

“Hesed Rejected”
2 Samuel 10
October 18, 2020
Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service
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We return again this evening to the Book of Samuel, chapter ten, where we read of David’s deeds as king of God’s people.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this evening:

^{10:1} After this the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. ² And David said, “I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me.” So David sent by his servants to console him concerning his father. And David’s servants came into the land of the Ammonites. ³ But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city and to spy it out and to overthrow it?” ⁴ So Hanun took David’s servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. ⁵ When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, “Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return.”

⁶ When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob, 12,000 men. ⁷ And when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the host of the mighty men. ⁸ And the Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the gate, and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the open country.

⁹ When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians. ¹⁰ The rest of his men he put in the charge of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed them against the Ammonites. ¹¹ And he said, “If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. ¹² Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD [may Yahweh] do what seems good to him.” ¹³ So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. ¹⁴ And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ But when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. ¹⁶ And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the Euphrates. They came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. ¹⁷ And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan and came to Helam. The Syrians arrayed themselves against David and fought with him. ¹⁸ And the Syrians fled before Israel, and David killed of the Syrians the men of 700 chariots, and 40,000 horsemen, and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. ¹⁹ And when all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Syrians were afraid to save the Ammonites anymore.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

Let’s pray ...

Lord, we do believe that your word
is firmly fixed forever, with you, in the heavens.
Your faithfulness endures to all generations,
you have made this world and it stands as you will it to.
Lord, as your people, help us to never forget your precepts,
Because by them you have given us life.
Lord, we are yours, save us,
for we have sought your ways.
Grant us life now through this, your word.
In Jesus's name. Amen
[Based on Psalm 119:89, 90, 93, 94]

INTRODUCTION:

In this chapter we are once more focused on *hesed*. We have talked about *hesed* in the Book of Ruth. We have talked about it in chapter nine of Second Samuel. And now we come to it again.

Dale Davis writes that chapter ten “begins like chapter 9 – by waving the word *hesed* at us: ‘David said [in verse 2], “I will act in a *hesed*-way with Hanun son of Nahosh, since his father acted in a *hesed*-way with me.’”” [Davis, 133]

“*Hesed*” is again a key word. It is translated here as dealing “loyally.” In chapter nine it was translated as “kindness.” What, again, does this word mean?

Well, as we've said, it is a difficult word to define, but it is stronger than the English word “kindness.” It refers not just to good deeds, but to “covenant love” [Ferguson, 55] – to “covenant loyalty” and “covenant devotion.” [Lusk, 44] It is, as one commentator puts it, a “lovingkindness” that “means faithfulness to covenant obligations that is expressed in acts of generosity and kindness.” [Leithart, 230; Cf. Alter 240]

“We do not know if there was some covenant or treaty relationship between Nahosh and David. *Hesed* may imply that” but it doesn't necessitate that. [Davis, 133]

In chapter nine David's concern was showing *hesed* love and loyalty to Mephibosheth, a descendant of Saul. Here in chapter ten, David's concern is showing *hesed* love and loyalty to Hanun, a foreign ruler. In both his domestic practices and his foreign policy, David wanted his rule to be rooted in *hesed* loyalty, love, and kindness. [Fokkelman, quoted in Davis, 134]

Here the extension of *hesed* is rooted in David's relationship with Hanun's father Nahash.

We first meet Nahash the Ammonite king in First Samuel 11. He was then attacking the people of Jabesh-gilead. He did *not* seem like a good guy in that account. He had to be defeated and driven off by Saul.

And yet, it seems something has happened since then. At some point after that Nahash showed lovingkindness – he showed *hesed* loyalty – to David. That's what David says in verse two of our

text. The account of that interaction is not recorded in the Book of Samuel though, so we don't know the details.

Regardless, David now in verse two, wishes to show *hesed* loyalty to Nahash's son Hanun, sending a dispatch of ambassadors to express his condolences to Hanun upon the death of Nahash.

As David extended *hesed* love and loyalty to Mepiboshet for the sake of his father, so David now extends *hesed* love and loyalty to Hanun for the sake of his father. Only, where Mephibosheth received David's *hesed*, Hanun will reject it.

