

Stealing

2 Samuel 15:1–6

Embrace the Father's love this day.

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

You are in David's chaotic household. 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

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 suit 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 deputed by the king to hear you." Absalom said moreover, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a suit or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." And whenever a man came near to do obeisance 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.

Reflection

Absalom is out to make a name for himself. He gets a flashy vehicle and assembles an entourage. He gets up early every day and positions himself prominently at the gate of Jerusalem so that anyone coming to see the King will have to speak to him instead. He is campaigning. He steals the hearts of the people. From whom is he stealing them? He is stealing from his father.

Although David's absence and neglect of duty is allowing Absalom to accomplish this, and although Absalom's initiative may be considered commendable, there is something extremely sinister going on. The conspiracy to overthrow King David, the Lord's anointed, is actually a desire to overthrow God.

The mother of Absalom and his sister, Tamar, was Maacah, the daughter of

Talmai, king of Geshur. The people of Geshur were pagans that Joshua and the Israelites had never been able to drive out of the land. They dwelled in the midst of the Israelites, even though they worshipped a false god in the form of a bull. After Absalom murdered Amnon, he fled there to his grandfather's kingdom, east of the Sea of Galilee. Talmai surely encouraged his grandson to reject the God of Israel and to come back to the pagan god of his ancestors. Meanwhile, Tamar and Maacah were left in Jerusalem disgraced and resentful toward David, his people and his God.

Just as Absalom positioned himself to overthrow his father and his father's God, our culture rejects fatherhood and God. The consequences of such rebellion are as devastating today as in the Kingdom of David. In David's time, Absalom cared more about himself than the Israelites. Today, people do not care about the common good; they only want their own interests secured. Instead of conforming to the truth of an objective moral order, our society wants to decide what is true and to redefine reality, good, and evil.

We are slothful toward what matters most. We value science, freedom, and independence while mocking faith, obedience, and trust. All of the world's problems seem to be blamed on fatherhood itself: patriarchy. Much of the current confusion surrounding gender ideology flows directly from the rejection of fatherhood. These things fill the world with anxiety and make fathers further relinquish their responsibilities. With no one to show us the harsh facts of reality, freedom becomes a curse. It crushes us with options, confuses us with contradictions, and overwhelms us with meaninglessness.

In what ways are you out to make a name for yourself? How do your sins "steal" from God? Despite our culture's rejection of God and fathers, the world needs fathers more than ever. As a man of God, are you ready and willing to accept your mission as a spiritual father? Dialogue with the Lord about this during your twenty minutes of silent prayer today.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 7 Action Items

Meditate on your vocation.

Schedule fraternity time.

Reflect on your summer schedule.