

Wednesday, May 29

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2 Samuel 14:1 - 15:22

14 **1** Joab realized how much the king longed to see Absalom. **2** So he sent for a woman from Tekoa who had a reputation for great wisdom. He said to her, "Pretend you are in mourning; wear mourning clothes and don't put on lotions. Act like a woman who has been mourning for the dead for a long time. **3** Then go to the king and tell him the story I am about to tell you." Then Joab told her what to say. **4** When the woman from Tekoa approached the king, she bowed with her face to the ground in deep respect and cried out, "O king! Help me!" **5** "What's the trouble?" the king asked. "Alas, I am a widow!" she replied. "My husband is dead. **6** My two sons had a fight out in the field. And since no one was there to stop it, one of them was killed. **7** Now the rest of the family is demanding, 'Let us have your son. We will execute him for murdering his brother. He doesn't deserve to inherit his family's property.' They want to extinguish the only coal I have left, and my husband's name and family will disappear from the face of the earth." **8** "Leave it to me," the king told her. "Go home, and I'll see to it that no one touches him." **9** "Oh, thank you, my lord the king," the woman from Tekoa replied. "If you are criticized for helping me, let the blame fall on me and on my father's house, and let the king and his throne be innocent." **10** "If anyone objects," the king said, "bring him to me. I can assure you he will never harm you again!" **11** Then she said, "Please swear to me by the LORD your God that you won't let anyone take vengeance against my son. I want no more bloodshed." "As surely as the LORD lives," he replied, "not a hair on your son's head will be disturbed!" **12** "Please allow me to ask one more thing of my lord the king," she said. "Go ahead and speak," he responded. **13** She replied, "Why don't you do as much for the people of God as you have promised to do for me? You have convicted yourself in making this decision, because you have refused to bring home your own banished son. **14** All of us must die eventually. Our lives are like water spilled out on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God does not just sweep life away; instead, he devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from him. **15** "I have come to plead with my lord the king because people have threatened me. I said to myself, 'Perhaps the king will listen to me **16** and rescue us from those who would cut us off from the inheritance God has given us. **17** Yes, my lord the king will give us peace of mind again.' I know that you are like an angel of God in discerning good from evil. May the LORD your God be with you." **18** "I must know one thing," the king replied, "and tell me the truth." "Yes, my lord the king," she responded. **19** "Did Joab put you up to this?" And the woman

replied, "My lord the king, how can I deny it? Nobody can hide anything from you. Yes, Joab sent me and told me what to say. **20** He did it to place the matter before you in a different light. But you are as wise as an angel of God, and you understand everything that happens among us!" **21** So the king sent for Joab and told him, "All right, go and bring back the young man Absalom."**22** Joab bowed with his face to the ground in deep respect and said, "At last I know that I have gained your approval, my lord the king, for you have granted me this request!" **23** Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. **24** But the king gave this order: "Absalom may go to his own house, but he must never come into my presence." So Absalom did not see the king. **25** Now Absalom was praised as the most handsome man in all Israel. He was flawless from head to foot. **26** He cut his hair only once a year, and then only because it was so heavy. When he weighed it out, it came to five pounds! **27** He had three sons and one daughter. His daughter's name was Tamar, and she was very beautiful. **28** Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years, but he never got to see the king. **29** Then Absalom sent for Joab to ask him to intercede for him, but Joab refused to come. Absalom sent for him a second time, but again Joab refused to come. **30** So Absalom said to his servants, "Go and set fire to Joab's barley field, the field next to mine." So they set his field on fire, as Absalom had commanded. **31** Then Joab came to Absalom at his house and demanded, "Why did your servants set my field on fire?" **32** And Absalom replied, "Because I wanted you to ask the king why he brought me back from Geshur if he didn't intend to see me. I might as well have stayed there. Let me see the king; if he finds me guilty of anything, then let him kill me." **33** So Joab told the king what Absalom had said. Then at last David summoned Absalom, who came and bowed low before the king, and the king kissed him.