Tonight we'll consider three aspects of this. We'll consider the rejectors of *hesed*, the ambassadors of *hesed*, and the battle over *hesed*.

REJECTORS OF HESED:

So first, the rejectors of *hesed*.

David extends *hesed* loyalty and lovingkindness to Hanun. And Hanun rejects it. Why?

We read the answer in verses three and four:

³ But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city and to spy it out and to overthrow it?" ⁴ So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away.

We should note two things about the claim of Hanun's counselors.

The first was that it was completely unfounded. We are given no reason to suspect that David had bad intentions for Hanun or the Ammonites here. He was instead genuinely seeking to be a blessing to Hanun – to extend *hesed* love, loyalty, and kindness to him. The Ammonites did not have a great history with the Israelites, so this was an unexpected opportunity not only for political and military peace, both for the Ammonites to be drawn into more of a relationship with the God of Israel, and the blessings he brings. This is such a good thing.

Which is what makes the false accusations of Hanun's counselors and Hanun's acceptance of those false accusations so devastating.

That's the first thing we need to see here.

The second is that even though the position of Hanun's counselors was completely false, they could still make a plausible-sounding case for it. In other words, their view was crazy ... but it didn't necessarily sound crazy.

One theologian writes: "In his extension of lovingkindness to Hanun, David is giving [Hanun] the opportunity of being blessed for the sake of his father – of entering into a positive relationship with Israel. However, Hanun's princes and counselors believe that David actually desires to destroy them. This isn't an entirely unreasonable impression to reach. From a distance David looks like

someone whose enemies conveniently die, and then David sheds crocodile tears over them. Both Abner and Ish-bosheth were conveniently assassinated, and while David can blame the brutality of Joab as much as he wants, there is Joab, still the commander of David's army. To the typical onlooker, he wouldn't seem very sincere. David's failure to deal effectively with people like Joab would naturally lead to distrust and suspicion from characters like Hanun." [Roberts]

Now, we see that David's shortcomings were real – his failure to deal with Joab was serious. But none of that actually related to David's intentions towards Hanun. Yet one could make a plausible-sounding argument that they were related.

The words of Hanun's counselors, in other words, probably felt plausible and felt true to Hanun ... even though they weren't. Even though they were false.

Lies can sound plausible. Lies can feel true. But they are still lies.

What was Hanun's problem then? Was it brains? Was it that he didn't have enough data?

I don't think so.

I think it was his heart.

And we often have the very same problem as we relate to one another in our culture right now.

The case made by Hanun's princes and counselors may have sounded plausible ... but it was still a lie. It was still a violation of the ninth commandment.

The ninth commandment says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." [Deuteronomy 5:20]

What does that entail?

Well, the Westminster Larger Catechism puts it well. Here's a slightly abridged form of what it says:

"The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, [...] sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; [...]."

What if Hanun had responded to the claims of his counselors in accordance with this summary of what the ninth commandment requires? What if he was ready to receive a good report, and unwilling to admit an evil report concerning David? What if he discouraged talebearers and slanderers? How might things have gone differently?

David French, commenting on the failure of people in general and Christians in particular right now to follow this command as described by the catechism writes this – he says: "If a person

understands those obligations—if he truly comprehends his duty to his neighbor—will he be a sponge for the worst and most paranoid accusations? Absolutely not. He’ll be inoculated against them.”

And having those duties “embedded in our hearts and minds,” French argues, can do more than all the fact-checking in the world.

French goes on: “What does it mean to have an ‘unwillingness to admit of an evil report’ concerning our [...] opponents? It doesn’t mean being gullible. It doesn’t mean rejecting the idea that our opponents can do grievous, scandalous things. It means addressing claims of wrongdoing with charitable skepticism—and the wilder the claim, the greater the skepticism. Our moral posture should deter slander.”

But Hanun’s moral posture did not deter slander. It made him susceptible to it.

And part of French’s point is that our moral posture often looks a lot like Hanun’s.

