Sermon Title: When Our Strength Fails
Series: Seeking God's Kingdom, Part 47
Scripture: 2 Samuel 14 & Psalm 38
Main Takeaway: When life's burdens become too heavy to bear, we don't have to move forward on our own strength. We can turn to the LORD and trust in His faithfulness.

You've heard the saying:
When it rains, it pours.
That's because it seems like there's just always something to deal with.

Not too long ago, as the leaves started to fall…
We noticed something hanging from one of our trees…

[SLIDE 1] Bees Nest Pic

This is in our front yard, pretty close to the street.

My neighbor noticed it as well and actually sent me a text about it.
We both couldn't believe we never noticed it before!

And I just said to him…
It's always something.

He just laughed.
Because it's true!
There's always something that comes up.

Now, in the grand scheme of eternity…
My bees nest isn't that big of a deal.

But when the really hard stuff of life comes up…
How do we deal with it?
Who do we turn to?

David has dealt with a lot of hard things in his life.

But nothing quite like what we've been talking about over the past few weeks…
Because this time…
All of it stems from his sin.

If you remember, after he committed adultery with Bathsheba…
He tried to cover it up…
And even had her husband killed…
Bathsheba became pregnant…
So David married her…

And for a moment it looked like he got away with it.
But the LORD saw the whole thing.

David confessed his sin and was forgiven…
But there were still the consequences of his sin.

So think about this…

[SLIDE 2] David's Family Picture

David is a king.
He's a father.
He's a husband.

And because of his sin…
His unnamed infant child became sick and died.
His son Amnon committed a horrific act of violence against Tamar.
Amnon was eventually murdered by another son, Absalom.
And Absalom ended up fleeing the country.

I can't help but think about the incredible weight of guilt..
And shame, that David's probably feeling.

Imagine if he had gone to the LORD that night on the roof…
Rather than acting on his temptation.
Things might be very different.

But here we are.
If it feels like his family's coming apart at the seams…
That's because it is.

Remember Nathan's prophecy?
Because of David's sin…
The sword would never depart from his house…

Again, that's a lot to carry!

So let's look at 2 Samuel 14 and see what happens next…

[SLIDE 3] 2 Samuel 14:1-3 - Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom. So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there. He said to her, "Pretend you are in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes, and don't use any cosmetic lotions. Act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead. Then go to the king and speak these words to him." And Joab put the words in her mouth.

Joab was like David's #1 guy…
He was the commander of Israel's army.

You might remember him from earlier chapters…
He was the one who murdered Abner and got away with it.

David had a public funeral for Abner…
And he did make it clear that this was a wrongful death…
But he admitted that he was too weak to do anything about it.
Joab was too strong for him.

And throughout the chapters that followed…
We've seen Joab win battles…
And now…
He's talking to a wise woman from Tekoa…
And giving her specific instructions to deceive David…

Why?
What's he up to?

Actually, check this out…

[SLIDE 4] 2 Samuel 13:39 - 14:1 - And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death. Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom.

That wording makes it seem like David really wants his son to return…
Like… he's lost enough…
He doesn't want to lose another son.
But that's just one interpretation.

We actually don't know for sure what David's feeling.

The Hebrew in these verses is super difficult.
The reality is…
David could really want his son back…
Or, he might really want to go after his son because he's still really angry about what happened.

Our Bibles have to make a translation choice…
Most of them make it feel like David's calmed down.

And if that's the case…
Maybe Joab's just trying to help David out?
Still, it's an odd situation.

Why use a woman from a small town of Tekoa?
That would almost be like…
If David ruled in Philadelphia…
Joab would go to Refton and find a wise woman to help him out.

To me something feels fishy!
But again, it's hard to know for sure what's going on.

We don't know what David's really feeling.
And we can't be sure about Joab's motivation.

Whatever the case…
The wise woman goes to David…
Face to the ground…
And asks Him for help.

She said…

[SLIDE 5] 2 Samuel 14:5b-7a - "I am a widow; my husband is dead. I your servant had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field, and no one was there to separate them. One struck the other and killed him. Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant…"

[SLIDE 6] 2 Samuel 14:7b - "...they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother down, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed; then we will get rid of the heir as well.' They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth."

Remember, these are the words that Joab told her to say.
She's pretending to mourn.

And did you notice her story parallels what David's going through…
Two sons…
One murders the other…

But in her story…
The town people want the murderer killed…
Leaving her with no sons.

This is why I wonder if David really forgave Absalom for killing Amnon.
Maybe David really did want to go after Absalom?

Regardless…
David hears the woman's story and grants protection for her son.

But then the woman shifts the conversation back on David.
She's like: *If you're willing to pardon my son for what he did…*

[SLIDE 7] 2 Samuel 14:13-14 - "Why then have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, for the king has not brought back his banished son? Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires; rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him.

That's actually a really profound truth!
She's not wrong…
The LORD is all about restoration and forgiveness.

So her point was…
Why wouldn't David do this for his own son?

But remember…
These weren't her words…
She was performing what Joab told her to say…
And David saw right through it…

[SLIDE 8] 2 Samuel 14:19 - The king asked, "Isn't the hand of Joab with you in all this?"

She said yes.

But how did David know Joab was behind this?
Some scholars suggest that maybe this wasn't Joab's first attempt?
Again, we don't know.

And we still don't know why Joab even cares!

Whatever the reason…
David turns to Joab and says…

[SLIDE 9] 2 Samuel 14:21 - The king said to Joab, "Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom."

