

Text: 2 Samuel 23:1-7

Title: "King David's Farewell Address"

Time: 5/26/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: On May 12, 1962, the Corps of Cadets at West Point heard General Douglas MacArthur deliver his "Farewell Speech." Here is how that speech finished:

"These great national problems are not for your professional participation or military solution. Your guidepost stands out like a tenfold beacon in the night: Duty, Honor, Country.

"You are the leaven which binds together the entire fabric of our national system of defense. From your ranks come the great captains who hold the Nation's destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds.

"The long gray line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: Duty, Honor, Country.

"This does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato, that wisest of all philosophers: 'Only the dead have seen the end of war.'

"The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished - tone and tints. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears

and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen then, but with thirsty ear, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll.

“In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes: Duty, Honor, Country.

“Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps.

“I bid you farewell.”

MacArthur honored some of our nation’s mighty men with those words. In a similar way, 2 Samuel 23 is a roll call of Israel’s mighty men during the reign of David. He honors them by delivering here what are referred to as his “final words” (v. 1). We might call this then, “King David’s Farewell Address.”

His address is brief, but it communicates five mighty truths that David and his mighty men sought to live by. MacArthur had a list of three: “Duty, Honor, Country.” We will look at David’s five together.

I. Mighty Truth #1 – God uses the humble, so humble yourself (v. 1).

Illustration: MacArthur’s three principles – Duty, Honor, Country – encouraged humility in these future military leaders: “They teach you to be proud and unbending in

honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for action; not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm, but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future, yet never neglect the past; to be serious, yet never take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness; the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.”

Application: David never forgot that he was the son of Jesse. As the youngest, he was not even invited to the interview with Samuel when the prophet was sent to anoint King Saul’s replacement. He waited patiently and humbly for God to deal with Saul, and he recognized that whatever he might accomplish in life, it was God who deserved the credit. God had raised David up.

He was not just the anointed one, but the anointed one of the God of Jacob. He was not just the sweet psalmist, but the sweet psalmist of God’s people, Israel. His life was a blessing first in the humble service of God and second in the humble service of God’s people. Self always must take a backseat in the life governed by Davidic humility. Does it do so for you and I?

II. Mighty Truth #2 – God has spoken, so listen to Him (vv. 2-3a).

Illustration: This is the season of graduation caps, gowns, diplomas, and commencement addresses. A commencement address is a farewell address of sorts. It is a school’s final words to its seniors.

I had the privilege of giving the commencement address at my daughter's graduation from high school in 2015. As I prayed about what to share on that occasion, the Lord impressed upon me the words of Jesus to Martha, when He said, "But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." Earlier the passage tells us that this was Martha's "sister Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching" (Luke 10:38).

Application: God has spoken. God has spoken through His prophets, like David. One commentator pointed out that when David speaks of God's word on his tongue, he is claiming to be verbally inspired by God (Blaikie, 365). David's final words emphasize this truth with its trifold repetition. That God has spoken meant everything to David. It meant everything to Mary. It is the one mighty truth that Jesus said leads us to the one necessary thing - to listen to what God has spoken. You have a lot to do today, but really only one necessary thing.

David was not just a Bible reader, he was a Bible lover (Psalm 19:7-14, " The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy

sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”) Are we Bible lovers? God has spoken, and we must listen.

III. Mighty Truth #3 – Godly leaders are Christlike, so lead that way (vv. 3b-4).

Illustration: We all have experienced a morning like the one described in verse 4. They are too rare in our part of the country, but we know what they are like. On Wednesday mornings I have the privilege of praying with men in our church. They need to meet at 6 am because they are hard workers that must be at work and so cannot meet later. In the wintertime, that time of day can be rough, cold, and dark, but last Wednesday morning the sunrise was 5:16 am, and it was warm enough to wear shorts to the morning prayer time. All day it was sunny, and warm, and breezy, a perfect spring day. We have had a nice week that way.

