demanded a king. They wanted a king who would rule over them like all the other nations. Saul became king. And while not everything about his reign was bad, the sum total of it all seemed to be to the negative when his life came to an end on Mount Gibeon.
7. David then became king, and everything started out great. 2 Samuel 8:15 says, “So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.” There was so much to love about David. So much to respect about his rule and reign as king. And then 2 Samuel 11 happened. David took Bathsheba. He murdered her husband. And David and the kingdom were never the same again.
8. So, there’s a sense in which it could be said that David ruled justly over men and in the fear of God. But I don’t think that anyone who has read all of 2 Samuel as we have would feel comfortable giving an unqualified endorsement of David as king.
9. And the truth is that it doesn’t get better from here. David’s son Solomon is going to become king. And he is certainly going to have his problems.
10. And after Solomon died, the kingdom was divided under the reign of his son Rehoboam. And God’s people were plagued by bad leadership from then on with a few bright spots sprinkled in here and there.
11. The point is that God’s words through David here leave us longing for something more. A different king. A better king. A king who will truly rule justly over men, who will rule in the fear of God.

E. But does David see in himself one who “rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God”?

1. We might think so initially based on the question he asks at the beginning of verse 5: “For does not my house stand so with God?” (vs. 5a).

2. And perhaps to some extent David does see himself as a just ruler. As we’ve said, when considering all of David’s public life and reign as king, there’s much to appreciate. Who among us would like to be judged solely on the basis of the worst thing we’ve ever done?
3. But David’s very next sentence indicates that David is not so much looking back on his reign as king as he is looking forward to the fulfillment of God’s promise to him. He says, “For he (talking about God) has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure” (vs. 5b).
4. David’s ultimate hope is not in himself and his righteousness. His hope is in God and His faithfulness to His covenant.
5. David is thinking all the way back to 2 Samuel 7 where God said to him, “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16).
6. Worthless men will always seek to stand in the way of God’s purposes, but they will not be successful. Ultimately, they will be “utterly consumed with fire,” as David says at the end of verse 7. David’s enemies could not prosper against him in his day because God was with him, and God’s enemies will not prosper against God in the last day either.

After David’s last words conclude in verse 7, the narrative shifts from David, who was himself a mighty man, to...

II. David’s mighty men (2 Samuel 23:8-39).

A. 2 Samuel is a story about David and God’s work in and through David. But David did not accomplish everything he accomplished as king of Israel on his own.

1. No, we read here of David’s mighty men and all the ways they served David and aided him in his work as king.
2. We’re not going to go through the list of names named this morning because that’s not the point.

3. The point is that these were real people who were committed to David and his kingdom and who served David and the kingdom valiantly.
 4. They were committed to David and the kingdom, and the Lord used them in some pretty consequential ways.
 5. We don't know much if anything about most of these men. Only a few of them have even shown up in the narrative of 2 Samuel before this point.
 6. But they are listed here because they were important to David, and they were important to the kingdom.
 7. The Lord used them to accomplish His purposes for David and his kingdom.
 8. These mighty men ought to cause us to think about the kind of legacy we will leave behind one day.
 9. We won't have our names written in the Bible. We will likely be more forgotten to history than even these men of whom we know very little about.
 10. But that does not mean we are insignificant. You and I matter. We matter to God. And what we do for the Lord in service to Him matters.
 11. See, just like these mighty men had a king that they served, we have a king whom we are to serve. King Jesus. The question is whether we are committed to our King. The question is whether we are willing to serve our King no matter what and do whatever He would ask or require of us.
- B. I also want you to notice that David's mighty men did not accomplish all that they accomplished for David and the kingdom on their own strength.**
1. Look at verse 10. (Read vs. 10) "The LORD brought about a great victory that day."
 2. Now look at verse 12. (Read vs. 12) "And the LORD worked a great victory."
 3. You remember that the reason the people wanted a king in the first place was that they would have someone to protect them. And it was God's intention to give the people a king to protect them. But they got out ahead of God with their demand, and God gave them Saul.
4. David was God's choice of a king to protect His people. And we see throughout David's reign that God used David and his mighty men to protect His people from their enemies, particularly the Philistines.
 5. And each time that God's people were successful against their enemies, it was because of God. It wasn't primarily because David was a mighty king, though he was. It wasn't primarily because of David's mighty men, though they fought valiantly. It was primarily because God was with them, and He brought about victory. God accomplished His purposes for David and His people.
 6. The takeaway here is that there is not anything God's people cannot accomplish when God is with them. And the flipside is that there is not anything God's people can accomplish on their own strength and wisdom.
 7. We need the Lord. Just like David's mighty men needed the Lord, we need the Lord. We are completely dependent on Him. He is our strength in times of trouble. We've been called out by God in His service, but we need Him if we are going to do the kingdom building work we've been called to do. Not building our own kingdoms. Or a kingdom of this world. But a kingdom that will last forever. God's kingdom.
- C. One more thing before we move along. Look at verses 13-17. (Read vs. 13-17)**
1. Remember when David was camped in the cave of Adullam? It was back in 1 Samuel 22. David was fleeing from Saul. And the place was crawling with Philistines. It was certainly a scary time for David. He didn't know what would happen next.
 2. On top of the danger he faced, you might say that David was homesick. Because David said longingly, "Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" (vs. 15).
 3. You can see the devotion of David's men here because the text tells us that three of them responded by going at great risk to their lives, to get David some water from the well of Bethlehem.

