

2 Samuel 14

- Tonight we continue with the story of Amnon, Absalom, and Tamar
 - The soap opera involving these three children of David was the product of David's failure to deal with sin quickly and decisively
 - And it was made possible by David's willingness to take multiple wives to produce multiple families with rivalries and jealousies
 - And the effect of these decisions have ramifications for the nation of Israel that extend for years
 - Last week in chapter 13 we studied Act 1 of this drama, as Amnon acted on his lust over his half sister, Tamar, and raped her
 - He was encouraged to do so by a cousin who was seeking to manipulate the heir to the throne to his own advantage
 - That cousin has now poisoned one brother against another, as Tamar's full brother, Absalom, now seeks revenge against Amnon
 - And that story of revenge leads us to Act 2 of this drama...

2Sam. 13:23 Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

2Sam. 13:24 Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold now, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant."

2Sam. 13:25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, we should not all go, for we will be burdensome to you." Although he urged him, he would not go, but blessed him.

2Sam. 13:26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?"

2Sam. 13:27 But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

14-1

- We learned last week that Absalom was intent on avenging his sister, but we also noticed that he told Tamar immediately after the incident to stay quiet
 - From that comment we saw he intended to be patient as he plotted his revenge, and now we see how patient he was
 - He waits two years to pick the perfect opportunity, and he has finally determined how to get it done

14-2

- Absalom knew that after he killed his brother, he would be a pariah in David's family
- So Absalom's planning revolves getting Amnon away from his defenses and getting himself far enough away from David that he has time to escape
 - And sheep shearing time gives Absalom both, because sheep graze away from the city and are sheared where they are kept
 - So in v.23 we're told Absalom has herds near a town called Baal-hazor, and shearing time has come
- Sheep shearing was done several times a year, and each time was a time of great feasting
 - It took several days to shear all the sheep in a fold, and the workers labored all day at a shearing barn or pen
 - Then in the evening, the workers enjoyed a large meal and plenty of drink, and the next day it started again
- At shearing time, it was common for families to join the men when possible to enjoy the festivities at night
 - That's why Absalom invites his father, David, and David's servants to attend the shearing of Absalom's sheep
 - David responds saying he would just be a burden on the work and the festivities, which is a polite way of saying no thank you
 - Absalom continues encouraging David to go, but the king continues to say no
 - The sense of the text is that Absalom expected David to decline the invitation, and therefore this was merely a set up for a second ask
 - Absalom's true target was Amnon, so when David refuses the invitation to join the feasting, Absalom asks that his brother go
 - Here again, it was not unusual for family members to attend a sheep shearing gathering but this was different
 - The history between these two brothers and Tamar would have made it usual and suspicious for Absalom to invite Amnon
 - For that reason, Absalom knows his brother is unlikely to go if invited, and in fact, David probably would have forbidden Amnon to go

- David knows Absalom hates his brother, and he knows this setting would give Absalom opportunity to take revenge
- For that reason, Absalom has waited two years and has schemed to invite David first
- The delay has lulled David and Amnon into assuming that Absalom is no longer upset or seeking revenge
- And by asking David to go first, Absalom has skillfully obscured his true target, Amnon
- So after David declines Absalom's hospitality, he feels some obligation to agree to Absalom's second request
 - But in so in v.26 when Absalom asks that Amnon be allowed to go to the feast, meaning can Amnon go with the rest of the brothers?
 - Reading between the lines, we're learning that David has been protecting Amnon
 - The rest of the brothers are invited too, but David is not allowing Amnon to be with Absalom because he fears the outcome
 - Even now after two years, David is suspicious when he hears Absalom's request to allow Amnon to attend
 - David asks why should Amnon go to this event, and in that response we can see how David has been protecting this son
 - Remember, David's failure to deal with Amnon in the first place allowed Tamar to be raped, and now he's favoring him again
 - This favoritism within multiple families is pouring fuel on the fire in Absalom's heart
 - Amnon committed sin against Tamar, and now Absalom is doing the same, and we can't blame David for their choices, of course
 - But David did play a role in this soap opera, specifically in not disciplining Amnon's sin when he could
 - And before that, David should not have taken multiple wives
 - And now, David shouldn't have listened to his instincts, but Absalom presses and David responds like a parent worn down by begging

- So David agrees to allow Amnon to accompany the rest of his brothers to the shearing party about 14 miles north at Baal-hazor
 - And so Absalom's plan to get David to stop protecting Amnon has worked and he will have his opportunity
 - Absalom's two-year delay and David's guilt for having declined Absalom's invitation lead him to agree to send Amnon
 - And that gives Absalom the opportunity he wanted

2Sam. 13:28 Absalom commanded his servants, saying, "See now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then put him to death. Do not fear; have not I myself commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant."

