The Lord’s Inheritance

2 Samuel 20:1-26

“We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the Lord’s inheritance?”

—2 Samuel 20:19

Good morning. My message today is, “The Lord’s inheritance.” It’s taken from verse 19, “We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the Lord’s inheritance?” These are the words of, what the passage says, “a wise woman.” The Bible endorsed her words as wise. So, we can pay attention to them in how they are received in the passage.

“We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the Lord’s inheritance?” What do you think when you hear the word inheritance? I think of wealth that you receive from a distant relative when they die. What is the Lord’s inheritance? Once, when Moses was talking to the Israelites, he referred to them as the Lord’s inheritance.

Deuteronomy 4:20 says,

But as for you, the Lord took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are.

and, Psalm 33:12 says,

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.

The Lord’s inheritance is his people. When he brought them out of Egypt, he gave them the land of Canaan as their inheritance, and he took them as his inheritance. They used to belong to Pharaoh as his slaves. But now they belong to God. He made a covenant them. With this background and mindset, that they belong to God, this woman spoke to Joab. She said that Joab was trying to destroy and swallow up what did not belong to him, but to the Lord.

There was much conflict in bringing back David to Jerusalem, even after Absalom had been killed. In stabilizing and unifying the kingdom again, her words work to bring the focus back to the Lord, to whom all the people belong. They belong to the Lord because they are his inheritance.

Even sitting here, as we turn and look at each other, we might see each other in different ways. This person looks funny, or this person does this or that, etc. But there is a common element between all believers, we belong to the Lord. As such, we can glean from this passage how to treat properly what belongs to the Lord and how to be unified, because we cannot do anything to another person’s inheritance.

For, still we are called as God’s inheritance. Ephesians 1:18 says, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people” So there is always a third party in our relationships which we need to be mindful of.

In the passage there are troubles and divisions between the people, Sheba and Daniel, Joab and Amasa, and Joab and the city, but the words of wisdom that came out was to not swallow up or destroy the Lord’s inheritance.

First, let’s look at Sheba’s call to rebel and divide.

Look at verses 1-2.

[1] Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bikri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted,

“We have no share in David,  
    no part in Jesse’s son!  
Every man to his tent, Israel!”

[2] So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bikri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

“We have no share in David, no part in Jesse’s son!” These words are very surprising and telling of why he is called a troublemaker. In the previous passage, David’s tribe, Judah, and the other tribes were arguing strongly about who had more shares in David. Then Sheba says, “We have no share!” This was wrong. In fact, it was not a matter of who has more shares—shares were not the issue. His words were wrong and divisive because they did not put God in the picture.

Especially, he didn’t remember what God had done. God made them his people. Then God set David as the king over them. And through David God had done great things for the people, especially protecting them their enemies so that they had peace on all sides. They had not had lasting peace ever since they came out of Egypt.

So we are warned of causing division when we relate to each other without God in the picture, especially forgetting God’s mercies.

Remembering what God has done for us, especially his mercies and salvation is for everyone. Even King David learned this. So he wrote in Psalm 103,

Psalm 103:2

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—

What are his benefits? It was not firstly wealth or materials things, but his salvation. He didn’t give thanks for becoming a rich and powerful king, but for God’s salvation.

Psalm 103:3-6 continue, saying,

[3] who forgives all your sins

    and heals all your diseases,

[4] who redeems your life from the pit

    and crowns you with love and compassion,

[5] who satisfies your desires with good things

    so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

[6] The Lord works righteousness

    and justice for all the oppressed.

God is the one who forgives, who heals, who redeems, who satisfies, and who works righteousness and justice “all” the oppressed. It is his work. He redeems people to be his very own. It is important for us to remember that he does this for “all” the oppressed. It is not just for you or me, but for all. So if we look at just what is ours, or what is yours, or about people belonging here or there, we are going to miss the point of what the Lord had done. David also told himself to remember what God does for other people as well as what God has done for him.

Jesus is the one who purchased people with his blood. In heaven, there is a song about this to be sung:

Revelation 5:9-10 say,

[9] And they sang a new song [to the Lamb], saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll

    and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

    and with your blood you purchased for God

    persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[10] You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

    and they will reign on the earth.”

We are all together because of Jesus. He shed his blood to purchase persons from “every tribe and language and people and nation” with the same capacity to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and reign on the earth.

“Purchased for God” means that they all belong to God. We should see what he has done to understand what we have together and what we share. At the most basic level, we are all united as people purchased for God by the blood of Jesus.

Last week’s passage told us that David won the hearts of the people (2 Samuel 19:14). He had won them back after Absalom had stolen then. The Bible uses the phrase, “stole the hearts of the people” (2 Samuel 15:6).

David was mindful of this and working to restore unity to the kingdom as he returned. In a similar way, there is unity in Jesus because Jesus did something to bring us together in him, in shedding his blood and forgiving others. But we see that we also need to make good efforts among each other to keep that unity which he purchased with his blood.

