

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
"A Kingdom Divided"

Scripture: 1 Kings 12:1-17, 25-29; Mark 10:42-45

Opening Hymn: A mighty fortress is our God 316

Closing Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you 635

Children's Hymn: Lift up your hearts 526

Choruses: Shout to the North,

Rev. Steve Filyk

October 27, 2019

Reformation Sunday

We have survived yet another election.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

will remain the leader of our nation for another term.

During the past 40-day electoral campaign

There's been a lot of mudslinging from all sides.

It's hard to imagine many people

itching to pursue public service after this election.

Of course, there are some benefits to holding office in Canada.

Just consider the perks of being Prime Minister.

"According to the approved budget of 2018,

the total compensation of the Prime Minister of Canada

is CAD \$347,400... per year...

The Prime Minister is also provided

with two official residences and an office.

The primary residence of the Prime Minister

is at 24 Sussex Drive in Ottawa

while the secondary residence [Harrington Lake]

is a country retreat.

The [RCMP] provide security for the Prime Minister and his family.
An armored car is provided for [his/her] transportation
as well as the shared use of two aircraft...ⁱ

And my favorite perk...

The PM has his own personal chef.

Imagine being able to choose your own daily menu
And not having to worry about the dishes!

Hearing about these perks and privileges

Sometimes makes me wonder:

“Wouldn’t it be great to be Prime Minister?”

Would it be great to have so many people

Attending to my concerns!

PAUSE

Last Sunday we had Will Hogeveen visiting from Young Life.

Will spoke about King David.

Now the Bible is clear that David had his failings.

But he is also remembered for being

‘a man after God’s own heart’.

David put the worship of God

front and center in the United Monarchy.ⁱⁱ

When David died, his son Solomon succeeded him.

Solomon is remembered for extraordinary wisdom.

During Solomon's reign there was a period of
"unprecedented peace, prosperity, and cultural development".ⁱⁱⁱ
Solomon build the First Temple in Jerusalem.

But "Solomon notoriously oppressed his subjects through hard labor
in order to build the temple and [his] royal complex.

He... became a man of excess
and enriched himself from tribute and the products of the land.

[And Solomon wasn't wholeheartedly devoted like his father.
He] built altars for the worship of foreign gods,
notably those worshiped by his foreign wives,
and Solomon participated in this worship."^{iv}

When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam succeeded him,
the northern tribes approached Rehoboam
And asked him to lighten the load of his father.

They had been carrying the huge burden of Solomon's ambitions
For decades.
Now that he had died, they wanted change.

As you heard this morning Rehoboam asked for a few days
to consider their request.

In his deliberations Rehoboam consulted with his father's advisors.
These men had lived through Solomon's excesses
And they encouraged him to listen to the people:

“If today you will be a servant to these people
and serve them and give them a favorable answer,
they will always be your servants.”^v

But Rehoboam didn’t like this advice
And so he asked for the opinions of the younger men
He had grown up with.

These younger men encouraged a very different type of leadership.
They urged him to stop this complaining
With threats and bold promises

[You may not have caught the innuendo,
The coarse jocularity.]

“My little finger [he’s not talking about his finger]
is thicker than my father’s waist.
My father laid on you a heavy yoke;
I will make it even heavier.
My father scourged you with whips;
I will scourge you with scorpions.”^{vi}

Rehoboam prefers this edgy advice.

He’s not going to be serving anyone.
They are supposed to be serving him!

So this is what he tells the people.
If they thought king Solomon was harsh,
boy do they have something coming!

For their part, the northern tribes aren't willing to put up with
Another term with another tyrant.

They walk away from the table.
and decide to follow Jeroboam.

For all his boasting Rehoboam isn't able to cower them
Or compel their service.
His coronation marks the end of the United Monarchy.

PAUSE

It is easy to look down on Rehoboam.
Very few of us would be as bold as him.
Most of us aren't accustomed to manipulate
Through bullying and intimidation.

Yet when it comes to leadership it is easy to adopt his attitude.
"I'm here to be served."