2Sam. 13:29 The servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose and each mounted his mule and fled.

- Amnon's plan is simple...he tells his servants to wait until late in the evening after the party has run its course and Amnon is drunk and tired
 - Then Absalom directs them to kill Amnon and not to be afraid to raise their hand against the king's son
 - Absalom assures them that since he is giving the order, he alone will bear the guilt and consequences
 - And with that assurance, they do as they are told and kill Amnon
 - Once again, a son of David has followed in David's footsteps
 - Earlier, David's son Amnon followed David in committing an immoral sexual act with a vulnerable woman
 - And now a second son has followed in David's footsteps by committing murder in the aftermath of the sexual sin
 - David can't act in such ways without expecting his example to set the tone for his family, and it does
 - In response to the attack, the rest of David's sons who also attended the feast, get on mules and flee the scene
 - Most likely they are running because they wonder if David has intentions of killing all his brothers
 - Everyone knows that Absalom was infuriated at Amnon over Tamar's rape, and they suspect he's equally upset at David

- Now that he has taken Amnon's life, the fear would have been that he wouldn't stop there
- But wishing to hurt David, Absalom would kill all of David's sons
- But that was never the plan, and so the other sons leave unharmed, but in the ensuing chaos of that night, rumors start flying
 - And one of those rumors makes its way back to David faster than the sons themselves

2Sam. 13:30 Now it was while they were on the way that the report came to David, saying, "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left."

2Sam. 13:31 Then the king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground; and all his servants were standing by with clothes torn.

- A report of this incident reaches David before the sons themselves are able to return to the palace
 - We wonder how that would be possible, but it's not hard to imagine
 - If a servant overheard Absalom giving instructions to his servants to kill Amnon, he could have run back to David then
 - A scared man could run the 14 miles in 2 hours and be talking to David even as the event was still taking place
 - And if so, that would also explain why the news David heard was so exaggerated...the messenger didn't see how it actually turned out
 - He must have assumed that if Absalom intended to kill one brother, then he was going to kill all of them
 - And that's how the news gets reported to David at first
 - And for a while, David bears a burden equal or great to the one he bore when the Lord told him that his son of Bathsheba was going to die
 - Imagine the emotions that went David experienced for these few hours as he contemplates the loss of all his sons
 - In v.31 we're told that David lay on the ground, probably sobbing and irrational with sadness and perhaps anger
 - And while the text doesn't say, laying on the ground was a common position of prayer during distress, so perhaps David is appealing to God

- Was he praying to the Lord for mercy as he did for his younger son when he learned that the boy was destined to die?
- Would David have even considered to pray for the lives of boys who were reportedly already dead?
- In that previous moment, David's prayer couldn't save the son who was still alive, so we wonder did David think to pray now?
- And the cousin, Jonadab, who encouraged Amnon to rape Tamar in the first place, speaks up to correct the inaccurate report

2Sam. 13:32 Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, responded, "Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar.

2Sam. 13:33 "Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely, 'all the king's sons are dead,' for only Amnon is dead."

- Jonadab is the cousin to Amnon and Absalom who has been playing both sides to his advantage
 - As he sees David mourning the loss of his sons, he steps in to measure the king that only Amnon has died
 - He also tells the king that Absalom is the guilty party having acted in revenge against his brother
 - But Jonadab is confident that only Amnon died, not all David's sons
- Why is Jonadab even here? Perhaps he has worked his way to becoming a member of David's cabinet over the past two years
 - However he came to be there, we know he was not at the shearing party that night
 - So the only way he could know the truth is if he was part of the conspiracy with Absalom
 - As we suspected, Jonadab was working both sides, first conspiring with Amnon and then with Absalom
 - He manipulated Amnon into raping Tamar and now we learn he helped Absalom entrap and kill Amnon

