

Sermon Title: When Everything's Going Great

Series: Seeking God's Kingdom, Part 42

Scripture: 2 Samuel 10

Main Takeaway: Slow down. Seek King Jesus. Pay attention to what's shaping our perception of reality.

I'm just curious...

How many of you have pets?

Recently Morgan got a tortoise...

[SLIDE 0] Picture of Bumi

His name is Bumi.

I tried to convince Morgan to name him Michaelangelo or Donatello...

But she said no.

Anyway, for the first week or so...

Bumi wasn't eating much and we were getting concerned...

So he and I took a road trip to the vet.

I didn't have anything fancy to put him in...

So I just used a cardboard box like this... **[bring a box to church?]**

Before I put him in there...

I thought about taping the flaps up to make the side walls higher...

But thought: *Nah... that's good enough.*

Well, to my surprise, Bumi's capable of standing on his back legs!

So, the whole car ride there...

He's pacing back and forth...

Trying to climb up on the walls...

So now I'm driving with one hand on the wheel...
And the other was making sure Bumi couldn't get out!

Definitely not an ideal situation...
But still, I was doing something good for Bumi!
And yet, he was clearly scared!

I realize he didn't know what was going on...
He was in unfamiliar territory...
He was acting like something bad was going to happen.

Long story short...
We made it safely...
He got a clean bill of health...
And all is well.

But I wanted to tell this story because there's a general principle in it
that's not just for Bumi...

[SLIDE 1] Sometimes our good intentions can be misunderstood.

And that's kind of what we're seeing in chapter 10.

David's trying to extend kindness to someone...
But as we just heard from Troy...
Things didn't go so well!

So let's take a closer look...

[SLIDE 2] 2 Samuel 10:1-2 - In the course of time, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king. David thought, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me." So David sent a delegation to express his sympathy to Hanun concerning his father.

So the theme of kindness continues into chapter 10...
You might remember we talked about this last week...

The Hebrew word for kindness is *hesed*...

Hesed describes a kind of loyal-love.

So apparently David had some kind of genuine, covenantal, political relationship with Nahash.

But now that he passed away...

David wanted to extend that same kindness to Nahash's son, Hanun.

So David sent some of his men to express his condolences.

These guys were there to represent the king...

So when they delivered the message...

It was as if it came directly from David's mouth.

But not everyone believed their sympathy was genuine...

[SLIDE 3] 2 Samuel 10:3 - the Ammonite commanders said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think David is honoring your father by sending envoys to you to express sympathy? Hasn't David sent them to you only to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?"

Clearly these guys didn't trust David...

And unfortunately...

Hanun didn't either...

[SLIDE 4] 2 Samuel 10:4 - So Hanun seized David's envoys, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away.

This might sound like a college prank...

But the ancient world...

To cut a man's beard in half was to take away his honor and masculinity.

These guys were walking away in complete shame...

Just *absolutely* humiliated.

Imagine having to come home like that...
No pants... beard cut...

And... These guys weren't just a bunch of bro's on a road trip...
They were royal diplomats that represented David.
So to dishonor them was to dishonor the king himself.

And for them...
This wasn't something they could just laugh off...

It would've affected them on a personal level...
It could've affected their social status...
Maybe even their job...

Because everytime they walked outside...
Everyone would see the mark of shame carved into their beard...
And that shame would've stayed with them for a long time...

But David didn't let that happen...

[SLIDE 5] 2 Samuel 10:5 - When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, "Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back."

So David protected them from having to carry that public humiliation back home.

But again... This wasn't just personal...
This was humiliation on a national level...
It was an act of war!

And so...

[SLIDE 6] 2 Samuel 10:6 - When the Ammonites realized that they had become obnoxious to David, they hired twenty thousand Aramean foot soldiers from Beth Rehob and Zobah, as well as the king of Maakah with a thousand men, and also twelve thousand men from Tob.

The Hebrew word behind 'obnoxious' carries the meaning of a bad smell...
It's a way of saying you dislike someone very much.

So like the beards...

The kindness shared between the Ammonites and the Israelites was cut off.

But did you notice David and his men didn't suit up for war just yet?

In his younger years...

David might've picked up his sword and immediately went to the Ammonites to put them in their place.

Kind of like when Nabal offended him long ago...

But if you remember that story...

Abigail's wisdom stopped him. (1 Samuel 25)

But now in this moment...

