**“Count on It: David”**

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1 Chronicles 21:1-2, 7-19, 26-27

Ash Wednesday Lenten Midweek 1

If you visit Israel (to this day), you will find David to be known as the great king establishing the kingdom that Israel hopes to rebuild. He was not the **first** king, but the **great** king. He was called a man after God’s heart (not perfect, by any stretch), but wrote for the Lord many of the psalms that speak of the Christ and his own need for the Christ. During the weeks of Lent, we’ll spend our Wednesday evenings (and then Holy Week) hearing of the **better kings** sitting on the throne of Judah leading to **their ultimate heir in the sacrificial descendent and King of Kings in God’s Son (and theirs) Jesus**.

**1**

David’s deeds (but also sins) were great. Besides his heroics and humility before God, many are familiar with his adultery with Bathsheba and then murder of her husband Uriah to try to hide that. His psalm 51 records his sorrow for all he knows wrong there: “I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”

That sin doled-out significant ramifications not only for him, but for the nation (his son Absolom’s coup and the country’s turmoil). David survived by God’s gracious will (and kings to follow), but not without conflict and struggle (and that was likely much of his punishment). His throne would survive, but with ebbs and tides … and then through to a manger in the small village of Bethlehem.

**2**

At the point of our 1 Chronicles account, things were tenuous. David’s solution (rather than to trust God) was to trust in the human might of numbers. As the account begins, Satan tempts him to take a head-count of his human strength. So, like Scrooge on his coined wealth, David ordered a census of fighting-aged men so that he might rest in a strength that he could **see**.

And we might sympathize. I (these days) see countless ads about the need for retirement **accumulations**. In younger ages, I’d had many other stresses: climbing employment ladders and trying to make more money and save some, yet enjoy a bunch of it (and enjoy it immensely). Lifestyle and, then, retirement lifestyles (or the accomplishments of kids) often hold trust more tightly than a security in the forgiveness of a Savior.

While working to provide for a family (or head-counting soldiers in an army) might not sound evil, it’s their intent and goal that can condemn (if according to Satan’s interest for us rather than God’s). The 1st Commandment has us not supersede trust in Him divinely embedded with trust that’s just earthly and temporal. And the U.S. and Canada, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the whole world works pretty **embedded in “this world”** far more than you see us firmly aware of the “heavens”.

**Illustrating** how potentially damning this sin of self-reliance is, shown with David is His choices in punishments God offered (His consequence he could choose). Sins of leaders show as harming not just them, but their family and friends and constituents. Through Gad, David got told to choose his people’s fate, offered three consequences to include three years of famine for the nation or three months of a losing war, or three days of a pestilence by divine intervention … but all would mean death for David’s countrymen’s population. **His sin** would **hurt** **his people**.

He **pleaded for them (personally guilty himself of this):** “Was it not I who gave the commend to number the people? It is **I** who have sinned and done this great evil (Satan’s will). But **these sheep, what have they done?** Please let Your hand, O Lord my God, be **against me and against my father’s house**. But do not let the plague be **on Your people**”. The king, beginning his life as a shepherd, had **led his people** **to slaughter** when **protecting them was his charge** … and **he** **knew it**.

**3**

Presented with **this choice**, David chose to submit to God’s wrath rather than men’s, hoping for more mercy than by humans: “I am in great distress. Let me **fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercy is great**, but **do not let me fall into the hands of men**”. Aware of the mercy of God and His overall gracious Goodness, he chose **THAT WAY** the fate of his people (and himself). He did not trust a **human way**.

And there **is no better choice to make than that one**. “We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them” as our catechism reminds us, “but we ask that God would give everything to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment” … yet **know and trust God**.

**4**

The punishment was **great** in this historic case. Seventy thousand died by divine judgement (and that’s just the men, not counting women and children within that number). In three days, more than the number at Gettysburg paid the price for David’s sin … which David had to watch … and **learn from** …

… because reaching Jerusalem, the Angel of the Lord **stopped His carnage: “The Lord saw repentance, and “relented from the calamity”, showing mercy (saying “It is enough”)**. Knowing that bloodshed for his sin stopped at the “threshing floor of a man named Ornan” where David met the Lord’s Angel, **there he built an altar to the God of grace and mercy**. It later became the spot of the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s Temple, right on Zion’s mount where, then, a crucifixion site sat minutes away. Full retribution for sin stopped by the words “It is finished” … and that not long down-stream. David, there, had **thrown himself on the mercy of God that was undeserved and, yet, given by the self-sacrifice of an Heir, Jesus** …

… so David said “**Here** shall be the house of the Lord God” (the place of worship and thanksgiving for grace and mercy). “And **there** the altar of offerings of thanksgiving for Israel were made”. Solomon built the Temple right upon that spot, and the blood of the best of **animals** would **hold place until the blood of the Savior got shed** …

… because animals didn’t belay God’s **appropriate anger over continued sin**. A human divine was all that could be **sufficient**. So Israel waited for the **Greater King** (the **One** that animal bloodshed for sins pointed to). When David’s descendant, Jesus, entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday morning, He was **lauded** as Israel’s returning Kingdom, yet (from His Baptism) He’d “taken our illnesses and born our diseases / our sins” and **reversed death’s course** on a sacrificial altar. He **crucified those things** (with His body) on a cross to **change the forever destiny of mankind who’d be thankful for that**.

Jesus (the King of kings) was anointed to “bring Good News to the poor and free those oppressed” by sin’s destruction (which is all of us). He **saw** the repentance of sheep knowing they need a Shepherd and had compassion on them, becoming food to feed their hunger from the abundance of the Father’s grace. He **gathered them (Jesus did) into a flock His for taking care of** which He did according to the plan and will of the Father **that merciful**. **All He counted** **(literally)** was the cost of following the Father’s will … and carried His cross to its **end result**. So, on Mount Zion, **the King died for His people (not the people for the king) …**

**… AND THE SON OF GOD STAYED (OR STOPPED, THAT WAY)**

**WRATH-OVER-SIN BY HIS SACRIFICE FOR IT, TO GRANT**

**MERCY AND ESTABLISH A RETURN AMONG MEN TO GOD’S KINGDOM.**

**5**

David will always be remembered as great in strength, but also humility (calling out to God for mercy and, so, **showing us to do so**). Jesus (his heir to the throne) was the King of kings (and not of mere earthly reign, but **COSMICALLY OVER ALL THAT WAS CREATED YET DAMAGED BY HUMAN’S FALL INTO SIN**). Jesus **SAVES and rules in that** by dying for an eternal life for humanity.

It’s said that the Christ would **establish the “Throne of David for all time”** and **that’s indeed what He did**. **Pouring out on the altar of the “threshing floor of Ornan” His blood for the forgiveness of sins, His kingdom is established for all to gain** …

… in +Jesus’ name. Amen.