- But Jonadab is playing a third angle with David...that of comforter and wise counselor
 - Jonadab spoke as if he did not possess personal knowledge but was merely making an educated guess
 - But he did so knowing that the facts would bear out in the end, and that when they do, David will appreciate his wisdom
 - He gave David reason for hope and when hope turns to reality, David will be pleased with Jonadab
- Turning back to David, the text never records David's reaction to Jonadab's news that only Amnon is gone, but we can imagine it was well received
 - Certainly, knowing Amnon was dead would still upset David, but at the same time, David probably felt considerable relief for his other sons
 - It seems if the Lord set up this moment so that David would fear the greater outcome for a time leading him to seek the Lord
 - And then as Jonadab spoke, David saw the Lord moving to his side
 - And then the confirmation comes by way of the other sons returning

2Sam. 13:34 Now Absalom had fled. And the young man who was the watchman raised his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain.

2Sam. 13:35 Jonadab said to the king, "Behold, the king's sons have come; according to your servant's word, so it happened."

2Sam. 13:36 As soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted their voices and wept; and also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

- Absalom had to flee after the murder of his brother, because he knows he cannot return home safely
- David ignored Amnon's rape of Tamar, but Absalom knows David won't be able to overlook this treachery
- Even if David didn't act against Absalom, his brothers certainly would take revenge, and so the cycle would continue
- So as Absalom has gone on the lam, the rest of the sons ride home to David, and a watchman sees them approaching and informs David

- The news is as Jonadab reported to David and it leads to a tearful reunion
- David's family is being torn apart one seam at a time, first Amnon vs. Absalom, and now Absalom vs. his brothers and father
- Every believer seeking spiritual maturity in their walk with God needs to appreciate the differences between judgment, discipline and consequences
 - God's judgment is the penalty for sin, and by our faith in Christ we have received relief from that outcome forevermore
 - Nevertheless, the Bible says God will discipline His children to encourage us to move away from sin and into obedience
 - Discipline is a far cry from judgment, both in terms of purpose and form
 - The purpose of judgment is to bring justice against ungodliness, as a just penalty for an offense committed against God
 - And it comes in the form of the wrath of God, an eternity spent away from God's presence and in torment
 - But the purpose of discipline is to encourage us into greater godliness, as an expression of the love of God for His children
 - And it comes now, in this life, and in various forms that train us, not to destroy us but to build us y up
 - As Hebrews says

Heb. 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Heb. 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

- The Lord has not brought judgment upon David for any of his sins, nor will He because David was covered by the grace of God

- Remember, Nathan assured David after he repented that he was forgiven by God
- But because God loves David, God also measured out discipline, particularly the death of his son to discourage future sin
 - Moreover, discipline was made necessary because David didn't repent on his own earlier
 - This wasn't judgment...that's an eternity in torment...it was a temporary "scourging" to promote holiness
 - God resorted to discipline to shepherd David's heart as He does for all His children
- And then there are consequences of sin, which are the natural result of our actions
 - On believers experience the discipline of the Lord, because He only disciplines His children, but everyone experiences consequences
 - The consequences of our sin follow us just as they do the unbelieving world
 - And those consequences usually don't stop at just one or two effects...they fan out like ripples across a pond
 - The consequences of David's sin to take multiple wives including Bathsheba have piled up and continue moving outward
 - In addition to God's discipline of taking the life of the child, we can count six family consequences from David's poor choices
 - First, David developed an attitude of favoritism for his children and turned a blind eye to his sons' sins, especially Amnon
 - That allowed Amnon to lust after and rape Tamar,
 - This led Absalom to hate his brother Amnon leading to a division among the sons and in the family
 - Those events forced David to protect Amnon by keeping him apart from Absalom creating greater conflict in the family
 - This furthered Absalom's resentment leading him to act in revenge killing Amnon

- Now that has resulted in Absalom fleeing, depriving David of the company of his 3rd born son
 - This separation will have further consequences for David and the kingdom of Israel as Absalom mounts a coup attempt
 - And this will eventually lead to civil war in the family and in the nation, leading to a new chain of consequences, etc.
- It's hard to overstate how much harm can come from one decision, but imagine how different the story of David would be without his sin with Bathsheba
 - And at the same time, as we studied last week, without Bathsheba there would be no Solomon either
 - Which reminds us that though the consequences of sin can be great, the God who extends mercy and grace is still greater
 - That even as God may allow the consequences of our sin to attach, He also gives us grace to deal with the consequences
 - And He can turn the whole thing to good in the end
 - As Wiersbe observed:

Grace means that God, in forgiving you, does not kill you. Grace means that God, in forgiving you, gives you the strength to endure the consequences. Grace frees us so that we can obey our Lord. It does not mean sin's consequences are automatically removed. If I sin and in the process of sinning break my arm, I will receive forgiveness for my sin, but I still have to deal with a broken arm.

