**A United Israel**

**2 Samuel 5:1-10**

6/28/15

Thought for Meditation:

Why is "I am with you" so important? It means that David and all of us later royal and priestly children of God are never alone. However sinful and however lacking in confidence we might be, God is not ashamed to hang around with David, Bathsheba, or us. There is an implicit word of forgiveness in this simple sentence. *Ralph W. Klein*

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This summer I plan to preach a series of sermons based on the life of David. David was one of the two most important Old Testament characters. Moses, who led Israel out of Egypt, and David, who was the king of Israel at the peak of its power, are the most important people in the Old Testament.

 We are not going to have time to look at all of David’s story, so I want to focus on the second part of it. Let me give you a little short review of the first part of David’s story. He was born approximately 1000 years before Jesus. He first appears in 1 Samuel 16. He is a boy, maybe 12 or 13 years old, the youngest of the eight brothers. Because he is the youngest he is the shepherd of the family sheep. We tend to glorify that job, but it was the worst job, the least favorite, given to the one who was least important. In spite of the fact that David is the least important of his brothers, the prophet Samuel anointed him as the next king of Israel.

 David is also known as a singer and songwriter. As a young boy he went and played the lyre and sang songs for King Saul. Many of the Psalms are attributed to David.

 The best known story is about David and Goliath. David kills the Philistine giant with a slingshot and a stone.

 David was best friends with Jonathan, who was the son of King Saul. You may remember the stories of Saul trying to kill David. David had to run away and he gathered a group of outcasts who lived in the wilderness. In spite of the fact that Saul tried to kill David, David refused to kill Saul when he had the opportunity.

 After Saul and Jonathan died David was anointed as the king of Judah and Benjamin, the two southern tribes. The ten northern tribes chose Saul’s son, Ishbaal, as their king. He was king for two years and then murdered.

 That leads us to our passage for today. **“2 Samuel 5:1-10.”**

David’s first act as king was to make Jerusalem the capital. Let me give you a little bit of background to this story. When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land they conquered the whole country. The book of Joshua paints a picture that they controlled everything and lived happily ever after. The reality is that throughout the land there were cities that were not conquered, including Jerusalem. All the way through Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel, it was a city controlled by the Jebusites. The Jebusites had been so successful in keeping enemies out that they believed that no one could ever capture the city. That is what their taunt is all about. “Even if our soldiers were all blind and lame you wouldn’t be able to capture this city.”

Verse 7 is understated. This city had never been captured. “Nevertheless David captured it.” Verse 8 tells us how they did it. There was a tunnel that ran from the center of the city on the hill, down to a well, so that the people in the city could have their food and water, and outlast an enemy. David must have known about that tunnel and it was through that tunnel that they captured the city.

Capturing Jerusalem and making it his capital was a very strategic move. Part of that was because it was a good fortress and was easy to defend. It went beyond that. Jerusalem was located on the border between the two southern tribes and the ten northern tribes. Neither side controlled it before David captured it so neither group could say that David was playing favorites. Making Jerusalem his capital helped David unify the kingdom of Israel.

There is a tendency to think that when Moses led the Israelite tribes out of Egypt they were one unified body. The reality is that they were a loose confederation of tribes. There was not a strong connection. That becomes obvious as you read through the book of Judges. These tribes more or less acted on their own. Under Saul the tribes started to come together, but Saul wasn’t a good leader and wasn’t able to unify them. It was under David that Israel became one, unified nation.

Unity! It’s a great idea. We all believe in unity. We know God wants us live in unity. However, it’s not so easy to live it out. Charles V was the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire from 1519 until 1556. He stepped down as emperor and spent his last few years at his palace in Spain. He had six clocks in his palace. He tried as hard as he could to get these six clocks to strike together on the hour. It never worked. They would stay together for a few hours or even a few days. But over time they get out of sync. In his memoirs he wrote this:

How is it possible for six different clocks to chime all at the same time? How is it even more impossible for the six nations of the Holy Roman Empire to live in harmony? It can’t be done. It’s impossible, even if they call themselves Christians.