So that's exactly what happens.
Absalom returns…
But surprisingly, David doesn't want to see him.
In fact…

Absalom's been gone for 3 years…
Then Joab brings him back…
And David orders Absalom to go to his own house…
He's not even allowed to see David's face.

Feels weird right?
Why would David "long" for Absalom…
Only to be super hesitant to bring him back…
And then ignore him when he does come back?

That doesn't *sound* like a king forgiving his son?

Regardless, time passes.
Absalom stays in Jerusalem for another two years.

Finally, Absalom speaks up.
He wants to see the king.
But in order to do that, he has to go through Joab.
But Joab was also ignoring Absalom…
Which is funny…
Because they're neighbors.
It's also weird…
Joab was the one who wanted him back in the first place…
So why's he ignoring him?

Well, Absalom wasn't going to give up…

[SLIDE 10] 2 Samuel 14:30-31 - Then he said to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire." So

Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Then Joab did go to Absalom's house, and he said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?"

Kind of a drastic move.
But it worked!

So Joab went to David on Absalom's behalf…
Absalom was then allowed to come to David…
And when Absalom came in…
He bowed down to David…
And David kissed him.

That's where chapter 14 ends.

Honestly, this passage was a little more difficult to piece together because…
There's just so much we don't know!

We don't really know if David was still angry with Absalom…
We don't know why Joab wanted Absalom back…
We don't know why both David and Joab ignored Absalom…
And we don't even know if David's kiss was a sign of genuine forgiveness.

But all that uncertainty is what really catches my attention.

Because if you think about it…

- When Tamar was violated…
  As far as we know…
  David did nothing.
- When Absalom killed Amnon…
  As far as we know…
  David did nothing…
- And even now…
  David's super reluctant to even see Absalom.

All of this just makes me wonder what David was feeling.

As a father and a king…
He's been through some horrific trauma…
His kids are suffering…
And I would imagine he must feel the weight of all that resting on him…
Because of his own sins.

And so I wanted us to look at a Psalm that might actually give us a window into how David was feeling.

To be fair…
We don't know of any Psalms written specifically about 2 Samuel 14…
But it seems to me that Psalm 38 fits really well…

[SLIDE 11] Psalm 38:1-4 - LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.

It's verses like these that make me think…
Maybe this is why it seems like David's just been letting stuff go?

You know the feeling…
When we're overwhelmed…
It feels like the burden that's been placed on us is too heavy to carry.

When we're in that kind of situation…
It's hard to do anything.

That's why, earlier this year, I wrote a song called:
Help Me To Move

If you want to listen to that, it's on our Refton Church Youtube Channel.
The chorus says:

[SLIDE 12] Help Me to Move Lyrics

Help me to move…
Help me to persevere in the unknown…
LORD I'm waiting on You
Help me to trust in Your faithfulness…
So I can press on.

I wonder if David is in that "waiting" period?
Overwhelmed…
But waiting for the LORD's strength.

He continues in Psalm 38…

[SLIDE 13] Psalm 38:8-9 - I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. All my longings lie open before you, Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you.

[SLIDE 14] Psalm 38:10, 14-15 - My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes … I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply. LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God.

Did you hear what David just said?

My strength fails me…
My mouth can offer no reply…

And then…
Lord, I wait for You;
You will answer.

David doesn't know what to do next.
All he can do is groan and sigh…

Yet the LORD even hears that…
And, The LORD knows exactly how David's feeling…
Even better than David knows himself.

That's a truth David is holding on to…
That's why…

Even when David can't see the way forward…
He still trusts that the LORD will answer.

Sometimes that's where we are too…

When our strength fails…
When we don't have the energy, or the capacity, to do anything…

I can tell you from experience…

[SLIDE 15] When there's absolutely nowhere else to turn for help, that's when we feel the LORD's strength the most.

He guards our hearts and minds with His peace…
Giving us the strength to wait for His answer.

And so I have to wonder…

When we come to the LORD…

Do we really expect Him to answer?

Look at this again…
David prayed…

[SLIDE 16] Psalm 38:15 - LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God.

"You *will* answer"...
There's confidence in that.

David trusts that in the LORD's timing…
He will help him.
He doesn't know how…
Or when…
But his confidence is rooted in the faithfulness of the LORD.

Again…
David's going through a lot where we're at in 2 Samuel 14…
And it's only going to get worse.

But it'll be interesting to see as we continue…
Will David have this kind of confidence?

We'll have to wait and see…

But for now…
What about us?

When life hits us hard…
When things don't go the way we wanted…
Or even expected…

Where's our confidence?

Author and Holocaust survivor Corrie ten Boom once wrote:

[SLIDE 17] "Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength. "[1]

Her words remind me of what Jesus said…

[SLIDE 18] Matthew 6:34 - Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

When we're already carrying so much in the moment we're in…
It's easy to start trying to carry tomorrow too.

But tomorrow is full of even more uncertainty.
We don't know what's coming.
We don't even know how long we'll have to wait for the LORD to answer.

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[1] Corrie ten Boom. He Cares, He Comforts. 1977.

But even when the LORD answers us…
That doesn't mean that suddenly everything's okay.

Sometimes the grief is still there.
The sorrow… the anguish…

Think about David again.
He's been through so much…

His infant son became sick and died…
His daughter was left a "desolate woman"…
His son was murdered…
His other son fled the country…

How does he move forward from that?
How does *anyone* move forward when life falls apart?

I don't have an answer that will make everything okay.

All I can say is…

We wait for Jesus.

We pray…

Jesus…

[SLIDE 19] Psalm 38:10,15 - My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes … [But] … LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, LORD my God.

May that be our prayer…

And may Jesus be our strength…
In our time of need.

Let's Pray