- David sinned and broke a lot of things, and he's now dealing with the consequences but God is still with him
- And so the Lord will use it all to His glory in the end
- But in the meantime, don't expect that if we say a simple "I'm sorry" to God that the natural consequences will not follow
 - Our confession and repentance may stop the discipline of the Lord, just as we would hold back punishing a repentant child
 - But just as we can't stop the consequences of our children's sin, God usually allows the consequences of our sin to follow too
- Because the Bible says if God routinely intervened to stop them, we would be seen in our disobedience to be mocking God

Gal. 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

Gal. 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Gal. 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

- o David can't mock God by his refusal to address the systemic issues in his family and in his parenting, so the consequences keep coming
 - And so now the story transitions to the next Act

2Sam. 13:37 Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

2Sam. 13:38 So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years.

2Sam. 13:39 The heart of King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

14-3

- Absalom finds refuge in Geshur, which is in the Upper Galilee, present-day Golan Heights and spends three years in exile
 - o With David's first and second sons gone, Absalom is now the heir of the throne, at least by custom
 - And David is still very fond of this son, despite the fact that he killed another of David's sons
 - In fact, we're told David mourns the loss of his son everyday
 - o Even more, David is relieved at Amnon's death, we're told in v.39, because it solved a problem for David
 - First, it brought the justice to Amnon that the Law required yet David couldn't bring himself to execute
 - So in that sense David was relieved that Absalom took that duty off his hands
 - o But secondly, David no longer has to guard Amnon or referee the division between his two sons
 - David is clearly a father weary of dealing with rivalries and disputes, and yet they exist largely because of him
 - And even now, he's not willing to cut the head off this snake

2Sam. 14:1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was inclined toward Absalom.

2Sam. 14:2 So Joab sent to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there and said to her, "Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on mourning garments now, and do not anoint yourself with oil, but be like a woman who has been mourning for the dead many days;

2Sam. 14:3 then go to the king and speak to him in this manner." So Joab put the words in her mouth.

- Joab is the commander of David's army and another man that David should have dealt with long ago
 - But now after three years, Joab develops concern over Absalom hiding out in Geshur
 - God told David his heir will be Solomon, but Joab and everyone else thinks it will be Absalom
 - And it concerns Joab that the heir to the throne of Israel is hiding in the territory of a vassal state
 - Joab wants him in the palace reconciled with David, so he devises a plan to persuading David into pardoning Absalom
 - Joab recruits an actress from a town ten miles south to tell the king a story that is designed to mirror David's own situation
 - He found her in Tekoa to ensure she was an unknown character
 - The goal is to get David to hear the woman's story and issue a decree that will tie his hands concerning Absalom
 - Joab is a manipulator and a man who shouldn't be trusted, but like his sons, David can't bring himself to deal with the man
 - Another leadership weakness of David was leaving in power those who he shouldn't trust

14-4

2Sam. 14:4 Now when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself and said, "Help, O king."

2Sam. 14:5 The king said to her, "What is your trouble?" And she answered, "Truly I am a widow, for my husband is dead.

2Sam. 14:6 "Your maidservant had two sons, but the two of them struggled together in the field, and there was no one to separate them, so one struck the other and killed him.

2Sam. 14:7 “Now behold, the whole family has risen against your maidservant, and they say, ‘Hand over the one who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed, and destroy the heir also.’ Thus they will extinguish my coal which is left, so as to leave my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth.”

2Sam. 14:8 Then the king said to the woman, “Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you.”

2Sam. 14:9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, “O my lord, the king, the iniquity is on me and my father’s house, but the king and his throne are guiltless.”

2Sam. 14:10 So the king said, “Whoever speaks to you, bring him to me, and he will not touch you anymore.”

2Sam. 14:11 Then she said, “Please let the king remember the LORD your God, so that the avenger of blood will not continue to destroy, otherwise they will destroy my son.” And he said, “As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground.”