Our membership is very diverse. We have very young people, very old people, we have students and graduates and workers, we have very different tastes and preferences, we have different roles. But we can look at each other newly today, remembering Jesus and his salvation. You can say to your neighbor, “You were purchased for God by the blood of Jesus.” And they can say it to you. And we have equal shares in Jesus. Or, rather, he has 100% shares in us for we belong to God. Jesus is not more yours or mine. But, rather, we are his.

The Bible is very strict in certain places about people who are divisive. Such people are trouble markers.

For example, Titus 3:10 says,

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.

We can see that the Bible is strict about this because God is one. Jesus is not divided. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He was, and is, and is to come (Revelation 1:4, 1:8, 4:8). God understands the past and he is always contemporary and relevant.

Hebrews 12:15 say, ”See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

How can we see to this? One important way is by remembering what God has done, especially his grace of salvation, how he has purchased people by the blood of Jesus.

Next, verse 3 says,

When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them but had no sexual relations with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows.

David took care of the concubines. He “provided for them.” David was mindful of the women who had been abused by Absalom. In remembering what God has done for us, we also ought to provide for others, especially the weak, the poor, and injured. The concubines were left weak and devastated. There was nothing they could do in their situation. David remembered them and provided for them.

Verses 4-13, tell us how Joab killed Amasa. It was a huge mistake. He did it without David knowing. He was also causing division, destroying and swallowing up others.

Why did he do it? There could be several reasons. From the passage, at least, we can see the following.

First, he didn’t forgive and accept Amasa. David had chosen Amasa to be the new commander of the army in place of Joab. David didn’t explain why he did it. Simply, David forgave and accepted him, even though he had been the commander under Absalom. But Joab didn't forgive and accept Amasa. He pretended that he did.

Verse 9 says,

Joab said to Amasa, “How are you, my brother?” Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

He called him brother. He acted as if he was welcoming him. But he did so only to catch Amasa off guard and kill him. Joab and Amasa were family. They were cousins whose mothers were sisters. Yet, Joab didn't consider him as one of them. He called him “my brother” yet acted deceitfully and violently.

Joab’s heart for others did not match the king’s. So there was a problem a division. This helps us to see the importance of having the same heart and love as Jesus.

First, it begins with forgiveness and acceptance.

Colossians 3:13 says,

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

He added “bear with each other” and he acknowledged grievances because he knows that we’ll have such troubles with others. But the solution is to forgive as the Lord forgave you. It is not to demand from others, but to be met from our side, doing to others as Jesus has down for us.

Romans 15:7 says,

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Again, our actions are called to match Jesus’ actions, in forgiveness and acceptance. This is for our benefit and for God’s glory. So, if you want to live for God’s glory, then you should do as Jesus has done for you.

Paul experienced this personally. He had been a persecutor of the church. When one believer was killed (Stephen), Paul stood there approving of his death. Then he went to different cities to arrest believers, put them in prison, and to kill. This was the kind of person Paul was. After Jesus appeared to him, he was not welcomed at first into the fellowship with believers. Many doubted that he was genuine and thought he might be a spy, trying to destroy from the inside by infiltrating their ranks. But through one man Barnabas, Paul was accepted. We have been greatly benefited by the Lord’s work through Paul. But can you imagine: If Paul, although he had not been welcomed by the other believers, also Jesus had forgiven him, what would have happened? Things would have been very different. Our actions make a difference. We ought to have the same forgiveness and acceptance as Jesus Christ.

Then, it leads to a mutually affection. 2 Peter 1:5-9 say,

[5] For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; [6] and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; [7] and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. [8] For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

The words “mutual affection” are also translated as “brotherly kindness.” But for the sake of trying to make the meaning clear that it is for brothers and sisters in the Lord, this translation uses “mutual affection.” It is a quality that we have to make “every effort” to add on top of our faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, and godliness. Then, it leads to love.

Because Jesus calls those who believe in him, those he died for, as brothers as sisters, we ought to do the same.

Hebrews 2:11-12 say,

[11] Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. [12] He says,

“I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;  
    in the assembly I will sing your praises.”

Our actions and heart are to match God’s. Joab’s didn’t match David and there was division. For unity, we have to align our hearts and actions to match God’s, especially in how we view each other. Joab said, “My brother,” but he didn’t mean it.

Second, Joab had an issue about keeping his position.

Verse 11 says,

One of Joab’s men stood beside Amasa and said, “Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!”

“Whoever favors Joab…” Following Joab was made out to be a matter of preference. (Although there wasn’t much choice because Joab had already murdered Amasa). Maybe they thought that Amasa was a conspirator. Maybe they thought that Joab should keep his position because he was already well known and experienced with the army, with excellent results in battle. Whatever their preference or reason was, it didn’t matter because it was not matching that of the king’s. Joab killed the very person David had set over the army. He obviously did it for his own benefit without regard to what David had done. He thought that it was his position to keep, but it was not. It was David's to give to Joab and it was still David’s to give to another person.

In thinking about people as the Lord’s inheritance, we also see that he is the one who gives even roles and positions.

1 Corinthians 1:26 says,

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 go on to say,

[30] It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. [31] Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

What we have is from God. Did you make something of yourself? Or did it come from God?

We need to hold on to Jesus, not to positions or authorities or titles. We ought to humble ourselves before God.