With certain people, he says, we are all far too ready to receive an evil report, and to be skeptical of a good report. We don’t discourage talebearers, but we crave what stories they might tell us.

We can see this in our personal relationships, whether with peers, with those under our authority, or those in authority over us. We can see it in that person at work, or at school, or at church, or somewhere else, who for whatever reason, you really struggle with. Whom you are easily frustrated by. And you are quick to believe a negative claim about them, and quick to dismiss a positive claim. Quick to receive claims that they are stupid, incompetent, or self-serving. Hesitant to receive claims that they have done something well, that they have good intentions, that they are working hard.

Or maybe it’s a theological opponent that you treat this way – an individual or a group whom you are ready to believe has a secret agenda - and you are hesitant to believe that they are being honest about their intentions or sincere in their attempts to understand the Scripture.

Or maybe it’s a cultural or political opponent, whom you delight in reading articles about which make the most negative claims about them, and enjoy sharing such articles with as many people as you can.

And if you were confronted about any of these relationships, you’d maybe have excuses ready. “Well it *seems* plausible,” you might say. “Well, it *feels* true.” “Well I feel like ‘it fits.’” “Well look, you don’t know these people *this is what they’re like* so it’s probably true – and even if it’s not true, then there are probably worse things about them, that we don’t know about, that are true.” “You’re being naïve to deny this – to demand more evidence.”

And as we make those claims we sound less and less like people who think it’s important not to bear false witness – who think we are called be ready to receive a good report and unwilling to admit an evil report, who see it as part of our Christian calling to discourage talebearers and slanderers. And we sound more and more like Hanun and his counselors.

I am convinced that one of the sins we as a culture are most comfortable with right now, on all sides – Christians and non-Christians alike – is breaking the ninth commandment.

It is a grievous sin when we do such things to one another as Hanun does here. We should take some time to reflect on that.

It is a grievous thing to do to our neighbor. And it is even more grievous to do it to the Lord's anointed. And that is what Hanun does here.

For it would be a sin if David were acting as a private person or as a secular ruler. But David is God's king – he is the Lord's anointed one.

And by rejecting the *hesed* of the anointed one, Hanun is also rejecting the *hesed* of God.

Through David, God himself is extending *hesed* love and loyalty to Hanun. And Hanun rejects it. Which is an “insane insult” to God. [Davis, 130]

But Hanun is not unique in doing this.

Consider Psalm 2. It begins:

Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

² The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against Yahweh and against his Anointed, saying,

³ “Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”

As one commentator remarks: “2 Samuel 10 looks like a regionalized version of Psalm 2.” – like a “miniature of Psalm 2.” [Davis, 132-133]

For the natural disposition of our hearts is to view God just as suspiciously as Hanun views David, and to therefore set ourselves to cast away God's cords from us.

And we can all struggle with this, whether we are Christians or non-Christians.

We hear God's law and we immediately suspect that God is cruel in restricting us in these ways – he is trying to keep us from something good.

We see God's providence – the circumstances he is bringing into our lives, and we quickly suspect that God is not working for our good, but he is working against us.

We see the gifts God has given us in this life, and we find ourselves thinking that God has short-changed us – that we deserve something more, something better.

God, in any number of ways extends his *hesed* love to us and we respond with suspicion. We respond like Hanun.

For Hanun, the *hesed* of David and the *hesed* of God were all tied together. For us they are often more separated ... but we can be guilty of acting like Hanun in both cases.

And as with other people, we can tell ourselves that our suspicions of God are plausible. Adam and Eve could convince themselves that, and so surely, we can.

But Adam and Eve were wrong. And Hanun was wrong. And we, so often, in how we view God's kindnesses to us, are wrong.

The first thing Hanun's sin should lead us to do, is to look in the mirror.

Where is the spirit of Hanun at work in how we relate to others? Where is the spirit of Hanun at work in how we relate to God?

How do we need to repent? How do we need to discourage talebearers and slanderers, whether they be around us or within our own hearts – whether they slander our neighbors or our Maker?

The first thing our text calls us to is to not be rejectors of God's *hesed*.

