

Series: On the Throne

Sermon: Solomon - Grabbing the Bull By the Horns

I Kings 1:1, 5, 7-10, 24, 26, 28-30, 32-35, 36-41, 49-51

When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him.

Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, "I will be king." So he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him.

Adonijah conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their support. 8 But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei and David's special guard did not join Adonijah.

Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zohelath near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon.

Nathan said <to David>, "Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? Today he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now they are eating and drinking with him and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!'"

Then King David said, "Call in Bathsheba." So she came into the king's presence and stood before him. The king then took an oath: "As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out this very day what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place."

Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. As the Lord was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David!"

So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon mount King David's mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" And all the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.

Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they were finishing their feast. On hearing the sound of the trumpet, Joab asked, "What's the meaning of all the noise in the city?"

At this, all Adonijah's guests rose in alarm and dispersed. But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Then Solomon was told, "Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon and is clinging to the horns of the altar. He says, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'"

Solomon replied, "If he shows himself to be worthy, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die." Then King Solomon sent men, and they brought him down from the altar. And Adonijah came and bowed down to King Solomon, and Solomon said, "Go to your home."

Sermon

At the beginning of 1800, Napoleon had the world. Promoted up thru the ranks during the French Revolution, this Corsican shot France into greatness. Within a few years, he crowned himself emperor at Notre Dame, and began to conquer the continent of Europe and northern Africa. At his height, he controlled almost all of Europe, Spain to Russia, Germany to Italy. No other kingdom ever controlled as much of Europe as Napoleon. And then he went to invade deeper into Russia. And winter came and decimated his army. In 1814, it all came crashing down against him, and he abdicated his throne. He was exiled to the island of Elba off the coast of Italy to live out his days. The world was tired of him, but did not execute him, for the world was also tired of bloodshed and revenge.

Reminds me First Kings. The succession of kings following King David was in a precarious state. King David intended for Solomon to be king. Solomon was a son from Bathsheba, if you remember the David and Bathsheba story. Another sermon, another time. But David hadn't even died yet, and Adonijah (not even one of David's sons) had already proclaimed himself king. He was powerful and handsome (I guess that helps a king's case?), and he had gathered a following from David's advisers and friends. To celebrate his kingship, he gathered those folks for a feast and sacrificed to his gods. Pretty presumptuous! At the party were important people from the Kingdom. The leader of the army, Joab, was there. Abiathar the priest was there, the high priest under David. It would seem that the military and spiritual rulers were all favoring Adonijah.

Nathan (King David's most trusted adviser) knew that if Adonijah became king, he, Solomon, Bathsheba, and anyone supporting Solomon's succession would be killed — they were threats to Adonijah's kingship.

Nathan made sure King David named his successor (Solomon) before his death so there would be no question who was in power. David had Solomon anointed, and then they celebrated Solomon's kingship with horns and a procession, and Solomon sat on the throne before all of Israel. Solomon's celebration interrupted Adonijah's celebration — how humiliating it must have been for Adonijah! Now the tables were turned — Adonijah was in danger for his life because he was a threat to Solomon. His guests slunk out of the feast, and Adonijah clung to the altar of the Lord. This is THE altar. After all, Solomon couldn't murder a man on the altar of the Lord. Adonijah made Solomon promise not to kill him. Solomon agreed, as long as Adonijah did not prove himself wicked. GO HOME was the order given by Solomon to his rival Adonijah. Just go home.

Napoleon would have been fine in France. The nations seemed pretty cool with that. But he went out and wanted more. Just go home.

There have been times in my life when I probably needed to head that advice. Perseverance is a really great attribute, but there is a point where it can become self-destructive. Back in my single days chasing after a love interest, there is a fine line between perseverance and stalking. I spent time in the south, and remember seeing t-shirts from folk that read, "The South will Rise again!" Really? That's perseverance, but it's been 170 years. They're really playing the long game. And do you really want to go back to those days? Sometimes perseverance and reality need to have a meeting.

This is from a psychology magazine, earlier this decade: <Those who never give up> try over and over to impact a difficult person, situation, or something not within their control — hoping for a different outcome. They are unable to relent or let go despite being caught in a losing battle with proven low prospects of getting the intended result, or requiring too much effort relative to the payoff. In this case, refusing to give up protects people from facing their own limitations, feeling helpless and defeated, and/or having to confront sadness and

loss regarding relationships or situations they can't change. Letting go can also be mistakenly seen as a sign of weakness or personal failure, though in fact may be the harder, wiser, and more courageous thing to do.

Perseverance is not always the healthy choice, or the one that leads to success. Such defensive perseverance not only fails to lead to success, but actually blocks new opportunity and fuels frustration and stagnation.

There are days when life goes your way. And there are days when life does not go your way. And we keep fighting, we keep trying. But we also need to come to grips with reality. In those moments, I need to go home. Maybe my literal home, but also my spiritual home. Where is my value placed? Jesus came for you. Not because of your national identity. Not because of your accomplishments or failures. Not because of your education or status. Not because of your hurts and wounds. Not because of your past or your present. Not because of your ideology and beliefs. But he came for You. Just YOU.

