

Suffering for Love

2 Samuel 15:30-37

Arm yourself for spiritual combat today.

How are you doing in the spiritual battle?

You are fleeing from Jerusalem. After Absalom declares himself king in Hebron, David has to flee from Jerusalem or be killed. This week, David's sufferings teach us that spiritual fatherhood requires faith, courage, humility, and trust.

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

But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered; and all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. And it was told David, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O Lord, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." When David came to the summit, where God was worshiped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth upon his head. David said to him, "If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,' then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, their two sons are with them there, and by them you shall send to me everything you hear." So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

Reflection

David, the Lord's anointed, crosses the Kidron valley and goes up weeping to the Mount of Olives together with his companions. Likewise, Jesus and his disciples would cross the Kidron valley after the Last Supper on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane centuries later. David is betrayed by Ahithophel, foreshadowing Jesus's betrayal by Judas. David prays that Ahithophel's counsel will be turned into foolishness, just as Jesus prays, "Father, let this cup pass from me." Hushai may even be seen as a figure of the apostle John. Just as Hushai went back to spy on Absalom for David, John, who was known to the high priest, did not flee when Jesus was

arrested, but went in to the courtyard of the high priest where Jesus was held prisoner (see John 18:15).

It may seem jarring to shift from David's abandonment of the ark in yesterday's meditation to contemplating him today as a prefigurement of Christ. Yet, this paradoxical shift illustrates both the mystery of iniquity and the unfathomable mercies of God. Though David abandons the ark, God does not abandon David. Though David forgets how God has always delivered him, God does not forget the covenant. God will keep his promise that the Son of David will reign forever. David suffers for his own sins and those of his son, but the sinless Jesus suffers for our sins and the sins of the whole world. We, like Absalom, once rebelled against God and father. Jesus, obedient even to death, shows us how true children of God should live. Jesus is both the Son of David and the Son of God.

The sufferings of David and of Christ also confront us with the mystery of the Cross. Spiritual fatherhood, as well as the Christian life itself, always entails the Cross. Fathers must abandon sloth and act for the good of their children. Jesus shows us that true spiritual fathers must be willing to take upon themselves the sufferings caused by their children's failures. Jesus reveals the redemptive value of human suffering. By accepting the Cross in his own life, a father becomes a source of genuine consolation for others. He even becomes a peacemaker. As Isaiah put it, "by his wounds we were healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Boys generally follow the pleasure/pain principle. They cling to their mothers' comfort and run away from anything unpleasant. The spiritual life can hardly begin in a man with this kind of shallow masculinity. Boys want fun, ease, and pleasure, whereas fathers stay the course even when things are boring, difficult, and painful. Boys seek the path of least resistance, but fathers seek the truth and do the right thing. True spiritual fathers understand that the best way to discipline their children is to practice self-discipline. Fathers show their children how to set boundaries and how to say "no" to selfish, disordered desires. Fathers keep loving, even when it hurts. The Cross definitely separates the men from the boys.

How well do you suffer for others? How often do you complain? What are the ways you practice self-discipline?

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 8 Action Items

Plan another communal BBQ.

Keep Friday as a day of penance.

Check in with and pray for your anchor.