15 1 After this, Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty bodyguards to run ahead of him. **2** He got up early every morning and went out to the gate of the city. When people brought a case to the king for judgment, Absalom would ask where in Israel they were from, and they would tell him their tribe. **3** Then Absalom would say, "You've really got a strong case here! It's too bad the king doesn't have anyone to hear it. **4** I wish I were the judge. Then everyone could bring their cases to me for judgment, and I would give them justice!" **5** When people tried to bow before him, Absalom wouldn't let them. Instead, he took them by the hand and kissed them. **6** Absalom did this with everyone who came to the king for judgment, and so he stole the hearts of all the people of Israel. **7** After four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron to offer a sacrifice to the LORD and fulfill a vow I made to him. **8** For while your servant was at Geshur in Aram, I promised to sacrifice to the LORD in Hebron if he would bring me back to Jerusalem." **9** "All right," the king told him. "Go and fulfill your vow." So Absalom went to Hebron. **10** But while he was there, he sent secret messengers to all the tribes of Israel to stir

up a rebellion against the king. “As soon as you hear the ram’s horn,” his message read, “you are to say, ‘Absalom has been crowned king in Hebron.’” **11** He took 200 men from Jerusalem with him as guests, but they knew nothing of his intentions. **12** While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel, one of David’s counselors who lived in Giloh. Soon many others also joined Absalom, and the conspiracy gained momentum. **13** A messenger soon arrived in Jerusalem to tell David, “All Israel has joined Absalom in a conspiracy against you!” **14** “Then we must flee at once, or it will be too late!” David urged his men. “Hurry! If we get out of the city before Absalom arrives, both we and the city of Jerusalem will be spared from disaster.” **15** “We are with you,” his advisers replied. “Do what you think is best.” **16** So the king and all his household set out at once. He left no one behind except ten of his concubines to look after the palace. **17** The king and all his people set out on foot, pausing at the last house **18** to let all the king’s men move past to lead the way. There were 600 men from Gath who had come with David, along with the king’s bodyguard. **19** Then the king turned and said to Ittai, a leader of the men from Gath, “Why are you coming with us? Go on back to King Absalom, for you are a guest in Israel, a foreigner in exile. **20** You arrived only recently, and should I force you today to wander with us? I don’t even know where we will go. Go on back and take your kinsmen with you, and may the LORD show you his unfailing love and faithfulness.” **21** But Ittai said to the king, “I vow by the LORD and by your own life that I will go wherever my lord the king goes, no matter what happens—whether it means life or death.” **22** David replied, “All right, come with us.” So Ittai and all his men and their families went along.

John 18:1 - 24

18 1 After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. **2** Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. **3** The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove. **4** Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. “Who are you looking for?” he asked. **5** “Jesus the Nazarene,” they replied. “I AM he,” Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) **6** As Jesus said “he,” they all drew back and fell to the ground! **7** Once more he asked them, “Who are you looking for?” And again they replied, “Jesus the Nazarene.” **8** “I told you that I AM he,” Jesus said. “And since I am the one you want, let these others go.” **9** He did this to fulfill his own statement: “I did not lose a single one of those you have given me.” **10** Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave. **11** But Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the

cup of suffering the Father has given me?" **12** So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up. **13** First they took him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people." **15** Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. **16** Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. **17** The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not." **18** Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself. **19** Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. **20** Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret. **21** Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said." **22** Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded. **23** Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?" **24** Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Psalms 119:97 - 112

97 Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long. **98** Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. **99** Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. **100** I am even wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commandments. **101** I have refused to walk on any evil path, so that I may remain obedient to your word. **102** I haven't turned away from your regulations, for you have taught me well. **103** How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. **104** Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. **105** Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. **106** I've promised it once, and I'll promise it again: I will obey your righteous regulations. **107** I have suffered much, O LORD ; restore my life again as you promised. **108** LORD, accept my offering of praise, and teach me your regulations. **109** My life constantly hangs in the balance, but I will not stop obeying your instructions. **110** The wicked have set their traps for me, but I will not turn from your commandments. **111** Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart's delight. **112** I am determined to keep your decrees to the very end.

Proverbs 16:8 - 9

16 8 Better to have little, with godliness, than to be rich and dishonest. **9**We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.