AMBASSADORS OF HESED:

That's the first thing. That's the negative calling – we are *not* to be rejectors of *hesed*.

But the text also gives us a positive picture to emulate. It also tells us what we are to be. We are to be ambassadors of *hesed*. We are to be ambassadors of *hesed*. What does that mean?

Well, in this story there are literal ambassadors of *hesed*. David sends some of his subjects out to extend his *hesed* kindness to those outside of Israel. That is how David works as a king – as the Lord's anointed.

And it does not take much reflection to realize that that is how *our* King – how Jesus Christ, the Lord's Anointed, works as well.

Jesus sends his people out to those outside his kingdom. He sends them as ambassadors. He sends them to make disciples of outsiders by extending his *hesed* love to them. That is what Christ calls his Church to.

But we usually don't want to do that. We usually try to find ways to avoid that.

And why is that?

Well, because as we see in our text, the ambassadors of God's Anointed don't always get the response they want from those they offer God's *hesed* love to.

We read what happens to these ambassadors in verse four: "So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away."

The attack on the ambassadors was both religious and personal. By cutting off the edges of their robes, Hanun was cutting off the tassels on the corners of their robes, prescribed in Numbers 15:37-41 as symbols of God's covenant law with them. By shaving off a corner of their beards –

something that Leviticus 19:27 forbade Israelite men from doing, Hanun was forcing the men to violate God's ceremonial law for them. On top of that, the robes described here were official garments – signs of their roles in David's kingdom. [Alter, 245] By cutting them, Hanun is mocking the men's official roles among God's people. In all these ways Hanun sought to humiliate the ambassadors on the basis of their faith and their place among the people of God.

But the same actions that targeted the ambassador's faith was also meant to be personally humiliating to them. Cutting off part of their beard was, for them in their culture, an attack on their masculinity, bringing personal shame upon them. And cutting off their robes at the waist also meant to leave them at least partially exposed, bringing personal humiliation on them.

In all these ways, Hanun's attack on the ambassadors combined religious mockery with personal humiliation. [Leithart, 234]

Hanun's actions were a serious insult to the men, to Israel, and to David. [Firth. 409]

And this is often how the world responds to the ambassadors of the Lord's Anointed. It was true then and it is true now.

Of course the details and the degrees are different, but the same dynamic is often at play. When God sends us as his people out to extend his *hesed* love to others – to share his gospel of how others can be in a right relationship with him – many people respond with hostility. And their hostility not only targets our faith, but it aims to harm or humiliate us personally as well.

This can take any number of forms. It can be direct or indirect. It can be a hard or soft form of humiliation. It can be angry or mockingly dismissive. But it aims at both us and our King.

That is the nature of being an ambassador for Christ, and if that surprises you, you should read through the New Testament some time. For that is the story of every serious ambassador of Christ in the New Testament – at least at some point in their lives.

The real question is, knowing that, will you do it anyway? Will you still be an ambassador of Christ's *hesed* to those outside his kingdom?

Will you do it, as these ambassadors did, with a genuine desire to see outsiders receive Christ's *hesed* and come to know him and be blessed by him? Will you do it with a clear-eyed knowledge that your assignment may end in humiliation?

That is what Christ calls his people to.

First, he calls us to not reject his *hesed*. Second, he calls us to be ambassadors of his *hesed* to others.

THE BATTLE FOR HESED:

Third and finally, God calls us to trust in his present sovereignty and his final victory in the battle over his *hesed*.

The rest of chapter ten is an account of a battle. That is what we get from verse five through nineteen. And actually the battle continues into chapters eleven and twelve.

The account here seems, as one commentator notes “to consist of the bones of battle reports with only a little narrative flesh to them” [Davis, 130]

It is not told in the most exciting or engaging way. And yet there is still much here for us to learn. From a zoomed-out perspective, the battle account here, and stretching into chapters eleven and twelve teaches us that God calls us to trust in his present sovereignty and his final victory in the battle over his *hesed*.

And it teaches us that by showing us several things.

First, we see in these verses that David is motivated by concern for his ambassadors and for his people.