- Her story is mirrors David’s situation...two sons, one kills the other, and now people want justice for the death of the deceased
 - Absalom killed Amnon, and because the law requires that Absalom die, Absalom hasn’t returned to Israel
 - If he did come home and David allowed the law to prevail, he would lose yet another son
 - David certainly doesn’t want that, but moreover the people of Israel didn’t want to see that outcome either
 - Absalom was the popular son of David and the people’s choice for David’s successor
 - But here again, David should apply the law without favoritism, and there is no option under the law for mercy in the case of two sons
 - David should hold his son accountable, but Joab knows David is inclined to let his son go unpunished
 - And this woman is here to help nudge David in that direction
 - The woman spins her tale and appeals to David to help her save her last son from justice
 - She doesn’t want to lose her only heir, which would have meant the end of the family line
 - And of course, had David judged his son appropriately, then he would have lost another heir also

- Except that David knew Absalom wouldn't be the heir, so David had less reason to hold back justice
- Of course, David doesn't see the connection to his own story, so he agrees to make a decision on behalf of the later and send word to her later
 - But she has come hoping to get a decision in the moment, so she presses David to act more quickly
 - In v.8 she tells David that in the meantime she and her father's house bear the sin of not holding the son accountable
 - In other words, as long as nothing is done, she is guilty of not keeping the law and could be in jeopardy herself
 - So David says in v.10 he will protect her in the meantime and if anyone touches her, they will have to deal with David
 - Still not getting what she wants, she makes a final appeal in v.11 warning that others will take action against her son
 - If David doesn't pardon him immediately, her son will be killed by vigilantes
 - Growing weary with the woman, David gives in and says not one hair of her son shall fall to the ground
 - In that way, David pardons her boy without justification merely as an act of mercy contrary to justice
 - That fictitious boy was intended to represent Absalom, so that David would be persuaded to do the same for his son
 - Ironically, Absalom's eventual fall comes as a consequence of his hair, so David's comments come back later to haunt him
- Now with David trapped, the actress moves to the second half of Joab's plan

2Sam. 14:12 Then the woman said, "Please let your maidservant speak a word to my lord the king." And he said, "Speak."

2Sam. 14:13 The woman said, "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring back his banished one.

2Sam. 14:14 "For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him.

2Sam. 14:15 “Now the reason I have come to speak this word to my lord the king is that the people have made me afraid; so your maidservant said, ‘Let me now speak to the king, perhaps the king will perform the request of his maidservant.

2Sam. 14:16 ‘For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy both me and my son from the inheritance of God.’

2Sam. 14:17 “Then your maidservant said, ‘Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for as the angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.’”

- The woman asks David’s permission to speak once more, and David agrees
 - She then asks David why he has planned to allow the heir of the throne over the people of God to suffer a loss of their heir in the same way?
 - She boldly suggests that David has guilt to bear for not pardoning his own son for a similar crime
 - If it were acceptable for the king to pardon some obscure mother’s son, why not the heir to throne she asks?
 - In v.14 the woman points to a biblical truth yet uses it in an unbiblical fashion
 - She says that our lives are short and once they are gone, we can only move on
 - And we know God is not in the business of taking life, meaning He is not directed at destroying humanity but rather saving it
 - So therefore, the quest of life should be to find God’s plan for how banished ones are restored to God
 - In a sense she’s describing the Gospel, which is the message that God has made a way for sinful humanity to be restored and not cast out
 - But she’s misusing this truth to justify to demand justice against God’s own law
 - God makes a way for us to avoid the judgment for our sin, but that pattern doesn’t become a rule for every situation
 - The fact that God shows us mercy doesn’t mean that a judge should dismiss our speeding ticket
 - And the fact that God showed David mercy doesn’t mean that David should never hold anyone accountable either

- And yet that logic made sense to David, because he was already self-conscious over his sin with Bathsheba'
- And it's why David has thus far refused to hold his sons accountable to any degree
- I doubt this is the first time David has heard this argument during the past three years of Absalom's exile
 - Family members, advisors and David's subjects have all been asking when will David pardon the heir to the throne
 - Certainly David is received that counsel from Joab directly
 - So when David hears the same words coming from the mouth of this woman, he suspects Joab

2Sam. 14:18 Then the king answered and said to the woman, "Please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you." And the woman said, "Let my lord the king please speak."

2Sam. 14:19 So the king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" And the woman replied, "As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me, and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant;

2Sam. 14:20 in order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing. But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is in the earth."