4. **But when they returned with the water, David poured it out to the LORD and said, “Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?” (vs. 17).**
5. **I wonder if we have this kind of devotion to the Lord that David’s mighty men had to David. What are we willing to risk for the sake of the gospel? Our career? Our safety and security? Is there anything that we are willing to risk for the sake of the gospel?**
6. **I don’t completely know what to make of David pouring out the water. If I risked my life to get someone a drink of water and they poured it out, I would probably be pretty ticked. But notice that the text says he “poured it out to the LORD.” It looked as if he wasted it. But nothing is wasted that is given to the Lord as an offering to Him. It reminds us of the woman of Bethany who poured the expensive contents of her alabaster jar on the feet of Jesus. The disciples were outraged because it appeared that she had wasted the expensive ointment. But Jesus rebuked them. Because nothing is wasted that is given to Jesus.**
7. **What will you pour out for Him to express your devotion? Your career? Your comfort? Your safety and security? Your very life? May we be willing to pour out everything at the feet of King Jesus. Knowing that nothing will be wasted that is given to Him in faith.**

We’ve seen a mighty man, namely king David. We’ve seen David’s mighty men. Finally, I want to turn your attention to...

III. The mighty man – King Jesus (2 Samuel 23:3-4).

There’s so much that we could say by way of pointing to Jesus from 2 Samuel 23. But I want to direct your attention back to verses 3-4. (Read vs. 3-4)

David says that it is a good thing when one rules justly over men. When one rules in the fear of God.

And we have seen that in some limited sense, David’s reign fulfilled this ideal. It was said of David back in chapter 8 that he “administered justice and equity to all the people.” But we also know that the latter part of David’s life and reign as king was a mess. There was nothing just about what He did to Bathsheba and her husband Uriah. And the consequences of that were significant for the rest of David’s life and reign.

Then there was David’s son Solomon who became king after him. And there were some good things about Solomon as well. But he was also a mess. Then it was under Solomon’s son Rehoboam that the kingdom split in two. And the kings that followed, by and large, with some notable exceptions, did not lead God’s people in a way that could be described as just or ruling in the fear of God.

All of this left God’s people longing for a ruler who will administer justice and equity. One who rules justly over men. Who rules in the fear of God.

See, this is when human leadership is at its best. Good leadership dawns on the people like the morning light. It’s like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning. Like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

We all long for this kind of leader, don’t we? And we do get glimpses of it from time to time. Even in this broken world. And in our system of government here in the United States where we get to pick our leaders, this is what we should expect and even require of our leaders. Justice. And the fear of God. Character matters for those who lead.

But the truth is that even with the best of human leaders, we will not experience perfect justice until King Jesus returns to make all things right. We await the one who is called Faithful and True. Who judges in righteousness. Who makes war against sin and death. Who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Because when He returns, it will be like the morning light. Like the sun shining forth on a cloudless mourning. Like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. All our longing will find its fulfillment in Him.

Conclusion: He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Death will be no more. No more mourning or crying or pain anymore. This world of injustice and contempt for God will give way to perfect justice and the fear of God. The former things will pass away. And He will give us to drink from the spring of the water of life without payment. Praise be to God!