

Hiding in the Castle
2 Samuel 14:25, 27-33
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

Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his beauty as Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, without coming into the king's presence. Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king; but Joab would not come to him. And he sent a second time, but Joab would not come. Then he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Then Joab arose and went to Absalom at his house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent word to you, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to ask, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still." Now therefore let me go into the presence of the king; and if there is guilt in me, let him kill me.'" Then Joab went to the king, and told him; and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom.

Reflection

After two years in Jerusalem but barred from David's presence, Absalom grows impatient. It takes an act of arson to get anyone to listen to him. This is yet another failure in fatherhood on the part of King David. Instead of going out to his son to be reconciled, he hides in the protection of his palace and seems to ignore him. It does not seem to bother David, now seven years after the rape of Tamar, that he has not even seen Absalom in five years. David is acting more like a ruler than a

father, more like a child than a parent.

This kind of slothful indifference is another dreaded deficiency of fatherhood. Fathers are often too busy, too self-absorbed, or too lazy to put their children ahead of themselves. They fail to give their children their full attention and really listen to them. When fathers seem indifferent toward their children and neglect them, this is akin to abuse. It communicates, "You are not important to me." On the other hand, when fathers take time even to play with their children, they affirm their very existence. Even if one could argue that David was punishing Absalom for murdering Amnon, this would be quintessential passive-aggressive behavior. David seems to be saying, "Look how difficult you've made my life." Yet, the only message Absalom is receiving is, "I am not loved at home; it would be better to be in exile."

A father has to care genuinely about his children and to care more about them than he cares about himself. Jesus teaches us this in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father was watching the road daily for any sign of his son's return, and on seeing him, runs to him, embraces him, and calls for a feast. Without the father, there is no home to which the Prodigal Son can return. Without the father, there is no freedom to leave home in the first place. Without the father, there is no mercy, no forgiveness, and no opportunity to learn from mistakes.

What has been your experience of your father? Was he a harsh disciplinarian? Did he demonstrate any self-discipline? How does this affect your relationship with God the Father? How well do your family and friends know that you love them as you love yourself? Take these questions to 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.