

Power or Love

2 Samuel 13:8-14

Embrace the Father's love this day.

How can you show this love to those in your care?

You in David's chaotic household. After David sins with Bathsheba, the rest of his life fulfills Nathan's prophecy that "the sword shall never depart from your house." King David's sins, in particular his neglect of his children, had disastrous personal and national results. This reminds us to cherish the gift of spiritual fatherhood.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

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 every one from me." So every one 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 force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly. As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, 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 forced her, and lay with her.

Reflection

We overcome sloth by embracing our duties, especially as husbands and fathers, refusing to give into deadly distractions, such as lust.

Lust lacks the proper commitment and order to another person. Any intact male can rape and beget offspring. Physical generation does not require any particular intelligence or virtue. Ask any of the countless children who never knew their biological fathers. True fatherhood, however, is a spiritual reality, and it requires many virtues. The true vocation and mission of every man is to become a spiritual father, to love so much that life, especially eternal life, begins to flourish around him. The Gospel of

John makes this point clear through the fatherhood of God: "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Regardless of your age or state in life, you are called to be a spiritual father.

One of the greatest deficiencies of fathers, and the deficiency that most fuels the world's hatred of fatherhood, is the abuse of power. Amnon, being stronger than Tamar, forced his sister to lay with him. The power of fatherhood, even the gift of physical strength, is given by God to men for the protection and preservation of others, not for their domination.

As you may know all too well, men are more typically stimulated sexually by sight, whereas women are predominantly stimulated by emotion. God wired men this way so that they could be good shepherds, always on the watch for opportunities and threats to those entrusted to their care. God wired women the way he did to ensure that men would not be blinded by wanton folly, as Amnon and David were. God wanted women to help men to understand that sexuality has to be about love and relationship.

How often do you prefer power over love? The ways we prefer power can be subtle. Do you need to be in control? How deep is your self-reliance? Do you always get the last word? Do you usually buck authority? Do you make decisions without consulting those whom the decisions affect? Do your prayers attempt to manipulate God into giving you what you want, or is your prayer a relationship?

The very act of prayer relinquishes control and surrenders to God. Take some time today to pray and ponder these questions in God's presence.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 7 Action Items

1. Meditate on your vocation.

We have moved into the second half of our Kings of Summer exercise. We are now turning from the cause of sloth to its solution in embracing the demands of our kingly vocation to serve others sacrificially. Do you have clarity on your vocation?

God has called each one of us to accept a relationship of adoptive sonship with him. This is the foundation for any vocation in life. God may also call us to marriage and family life, or to serve him in holy orders. Beyond these larger vocations, he also calls us to particular kinds of service and work for the good of others.

All of these callings are aspects of the kingly life that comes to us from Christ. We are called to be sons of the King, to exercise responsibility for our families or for the Church, and to work for the good of others through the tasks at hand. We spread the kingdom of Christ by approaching these calls in faithfulness to God. God has entrusted the care of others to

us in some way. How are we responding to this task? Are we praying daily for all those in our care? Are we taking enough time to focus our attention on them?

2. Schedule fraternity time.

How are your fraternity meetings going? If it has been hard to meet over summer, reconnect and try to get into a good rhythm again. Keeping your fraternity strong will prove essential for your continued growth and stability in the spiritual life.

3. Reflect on your summer schedule.

How is work, vacation, prayer, and family time all working together? Do you need to make any adjustments? Has your Plan of Life been working to help you grow and fight the spiritual battle against vice and temptation? Pray about your schedule and disciplines this week.