Even after being humiliated...

David doesn't react immediately...

It's a different story for the Ammonites.

They realized what they just did...

So they hired an additional 33,000 men for war...

You can almost feel their fear coming off the page.

And now that they're preparing for war...

David had to act...

[SLIDE 7] 2 Samuel 10:7-8 - On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance of their city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maakah were by themselves in the open country.

David didn't go with his men...

Instead, we've got his main commander, Joab, leading the charge.

And when they get to the Ammonite city gates...
They quickly find themselves surrounded.

The Ammonite army was in front of them...
And the additional 33,000 hired men were behind them.

That's *not* a good position to be in!

So Joab split his troops...
Half were with him...
The other half fought with his brother Abishai.

Abishai would fight the army in front...
Joab would fight the army in back...

And just before they attacked...

[SLIDE 8] 2 Samuel 10:11-12 - Joab said, “If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you are to come to my rescue; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to rescue you. Be strong, and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight.”

Joab's saying...

*Let's just do what we're called to do and leave the rest up to the LORD.
Whatever happens, the outcome belongs to the LORD.*

I like that.

It reminds me of Jonathan's words when he said:
Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving. (1 Samuel 14:6)

Or when David stood against Goliath and declared:
The battle is the LORD's. (1 Samuel 17:47)

All three statements are a kind of battlecry that expresses trust in the LORD rather than their ability to win by their own strength.

And again, I love what Joab says...

But I don't know about you...

There's something about this situation that makes me feel a little uneasy...

**Joab's the guy who murdered Abner back in chapter 3!
But *now* he's trusting the LORD?**

People can change...

And we know that the people in the scripture aren't fictional characters...

They're real, complicated, human beings.

So maybe Joab really was trusting in the LORD?

Or maybe this is just what you say when the odds are against you?

Either way... It wasn't much of a battle.

When Joab advanced against the Arameans...

They ran away!

And when the Ammonites saw the Arameans running...

They also high-tailed it out of there!

The Arameans eventually regrouped...

Verse 16 says they brought even more troops from "beyond the Euphrates"...

But this time, David led Israel into battle personally...

And long story short...

Israel won.

Now...

[SLIDE 9] Think about where this whole thing started...

Nobody's at war...

David's just trying to extend kindness...

But the situation quickly blew up.

So maybe the lesson here is that we should stop being kind to people? (jk!)

Maybe there's a lesson in how we're supposed to treat people that offend us?

But I think there's something even deeper than that...

So, when I was studying chapter 10...

Something stuck out to me like...

It was almost like those flashing yellow traffic lights...

The ones we're supposed to slow down and proceed with caution...

There's someone in the text that made me slow down...

Nahash.

[SLIDE 10] 2 Samuel 10:2 - David thought, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash..."

We haven't heard Nahash mentioned since 1 Samuel 11...

Way back when Saul stopped him from taking over an Israelite city.

That was about 29 chapters ago!

But even though he's barely mentioned in the Bible...

I bet just the mention of his name would've got the attention of any ancient Israelite...

So who's Nahash?

Well, he was the king of the Ammonites...

And he was ruthless...

Back in 1 Samuel 11 he went up against Israel at the town of Jabesh...

Israel wasn't quite ready for this kind of war...

So Jabesh begged Nahash to make a treaty with them.

Nahash said: *Sure... I'll do that... under one condition...*

The only way I'm making a treaty with you is if I gouge out the right eye of everyone of you and bring disgrace to all Israel!

In the end, the LORD drove them away from Jabesh.

But the thing is...

Nahash was such a threat that he's mentioned as the reason why Israel rejected the LORD as their king!

Samuel said to Israel in the next chapter...

[SLIDE 11] 1 Samuel 12:12 - when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to rule over us'—even though the LORD your God was your king.

That's how much fear the name Nahash produced in the Israelites.

But it's even more than that...

Back when we talked about Nahash...

We saw that his name is the same Hebrew word used for the snake in the Garden of Eden.

Now...

Nahash isn't Satan...

But it's hard to hear that name and *not* think of the serpent in Genesis.

So this is why his name made me slow down and read 2 Samuel 10 with caution.

Look at it again...

[SLIDE 12] 2 Samuel 10:2 - David thought, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash..."

Why in the world was David giving kindness to *Nahash*?!?

We actually don't know...