Unity is something that the Sharon church has struggled with. The conflict of the past several years created divisions in the church and broken relationships. It left many of you deeply hurt, angry and afraid. When I got here last October there was a dazed look on many of your faces. You were worried about Sharon. Was there a future for this church? Was there a future here for you? I still hear people ask that question at times.

I have a sense that we are moving in a healthy direction. Healing has started and we are moving back toward a sense of unity, though we still have a ways to go. Now, in a twenty minute sermon I can’t say everything that needs to be said about unity – the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, the need for focus as we move toward the future, the need to make some changes in how we work together, and live together, and worship together. What I’d like to do is share with you two ideas about unity that come out of David’s story of bringing together the people of Israel.

First, the unity that we need, the unity that we want, the unity that God wants for us, takes time. If you look at the timing of events in Samuel David is the king of the Judah for 7 ½ years. Ishbaal is the king of the northern tribes for 2 years. That leaves 5 ½ years that the northern tribes didn’t have a king. During that time David could have sought to become king of the northern tribes. He was probably strong enough that he could have attacked the northern tribes made himself their king. He could have forced the unity of Israel. Instead, he waited for 7 ½ years, until the northern tribes were ready for him to be king. Notice that in verse 1 it says that the northern tribes came to David to ask him to be their king. He didn’t go to them. He waited. He waited for God’s timing to work out the unity. David was patient.

A Methodist pastor was visited by his bishop. The bishop asked the pastor how he could pray for him. The pastor said, “O pray for patience. I have all these dreams and hopes and ideas but the people are moving too slowly. Pray that I can be patient.” The bishop prayed for him: “Dear Lord, bring tribulation into this young man’s life! Bring trials and suffering. Bring struggle and conflict.” The pastor interrupted him. “I asked for patience, not for problems and trials.” The bishop said “Patience comes through suffering and struggle. God doesn’t give us patience, he gives us opportunities to learn to be patient.”

Most of us probably want to be more patient, right now. We want unity – right now. We want Sharon to move past the conflict and be a perfect church – right now. The problem is that unity takes time and patience. It will also take a lot of hard work to heal the wounds, to rebuild the church and renew our faith. Those things will not happen quickly. My friends, be willing to wait. Be patient and do the work that is needed to become one, unified church.

The second lesson for us is that the unity we want and need comes through the presence and power of God. David was the greatest of all the kings of Israel. He was king when Israel was at the peak of its power and faith. However, the reason Israel was so great under David is not because he was so great, or perfect. We will hear some stories in the coming weeks that make that obvious. David was the greatest king because God was with him. Look at the last verse of our passage. “And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him” (2 Samuel 5:10).

The hope for Sharon church is not based on having the right pastor or other staff. It doesn’t depend on starting the right programs to reach certain people. It isn’t based on the members of the church giving more money or working harder, though those are important. The hope we have for Sharon is based on the belief that we have a great God, who loves us and is present with us.

Our hope is that we will learn more and more *What that means for us is that we are called* to trust in God’s power and presence. We are called to seek God with all our hearts and minds and souls. We are called to do everything we can to grow in our faith. Our unity, our strength, our hope is in God, who loves us so much that he sent his son, Jesus, to live with us and die for us, and was raised from the dead that we might have an eternal and abundant life. The hope for our unity is based on the presence of God with us.

Remember Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor who thought it was impossible to keep his clocks all at the exact same time? Today it is possible to keep clocks at the exact same time. To stay on the same time they all need to be calibrated and connected to the same standard. It is called Greenwich Mean Time. Clocks can be in different places, and as long as they are connected to Greenwich Mean Time they will have the exact same time.

Unity in the church is possible as we stay connected to our standard, Jesus Christ. In him we are one. Our job is to stay connected to Jesus, to grow in our understanding of who he is and what he wants. The unity we long for, the unity we need, comes through Jesus Christ. In Jesus we are, and can be, “one great fellowship of love, throughout the whole wide earth.”