

Homily For Tuesday of the 4th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - Feb 1, 2022

2 Sam 18:9-30;19:3+ "*Would I had died instead of you, my son. So victory turned to mourning.*"

Psalm 86:1-6 "Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you."

Mark 5:21-43 "Do not fear. Only believe."

Absalom My Son

Introduction

It is always wonderful to have the chance to compare King David and Jesus. After all, David is the king after God's own heart, it tells us in the Scriptures. A king like David is the awaited Messiah. Despite his shortcomings, he has so many of the qualities which provide a look forward to God's ultimate anointed one. Jesus is that anointed one who fulfills everything about David, but without the imperfections. David points forward to Jesus. Jesus looks back to David. That's not just a fun way to think about the two of them. The point is that this **IS** at the heart of God's plan of salvation, which is offered to us once more today.

2 Samuel - David the King

Yesterday, the first mass reading told us of David having to flee Jerusalem because of a coup attempt by his son, Absalom. He is outnumbered. David looks weak. He won't even resist the man cursing him and throwing stones at him on the way out. Shall I cut off his head, asks his general? No, let him be. Maybe it is really God who is cursing me.

But finally, David's forces are victorious over Absalom, whose end comes when he is caught in a tree by his beautiful flowing hair of which he was so proud. His rebellion, which begins in pride, ends with his utter humiliation. This should sound just a little bit of a warning bell for us. O, we would never rebel so maliciously against our God and king. But any pride I have will always be my shameful undoing. It could be anything in my life that causes me to glory in any gifts I might have, stealing that glory from God who gave me those gifts.

This story is complicated, though. David knows the evil his son has done towards him. Yet he mourns deeply for the loss of his son. On a purely human level, perhaps we can relate to the pure misery of having lost something or someone very dear to us. Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son. Our broken hearts may feel like they can never be mended, as if we have suffered death itself. In fact, that's the depth of David's anguish: "Would that I had died instead of you, my son, my son."

David used to turn Israel's defeats into victory. Now he has made his own army feel ashamed of their victory. It's confusing. Where is the real victory and the real defeat. One way to look at this is the way God looks at us. We might not be as bad as Absalom in rebelling against our heavenly Father. However, we are all sinners. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Paul says (Rom 3:23). Understood in this way, David's lament over his son is God's lament over our waywardness. In fact, we see Jesus weeping over the people who don't understand how deeply God loves us.

But this time, something radically different happens. The old king wishes he could take the place of the dead son. But our Saviour, the Son of God, the new king, DOES die for us so that we might live. We who were dead in our sins, are now alive in Christ (Eph 2:5) This is how the story of salvation works.

Mark - Jesus, the New King

All of Jesus' miracles of healing in some way demonstrate this dramatic new reality for those who are marked by the sign of faith.

Jairus is a synagogue leader whose daughter is seriously ill. There is weeping over this beloved daughter. Unlike Absalom, she is an innocent 12 year old. The number 12 tells us that she is like Israel when the 12 tribes followed God in innocence, and who depend on God as their saviour.

Mark interrupts this dramatic healing with a very different but just as profound healing. A woman has been bleeding for 12 years. This is a reminder of Israel

unable to stop the bleeding of their dependence on human means to save themselves. Unlike Israel, the woman's faith in Jesus is actually profound.

She perhaps thought she was unworthy of Jesus' direct attention. Touching him, she can feel how her body is completely healed. Jesus, who knows what has happened, does not want to let her go without saying to her: "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be free of this illness" (Mk 5:34). This is the result of the healing power of God meeting the faith of a humble woman.

The Marks of the Faithful Disciple

Pope Benedict says, "We ask God to heal so many problems, our practical needs, and this is right, but what we must ask him for insistently is an ever firmer faith, so that the Lord may renew our life." (Benedict XVI)

The catechism puts it like this: "Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words, like those of Jairus, or in silence, like the bleeding woman who touches his clothes, healing infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, # 2616)

Do you have something to ask of Jesus today? Is there some issue that invites you to have faith in him who heals? The miracles Mark tells us about are signs of how he is going to free us from the most terrible of ailments, our sins, and sin itself. Have you ever felt like some precious thing in your life was dying? Ask him about it with your words and your tears. Have you ever felt like you couldn't stop the bleeding in your own life? In silence, reach out and just touch the hem of his robe. He will not fail you.

Today, we have not been able to stop the thing that has been happening to us for these two years. It has turned us away from Jesus and towards prideful dependence on our own means to heal ourselves. Everywhere there has been a tremendous loss of faith. But faith calls out from the disciple kneeling before Jesus and giving our tears to him. He understands, because he weeps for us, his beloved. Let us fall down before him like Jairus and like the healed woman.

Jesus, O Jesus, my God, my God, who died in my place. I thank you with my tears and my supplications that you have given me the life I could not give myself.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *The Lord is the strength of his people.*

Collect: *Grant, O Lord, that we may always revere and love your holy name.*

2 Samuel: *Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. His head caught fast in the oak and he was left hanging. Joab took three spears and thrust them into the heart of Absalom. Now David was sitting between the two gates. The king said to the first messenger, "Turn aside and stand here." Then the Cushite came and said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! The Lord has vindicated you this day." The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king be like that young man." The king wept and said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom. Would I had died instead of you, my son, my son!" So the victory that day was turned into mourning for the troops heard, "The king is grieving for his son." The troops stole into the city that day as soldiers steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle.*

Psalms: *Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long. For you are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call you.*

Mark: *Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well. So Jesus went with him. And a large crowd followed and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and only grew worse. She said, "If I but touch his clothes I will be made well." Immediately her haemorrhage stopped and she felt in her body that she was healed. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about and said "Who touched my clothes?" The woman fell down before him and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace." Some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Jesus said to the leader, "Do not fear, only believe." Jesus saw people weeping loudly. He said, "The child is not dead but sleeping." They laughed at him. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about. She was twelve years of age.*