Jesus is the one who gives for the sake of the church.

Ephesians 4:11-13 say,

[11] So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, [12] to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The point is that Jesus himself gave. It is from him. So we should not treat ourselves or positions as something we control or give. It is given by God and we have to follow what he is doing. It is not for our sake, but for the purpose of building up others, not tearing them down for the sake of maintaining our jobs in the ministry. Joab was not willing to follow what David was doing. He caused much trouble, even for himself.

They went on to pursue Sheba so that he doesn’t cause more trouble. Then when they reach the city where Sheba is hiding, Joab is called out by one of the women of the town.

Let’s read again verses 15-22.

[15] All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maakah. They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications. While they were battering the wall to bring it down, [16] a wise woman called from the city, “Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him.” [17] He went toward her, and she asked, “Are you Joab?”

“I am,” he answered.

She said, “Listen to what your servant has to say.”

“I’m listening,” he said.

[18] She continued, “Long ago they used to say, ‘Get your answer at Abel,’ and that settled it. [19] We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the Lord’s inheritance?”

[20] “Far be it from me!” Joab replied, “Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy! [21] That is not the case. A man named Sheba son of Bikri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I’ll withdraw from the city.”

The woman said to Joab, “His head will be thrown to you from the wall.”

[22] Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bikri and threw it to Joab. So he sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home. And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.

First, she told Joab to stop trying to destroy and swallow up the Lord’s inheritance. Joab said, “Far be it from me!” He didn’t think he was destroying and swallowing up, but he was. It was so clear that this old woman called him out for it. It’s exactly what he did to Amasa. He thought he was serving David, but he lost sight of the people as belonging to God and he was destroying and swallowing up. Thanks to this woman, he was deterred from doing it any more.

Then, she spoke to the rest of the town and they accepted what Joab said about Sheba. They also didn’t want rebellion and division, so they gave Joab Sheba’s head. [There was no question about Sheba as a troublemaker. Even this old lady understood and agreed right away to cut off his head and throw it to Joab.]

When there is not unity, there will fighting, division and destruction.

Paul said that we will bite and devour each other.

Galatians 5:13-15 say,

[13] You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. [14] For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” [15] If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Bite and devour sounds like swallow up and destroy. They lead to the same thing: destruction. Instead of biting and devouring for your own reason, Bible teaches us to serve others according to Jesus’ example and word. Unity among us ought to be expressed through serving each other in love.

This is in line with how this woman described their town. She said that it was peaceful and faithful, a “mother for Israel.” (Interestingly, this is another reference to women and provision.)

Joab was quick to violence. But here he was put to a stop to learn from a wise old woman. We don’t know if she had kids, but she thought like a mother. I found that this is an important word about women and mothers. If mother’s are quick to violence, children will die. They will suffer, be destroyed and swallowed up. I sometimes remind my wife that to our children, she is the most important thing in all of the universe. She is their life. Mothers of peace and faithfulness are important. Especially, mothers understand that children belong to them. So, this woman could understand that the people belong to God as his inheritance, as his children. As such, no one must destroy or swallow up God’s children. [So, we need to take care of mothers and appreciate them, being gentle and kind to them.]

This helps us to see each person in a right way, that is, as belonging to God as a child of God. The word “inheritance” shows us how treasured each person is to God. Each person is his treasured possession. We have no place to swallow up or destroy his treasured possession.

Philippians chapter 2 speaks of a right and humble attitude.

Philippians 2:1-4 say,

[1] Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. [3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, [4] not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Maybe we don't think were so great better maybe we do, usually people down. That's why he has to mention this. Because this is what we need to see others is better. Follow Jesus example. Serve each other love.

In staying with Jesus, we should learn of his humility and his heart and practice it with others.

Philippians 2:5 goes on to say,

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

So, our struggle is not with people, but to keep the same mindset as Christ Jesus and put it into practice.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says,

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Rebellion and division need to be dealt with in the sense of being obedient to Jesus. Christ’s command is that we love each other.

John 13:34-35 say,

[34] “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [35] By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

This is very clear words. We are known as Jesus’ disciples if we love one another. We are not known as Jesus’ disciples according to our numbers or activities, etc., but if we love one another as he has loved us. And how did he love us? He was humble, he served, and let others be free, he saw them as his brothers and sisters for whom he died. Interestingly, Jesus also served by seeing people as belonging to God. He served with that attitude. John 17:6 says, “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.” He prayed and served based on the knowledge that the people belong to God. Even Jesus served like this.

If we bite, devour, swallow up and destroy each other, if we are divided and fight with each other, if we hold our own positions and authority, then really we will not be known as Jesus’ disciples, but as something else.

Thanks be to God for Jesus who died for us and unifies us in him. I learn through today’s passage to view and treat others as God’s inheritance, his treasured possession. As such, I learn to forgive, accept, and serve others as Jesus has done for me. Let us bring praise to God’s name.

Let’s read verses 19-20 together:

[19] “We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the Lord’s inheritance?”

[20] “Far be it from me!” Joab replied, “Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy!

Let’s say, “Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy!” It says, “Far from me!” Not near! Let’s keep it far from us and bring praise to God and build each other up in love.