How did this story end? Solomon ended up king, of course. Adonijah was allowed to go home to live a peaceful life. But he never could leave well enough alone. He went back to the King and asked if he could marry a girl who was King David's last companion in his last days, trying to get back a little power, a little prestige. Claiming what was King David's is another way to the throne. At this straw, Adonijah was put to death. Joab the commander was also killed. And Abiathar the priest was banished from the kingdom. No idea what happened to him in the end.

How did the Napoleon story end? It didn't end on Elba where he was exiled. Napoleon escaped to France in early 1815 and once again, raised a new Grand Army that enjoyed temporary success as he tried to take over Europe again. But this army met its fate in present day Belgium at the battle ofWaterloo. This time, the powers of Europe really had enough. They didn't chop off his head, but they sent him as far away as possible. Napoleon was subsequently exiled to the island of Saint Helena 1,200 miles off the coast of Africa. They even put a garrison of soldiers on the uninhabited Ascension Island, 800 miles away and in between Napoleon and Europe just in case. He died six years later of stomach cancer at the age of 51, on that barren rock, with Europe still nervous about a Napoleon still out there somewhere. He didn't know when to quit.

Maybe you're hurting this week because of politics or because of our never ending national dialogue on race, maybe you're elated with recent events and outlooks. Maybe you're freaked out because of a pandemic or saddened by family drama, or family trauma. Go home. Go home and find rest. Build back your spirit. Build back your identity as a child of God. Come to me, he says, all who are weary. And I will give thee rest.

Opening:

Good morning, Oregon City United Methodist Church to our 36 online worship service. We are glad you are with us today. Earlier this month, we celebrated All Saints Day, and we remembered that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. But do you know the end of that verse? It goes something like this: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. There are many kinds of races, short distance, long distance. We just ended the election races. But the most important race we have is the one before us. It is not a competitive race; it consists of overcoming all the obstacles that hinder us from reaching God's goal for us, namely, to be transformed into the image of Christ! Thank you for joining us this morning, may it prove to be the fuel for the soul as you continue your own race!

Children's Time:

Hey kids, thanks for coming to Children's Time. Do you know what kind of candies I have today?

M&M's. That's right. Or maybe they're W&W's! M & M's Mars and Murrie, two last names of the owner of the company.

Let me ask this? What colors do M&M's come in? I'll give you a second to think about it. Here's a hint, there's Six colors. Brown, yellow, green, orange, red and blue. There have been 17 colors over the years, including tan and purple among others.

What kind of candy is inside the shells? You know this one: Chocolate!

What other kinds of M&M's are there besides plain chocolate? I know of the peanuts kind, but there have been other nuts like almonds and hazelnuts, and also fruity kind as well.

Well, what you all just showed me is your knowledge. You know what M&M's are, what colors they come in, and what flavors. But knowledge is not the same as wisdom. Let's try a few more questions.

Can you eat M&M's at every meal? Probably not.

Should you eat just M&M's for lunch? Probably not.

Why wouldn't you want to eat candy all the time?

Wisdom isn't knowing facts; it's knowing how to make wise choices. You can't eat candy all the time because it's not good for you. It's important to be wise, and to eat candy in moderation so we do not make ourselves unhealthy.

The wiser we are, the more good choices we make. There was a king 3,000 years ago who was asked by God what he would like as a gift. Could you imagine getting any gift from God? He could have asked for anything, even M&M's. But he asked for wisdom. The ability to make the right choices. Not a bad gift for a king. God is the source of all wisdom, and when we seek his wisdom in making decisions, he will never steer us in the wrong direction! Thanks for joining us today!

Prayer:

Wise and Patient God, we know what you want us to do, but we are far too often hesitant to follow through for you. You give us multiple blessings and ask that we develop these gifts and use them to help others. In times of great crisis we come through, we mobilize. But in the intermediate times, we hold back. We develop a "let

someone else do it" attitude. We often think of our gifts, our talents as things that are less than worthy. In this country in which competition is the ruling code, we don't want to compete with others, because we feel we just don't have the right "stuff". How blind we are, Lord! To each one of us you have given gifts which can be used to help others. Each gift and talent is precious in your sight. Rather than compete with others to see who has the greater talent, help us to use the gifts we have been given joyfully. It's in the gift givers name we pray, through the prayer he gave to us...

Offertory:

There are no limits to the gifts you have given us, gracious Lord. Now we return thanks to you for these gifts and we bring these tokens to you, asking for your blessing on givers and gifts. Help these gifts and givers to be your witnesses throughout the world. AMEN.

Closing:

Paul shares this near the end of his life with Timothy: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. We are near the end of this worship service. May you continue to fight the good fight. Keep on the race of justice and mercy, and keep the faith. Amen!