

Rapacious Desire

2 Samuel 8:7-13

Arise to follow the Lord today.

Has the summer been a time of spiritual progress or malaise?

You are in Jerusalem, David's new capital city. God prefers that, rather than building the Lord's house, David set himself to building up his own home by becoming a good father and husband. Rejecting the Lord's calling, David lays the groundwork for trouble.

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

And David took the shields of gold which were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze... And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze; these also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold which he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. And David won a name for himself.

Reflection

As David continues his military exploits, the text makes a point to note the many spoils of war that David took, even while attributing his success to the Lord and being careful to point out that David was a fair ruler. David's interest in wealth represents a new theme in 2nd Samuel. We did not see David previously concerned with wealth but with the honor and glory of God.

It seems like David has let his desires get the better of him. We might recall that Evagrius believed sloth arose from slavish pursuit of personal pleasure and inordinate passion. Sloth is caused by an abandonment to our desires, in which we can't say no to ourselves and we must have whatever we want, whenever we want it.

This is a prevalent problem in our era. In his book on acedia, R. J. Snell says we live in an "empire of desire" (Acedia and Its Discontents, Angelico, 2015). Desire is our dictator, and we believe deeply that happiness is just the satisfaction of our every want. While our needs are

met quickly, cheaply, and conveniently, we do not feel secure, but dominated by innumerable wants. We are overwhelmed with desires for all sorts of pleasure, entertainment, and accumulation of possessions. On social media, we see someone enjoying a vacation that we now want. We drive down the road and see a billboard for a store we now want to browse. We watch YouTube, only to see an advertisement for a product we now “need.” How many conversations with co-workers or friends are just little advertisements for a product they just purchased?

In our economic life, we have moved past self-interest to the encouragement of self-indulgence. Sadly, this mentality even has influenced our parenting. We don’t think our children should be denied any experience or request. We sign them up for all sorts of sports and activities and spend our time running them around from place to place. One of the major differences between previous parenting styles and ours today is that in times past, kids would serve the parents, while today parents serve their children, answering every interruption or request and giving in to a mountain of toys.

The slothful person is at the mercy of his or her wants and whims. We all know what this is like, in our helplessness before the “add to cart” button or the ice cream tub. We find our weakness repulsive, as we can’t pull ourselves away from scrolling through social media posts. We procrastinate by flitting from website to website, looking for something interesting or scandalous. We feel incapable of denying ourselves a movie series binge or an outburst of anger at the spouse or child who interrupts our schedule, etc. We are acutely aware that we have almost no power over our will and act under a compulsion to satisfy our urges as they arise. We can feel more like an addict than a man.

The intemperance of our times reveals that we lack a sense of purpose, meaning, and value, going in search of some new “thing” by which to anchor our restless souls. We are restless because we are not resting in the Lord. And we use things and experiences as a substitute for the peace that he alone can give.

Consider the way you are living. What controls you? Is it your desires? Do you tremble and bow before them? Or are you controlled by the Spirit of God? What products are you leaving in your online shopping cart, just waiting for a moment of weakness to buy? What websites do you browse in order to arouse your desires? How have you let the desire for “things” replace or subdue your passion for the Lord?

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 5 Action Items

Bookend your day with a morning offering and nightly examen.

Check in with your anchor.

Don’t give in to distractions.

Invite men to join the second half of Kings of Summer.