Bible scholars guess that maybe they made a treaty back when David was on the run from Saul?

It could've been a situation where "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Saul was Nahash's enemy...

Saul was trying to kill David...

So maybe Nahash showed kindness to David as a way of getting back at Saul?

Again, we don't know...

But whatever the reason...

David kept good relations with Nahash all these years...

And he wanted it to continue with Nahash's son, Hanun.

But Hanun was swayed by deceptive words.

Look at verse 3 again...

[SLIDE 13] 2 Samuel 10:3 - the Ammonite commanders said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think David is honoring your father by sending envoys to you to express sympathy? Hasn't David sent them to you only to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?"

Their words remind me of the snake's deception in the Garden when he said to Eve...

"Did God really say...?"

In Genesis 3...

The serpent's question caused Eve to reinterpret God's Word...

And in a similar way...

The commander's questions caused Hanun to reinterpret David's intentions...

This is the flashing yellow light!

What we're seeing is the same pattern of evil we've been seeing throughout the books of Samuel...

**[SLIDE 14] That pattern of evil from the Garden and beyond looks like this:
Distort reality, magnify the threat, and erode trust.**

Think about it in light of 2 Samuel 10...

David really was sending condolences...

But Hanun's commanders distort that reality...

They said:

"Do you really think David is honoring your father...?"

Then they magnified the threat...

They claimed that David's true intentions were to overthrow the Ammonites.

They said:

"Hasn't David sent them only to overthrow the city?"

Hanun believed them.

And now the trust that existed between David and the royal line of Nahash...

Was gone.

Why do I bring this up?

Because to me...

The sudden mention of Nahash makes me wonder what's coming.

The last time Nahash was mentioned...

The entire nation of Israel rejected Yahweh as their King.

And now that he's mentioned again...

What happens in the next chapter?

Spoiler alert...

David commits some of the most devastating sins of his life.

Isn't it interesting that we've now had several chapters where we've seen David at his best...

He's trusting God.
He's experiencing God's blessing.
He's showing *hesed*.
He's winning battles.
His kingdom is growing stronger.

But what strikes me is that...

[SLIDE 15] David was closer to losing his way than anyone realized.

**Because while everything was going great...
Darkness was brewing.**

THAT...
I think...
Is the warning of chapter 10.

When darkness shows up...
Reality becomes distorted...
The threat gets magnified...
And trust starts to fade.

We just watched this happen with Hanun...
And next week...
We'll see that even David's not immune to the darkness.

**But here's the warning...
Neither are we.**

We've got all kinds of deceptive voices that compete for our attention...

Social media...
News...
Advertising...
Gossip...
Rumors...

Fear...
Insecurities...
Assumptions...
Desires...
Rage...
Anxiety...

All of these things can whisper in our ear with that serpent-like tone...

“Did God really say?”

You know, the thing with Hanun is...
His commanders didn't force him to do anything...
He chose to believe their interpretation of reality.

We have that same kind of choice...
Except as followers of Jesus...
We have the Holy Spirit that guides us.

But what tends to happen when things are going great in our lives...
That's when we face the temptation to put our spiritual life on auto-pilot...
Maybe we convince ourselves that the Holy Spirit will send us a notification when something seems off.

The problem is, we don't always notice our notifications...
And honestly, I'm not sure the Holy Spirit works like that anyway.

I do believe He stirs in us...
Warning us when darkness rises...
But if we're not paying attention...
We're not going to notice.

We have to be paying attention.
What does Peter say?

[SLIDE 16] 1 Peter 5:8-9 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith...

In other words...

The Christian life isn't passive.

We're called to *seek God's Kingdom...*

To keep our eyes fixed on Jesus...

And *be aware* of the voices shaping us.

And so...

I hope you're tracking with me.

This is not a 'try harder' or 'be better' kind of message.

We're all sinners.

We've all fallen short of the glory of God.

Still, today's sermon is a good reminder to...

[SLIDE 17] Slow down. Seek King Jesus. Pay attention to what's shaping our perception of reality.

Let's not wait until something goes wrong to seek Jesus...

We're called to seek Him now...

In the good *and* the bad.

Maybe this is why David wrote in Psalm 139...

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)*

And so...

As we sing this last song together...

May that be our prayer...

*“Jesus, search me.
Show me what's shaping me.
And lead me in Your way.”*

Let's pray.