- David now realizes that this woman has been telling him a lie, and so he turns to the woman and asks her to tell the truth
 - She agrees, and David asks did Joab put you up to this?
 - Sandwiched between statements of flattery, she admits to her lies and says this was Joab's doing
- At this point this point, David shifts his attention to Joab

2Sam. 14:21 Then the king said to Joab, "Behold now, I will surely do this thing; go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom."

2Sam. 14:22 Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself and blessed the king; then Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, O my lord, the king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant."

2Sam. 14:23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

2Sam. 14:24 However the king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face.

- Joab was probably in the room the whole time, likely to observe his hired actress do as he directed her to do
 - And David has figured it out but he's trapped by his own words, so he has little choice at this point except to pardon his son
 - Why hadn't David done it already? Probably because David knew that he had no cause to do so and was afraid of how it appeared
 - But now that David has been willing to do it for a lessor, he feels he must show mercy for his own son
 - Is mercy a bad thing? No, and when it comes our way, we certainly like it
 - But mercy exists because the rule is justice, but when no one follows the rule, mercy is no longer mercy
 - It's merely injustice and license to sin, which is what David has been sowing in his family
 - With each decision to avoid holding a son accountable, David makes his family situation worse
 - And in the process, he proves that mercy disconnected from justice is permissiveness
 - So David orders Joab to go bring back Absalom, which means to go to Geshur and tell Absalom that he has been pardoned
 - Absalom can return to Israel without fear of death, but David adds that Absalom is not to return to the palace
 - David still has mixed emotions over Amnon and Absalom
 - David is issuing an official state pardon to his son, but he is not ready to forgive his son personally and restore that relationship
- And as it turns out, David's decision to restore Absalom made even less sense, because David knew Solomon was to be the king
 - And therefore, Absalom was a threat to that outcome, and now that Absalom has returned, there will be more conflict between them
 - And making things worse, Absalom has a personal following in the nation, which was a destabilizing influence

2Sam. 14:25 Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him.

2Sam. 14:26 When he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight.

2Sam. 14:27 To Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a woman of beautiful appearance.

- If this story is starting to sound a little like the introduction of Saul in 1 Samuel, it should because the pattern is the same
 - Like Saul, Absalom was a rock star in Israel, complete with the gorgeous hair
 - The Scriptures say there was no one in Israel more handsome, but notice it adds "so highly praised"
- In other words, the Scripture is saying Absalom was regarded as the most handsome by public opinion
 - He was the consensus pick for Most Handsome Jewish Man, and no one saw any defect in him from head to toe
 - And his hair seems to be of particular fame in that it was both good looking and abundant
 - He even made an annual show of cutting it, and since it grew so well, the weight of the cuttings was five pounds
 - We can imagine squealing school girls fighting for the locks
- There are two problems with this development, and both remind us of Saul
 - First, external beauty is never the quality God uses in determining who should be exalted
 - In fact, the people judge by appearance but God judges by the heart
 - Absalom might look the part, but his heart was suited to godly leadership
 - This was exactly the problem with Saul's leadership
 - Secondly, and more importantly, he wasn't the man God chose to succeed David
 - Solomon has already been designated as David's replacement, though it's unlikely few know this yet

- So the people are setting themselves up for disappointment by wishing for something that can't have
- And that's a dangerous situation...one that will force the people to split their allegiance between David and his own son
- Meanwhile, Absalom has a family and a future, but David is going to hold Absalom back and his resentment will build

2Sam. 14:28 Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face

- For two years Absalom is basically on house arrest, or at least kept outside the corridors of power
- He's the heir apparent (at least publicly) but treated as a pariah, and that leads Absalom to make his own plans
- If David won't treat Absalom as the rightful next king, then he will take the throne on his own terms
- Sin has consequences, and we repeat that phrase not as statement of the obvious but as a warning not to sin
 - Knowing that sin may feel good in the moment but ultimately leads us places we don't want to go, then it's far better not to sin
 - David is learning that lesson the hard way
 - David was reluctant to pardon a son he loved because he felt conflicted over his first son's death and his own past
 - But now that he has pardoned Absalom, he's only sowing seeds for the next conflict by not living up to the terms of the pardon
 - David's internal conflict over how and when to do the right thing by his family flew in the face of an otherwise stellar life
 - And isn't the case so often that our greatest failings come in how we live among and with our family
 - I suspect that if we made our goal being the best husband, wife, mother or father we could be, we would find most other sins disappearing too