When David’s ambassadors are mistreated, he cares. And he cares about them. In verse five we read how he meets with them himself. He notes their shame. He provides a place for them to recover and to therefore reduce their shame. David here is concerned for those he sends out.

But not only that. David is concerned for all his people.

We can tend to read this conflict with David primarily on the offense, but the text actually stresses the defensive nature of it. In verse twelve, Joab notes that the men are fighting for the people and for the cities of God. This likely meant that they expected the Ammonites and Syrians to attack the people of God further if they were not stopped. [Leithart, 235]

David is concerned for his ambassadors and his people.

And it reminds us that the same is true of Christ. Christ also cares for his people. He cares for his ambassadors. And if David is concerned to cover the shame and protect the welfare of his people, Christ is even more so.

The Lord’s anointed is concerned for his ambassadors and for his people.

The second thing we see is that David is concerned that his offer of *hesed* – and with it, the Lord’s offer of *hesed* – has been rejected.

It is not a neutral thing to reject someone’s offer of love and loyalty. When love and loyalty are extended, there are only two options: acceptance, leading to a relationship of love and loyalty; or rejection, leading to a relationship of hostility.

Hanun chose hostility. And David responds to Hanon as an enemy because that is what Hanon has become.

And the same dynamic is at play when Christ extends his offer of love and loyalty to others.

There is no neutrality with Christ. There is no middle ground. We must either accept the love and loyalty he extends to us and enter a covenant relationship with him, or we reject his love and loyalty and we set ourselves against him, as his enemy. We are either for him or against him.

That is the second thing we see.

The third thing we see is that those who reject David's *hesed* bring destruction on themselves.

We might expect that after Hanun rejects David's offer, it would be David who escalated things next. But the text stresses that Hanun is the one who begins to mobilize first. Hanun is the aggressor, not David. And as such, Hanon brings destruction on himself by escalating his conflict with David. [Firth, 409]

As one commentator notes: "David's intention throughout had been to show lovingkindness [to show *hesed*]. Ironically, Hanun's fears will ultimately be realized as David takes over his royal city and enslaves the Ammonites at the end of chapter twelve. But that is a situation arising not from David's initial intention but from Hanun's provocation and his laying down of the gauntlet." [Roberts]

Hanun brings about his own worst fears when he rejects David.

And so do those who reject Christ. Christ issues an invitation to love and loyalty, and people suppose that Christ is secretly their enemy. And so they reject him. And they make him their enemy. And as they do, they bring destruction onto themselves, escalating a war with their Maker that they have no hope of winning.

The third thing we see is that those who reject the *hesed* of the Lord's anointed bring destruction on themselves.

The fourth thing we see is the shape of the battle between the Lord's anointed and his enemies.

The battle in this chapter takes place in stages. First the Ammonites hire fighters from among the Syrians to fight alongside them in verses six through eight. Then the first stage of the battle itself occurs in verses nine through fourteen, and at the end of that both the Ammonites and the Syrians are defeated in that battle, but neither is yet conquered or subjugated. [Firth, 410]

In verses fifteen through nineteen we learn of the second stage, in which the Israelites fight against the Syrians who had come to assist Hanun, and the Syrians are soundly defeated. But even then, the battle with the Ammonites continues into chapter eleven, as Joab fights them at Rabbah. [11:1]

And the siege at Rabbah continues until the end of chapter twelve. It is there that we read of how David eventually fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and defeated it, plundering the city, and enslaving the people of Hanun. [12:29-31]

In the end, David conquerors Hanun's forces that had been set against him. He wins a decisive victory. [Leithart, 235]

But the fact that it took multiple stages, with several twists and turns, is worth noting.

There is serious back-and-forth in the conflict. There are times that things don't look good for David's army. There are times that David seems to have won, only to see his enemies regroup and attack again. The conflict is not clear-cut.

And that is often the case of spiritual conflict in this world. The shape is not straightforward. The arch is not neat and clean. Things are not always what they seem.

How then are we to view these conflicts when we are in their midst?

That brings us to the fifth thing we see here about the battle: the right outlook on what transpires.