Application: David’s truth says that the right kind of leader can affect other lives the way that good weather affected our days this past week. Christ is this kind of King. Scripture calls Christ the coming Sun (with a u) of Righteousness who would follow the coming of Elijah (Malachi 4). He would come with healing in his wings. Jesus taught His disciples that John the Baptist was Elijah who had come (Matt. 11:13, 14; 17:12). The Sun of Righteousness has come, and there is healing available in Him.

The risen Christ would later say to His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, so send I you” (John 20:21). He would tell them that they are the light of the world, and that their light should be on a lampstand and not under a bushel (Matt. 5:14-16). He would call their local churches His candlesticks, which heaven sees as its messengers, with the brilliance of mighty stars in His hand (Rev. 1:20).

Is your life shining brightly, leading with righteousness and the fear of the Lord? Only then shall we bring a new morning to the darkened night in the lives of people around us. God-fearing righteousness is the essence of blessed leadership, and as disciple-makers, we are all called to leadership of this kind. Note the many different kinds of leaders in this chapter. The right 37 made their entire nation a godly home blessed by the Lord. Our nation needs some of these.

IV. Mighty Truth #4 – God has promised salvation, so trust Him (v. 5; see ESV for translation issue here).

Application: David refers here to the Davidic Covenant, which is one of the primary themes of the books of Samuel (2 Sam. 7:11-16). David's house was promised a Son who would bring in everlasting salvation. That promise and its coming Son of David was all of David's salvation and all of his desire. He believed the God of this promised Savior would make his house prosper and bring it to completion.

Our New Testament tells us that David's promised Son is Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead for our eternal life (Matt. 1:1). As sinners, we need to trust that promise of salvation to be saved from our sin, just like David did. The books of Samuel do not ignore the problem of David's sin, nor that of his house. Yet in spite of this sin, David experienced salvation based on faith in an everlasting covenant. He knew God's forgiveness and was assured of eternal life. Do you rejoice in the salvation that has been promised you just like David rejoiced in the salvation promised to him? If not, you must. There is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12).

Notice that David describes this promise as "ordered in all things and secured." Those who have trusted God's prom-

ise of salvation can keep on trusting it. Paul put it this way, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose; for whom He did foreknow, these He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:28-29a). Nothing can separate us from this redeeming love. We shall be like Jesus someday, no matter what else happens. Our salvation is well ordered and secure.

V. Mighty Truth #5 - Thorns are for fire, so do not be one (vv. 6-7).

Illustration: It was a joy to have our former deacon and some of his family with us on Mother's Day. When I see Bryan, I sometimes like to tease him about a workday project he thought that he had successfully completed years ago. It was the removal of the thorny red bush by the modular. Today, Bryan is gone but the bush is still there, so I try to find inspiration for perseverance from the bush.

But Bryan tried to get rid of the bush, in part, because it is full of thorns. It is difficult to weed around the bush and to keep it manicured with all those thorns on it.

Application: David tells us that people can have some of the negative traits of that bush. It is possible for a person to respond to God's offer of eternal salvation like a thorn bush. God plants them and blesses them with sunshine and rain, and all He gets in return for His goodness to them is a thorny "Stay away!" and "Don't touch me!" of unbelief.

The sad thing is that ultimately, God will respond to the thorns accordingly. In the end, those who have responded to God's plan of salvation like a thorn bush shall be utterly burned with fire like a thorn bush too. Thorns are for fire,

so do not be one. Or perhaps we should say, stop being one. Welcome your Maker and Redeemer into your life. Stop rejecting His overtures of grace, and trust Him for salvation from your sin.

Conclusion: MacArthur's farewell instructed patriots to sacrifice for Duty, Honor, and Country. We are thankful for those who still heed that call. Sadly, West Point recently dropped their motto from their mission statement. "Duty, Honor, and Country" is still a slogan, but it is no longer a part of the school's mission. MacArthur would not be happy.

David's farewell instructs each of us about our duty as believers: humility, love for God's Word, Christlike leadership, and faithfulness in a world of thorny unbelief. It reminds us that those who honor God, God will honor (1 Sam. 2:30). And it directs us to live for that better country, that is a heavenly one (Heb. 11:16). May these be the mission of our life, not merely a slogan, with the Lord's help.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*