And this we get, somewhat surprisingly, from Joab.

Joab is the one who provides the spiritual lens for the battle. And for all the problems we have seen with Joab so far, the lens he provides still turns out to be the right one.

In verse twelve he says to his brother: "Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may Yahweh do what seems good to him."

In such a sparse account, the inclusion of Joab's words is supposed to get our attention.

What is Joab's perspective on the battle before them?

That while the individual battle is unsure, God is in control over it, and the final outcome is sure, and so our calling is to trust in him. [Davis, 135-137]

Calvin, reflecting on this passage explains that Joab's uncertainty about the outcome of this battle is not a lack of faith on his part, but a proper understanding of the situation. We should, Calvin says, be firmly persuaded "that God will never abandon us, and that in the end he will show that our hope in him was not in vain, so that our faith will not be frustrated when it rests upon his mercy and his truth. Nevertheless," Calvin adds, "we must remain in suspense about many things." Calvin goes on to emphasize that we do not know what the road will look like by which God brings us to that final victory, though we do know that God is in control. And Calvin writes, "That is how [God] wants us to remain[,] in suspense about many things and to leave it all to his sacred counsel and his providence." [Calvin, quoted in Davis, 136-137]

In other words, God calls us to trust in his present sovereignty and his final victory in the battle. We do not know how our current circumstances will play out in the future. But we do know that God is in control. And he will have the final victory.

"There is a strange chemistry here," one commentator writes: "taking Joab's words into our dilemmas may make us both more confident and less certain. But, at some point, will we not see that if Yahweh will do what he thinks is good, that will also be what *is* good for his people?" [Davis, 137]

The fifth thing we see is that God calls us to trust in his present sovereignty and his final victory in the battle over his *hesed*.

The sixth thing this text gives us is a warning against those who reject God's *hesed*.

Hanun feels confident in his power against God's anointed in verse four. He's more worried by verse six. In the verses that follow, as the situation develops, we might imagine that Hanun's confidence ebbed and flowed.

But his defeat was sure from the start. And it came to pass by the end of chapter twelve.

Any peace we have, any confidence we have as we reject God's Anointed is pure delusion. You cannot fight the living God and win.

As Psalm 2 puts it, when we try to fight God:

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
⁶ "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
[...]
¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The only safe place is in the refuge that the Lord's Anointed offers. The only sane response when we have made ourselves enemies of the Lord's Anointed is to beg for his forgiveness, and pledge our love and loyalty to him.

Hanun's end is, for us, a warning of that.

Finally, the battle between David and the Ammonites offers confidence for God's people.

Because however things may look now, the final victory of the Lord's anointed is assured.

In Psalm 2 the Lord's Anointed describes the words of the Lord to him. There we read:

⁷ I will tell of the decree:
Yahweh said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you."
⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

No force can stand against the Lord's Anointed. No matter how strong the enemies of God look, no matter how strong our own enemies look, Jesus Christ, the Lord's Anointed, will triumph.

And in fact, God is using even the sin of his enemies to bring about their end.

And one commentator writes:

“This is one of the ways that God brings good out of evil. The wicked attack the godly, but that is simply God’s way of bringing the wicked out on the battlefield, where He can rout them. This is one aspect of the truth that by doing good we heap coals on the heads of our enemies, a truth that David knew long before Paul. When enemies attack the church, or enemies in the church attack the faithful, it may be that God is bringing them out of the dark recesses and into the open so that they can be more easily, and more dramatically, thrashed.” [Leithart, 233]

For the Lord and his Anointed will have the final victory.

And rooted in that, we can commit ourselves to being people who will accept the Lord’s offer of *hesed* love, rather than those who reject it.

Rooted in that, we can courageously be ambassadors of the Lord’s Anointed, offering and extending his *hesed* to others, regardless of their reaction.

And remembering the power of the Lord’s Anointed, we can have confidence that whatever our current circumstances, he is sovereign, and the victory will be his.

And so:

- ¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
 be warned, O rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
 and rejoice with trembling.
¹² Kiss the Son,
 lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
 for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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