Whether you are the boss or the employee...
Whether you are the child or the parent...
It's easy to adopt that attitude:
"I'm here to be served."

As a church leader who has served a variety of communities,
I know how enticing this sentiment is.

In many places Pastors are shown great honor
out of respect for their position in the community.

I've experience this here at St. Andrew's.

People bringing me produce or taking me out for lunch.

People paying for golf or picking up tasks around the office.

People are very kind to their ministers.

And yet kindness shown can become kindness expected.

What were once gifts easily become entitlements.

I've observed this in myself.

Waiting an extra second to allow the person to say:

"I'll pick up the bill."

Stewing in my office because I'm left to take care of some task

That I feel is way beneath my pay grade.

Sometimes I catch myself acting like Rehoboam.

I think I'm here for others to serve me,

Instead of being here to serve others.

Ever catch yourself thinking or acting this way?

In truth I believe that Rehoboam has many followers.

The Northern Tribes chose not to follow him.

They turned to Jeroboam.

But Jeroboam had the same selfish inclinations as Rehoboam.

He embraced the same self-interested,

self-preserving leadership style.

Jeroboam set up alternate worship sites in the north
So that the people would have to go to Jerusalem to worship.^{vii}

Despite being promised that God would reward his fidelity,
Jeroboam worried that in his peoples' annual trips to Jerusalem
He would lose their loyalty.
So he put his throne before their spiritual wellbeing.

Rehoboam has a surprising number of followers.

It would be decades, even centuries before the people of Israel
Would find someone offering an attractive alternative.

One who told his followers:

“whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...
whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”^{viii}

Jesus Christ wrote the book on servant leadership.
He didn't just teach it, he lived it, in the end
Offering his life as a ransom for many.^{ix}

Thankfully there some leaders today
That emulate Jesus' example.
Many are deliberately trying to walk in his ways.

“Jimmy Carter was once the most powerful person on the planet.
He entertained presidents and kings in the White House.
He controlled nuclear weapons that could destroy the planet.

[But have you ever wondered what Carter spent his time doing
After the presidency?]

[Since that time] Carter [has fought] childhoods diseases,
Negotiate[d] peace, hammer[ed] nails for Habitat [for Humanity,]
[taught] Sunday school classes,
and [mowed] grass and [scrubbed] toilets
at his [small hometown] church.

When Jimmy Carter left the White house,
he could have retired in leisure
or [demanded] lots of money on the speaking circuit.

Instead, he and his wife devoted themselves to service.”^x

[An interesting tidbit: “Carter is the only president in the modern era
to return full-time to the house he lived in before he entered politics
— a two-bedroom rancher assessed at \$167,000,
less than the value of the... Secret Service vehicles
parked outside.”]^{xi}

Now let’s be honest.

None of us will likely ever be the leader of any nation.

But most of us are called to some form of leadership:

Leadership in our families,

Leadership at work,

Leadership in our communities.

So whose leadership will we practise? Christ's or Rehoboam's?
Will we be bullying others or living humbly and peaceably?
Will we be serving others, or will we be serving ourselves?

May we live AND lead intentionally.
May our lives look like Christ's.

Amen.

ⁱ "What Is The Salary Of The Prime Minister Of Canada?" www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-salary-of-the-prime-minister-of-canada.html

ⁱⁱ 1 Samuel 13:14 and 2 Samuel 6

ⁱⁱⁱ "Kingdom of Israel (united monarchy)" *Wikipedia*

^{iv} Sarah Malena "Solomon" bibleodyssey.org/people/main-articles/solomon

^v 1 Kings 12:7 NIV

^{vi} 1 Kings 12:10-11 NIV

^{vii} See 1 Kings 12:25ff

^{viii} Mark 10:43-44 NIV

^{ix} Mark 10:45 NIV

^x Martin Thielen *What's the Least I Can Believe and Still be a Christian?* 104

^{xi} Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan "The un-celebrity president: Jimmy Carter shuns riches, lives modestly in his Georgia hometown" *The Washington Post* August 17, 2018 www.washingtonpost.com/news/national/wp/2018/08/17/feature/the-un-celebrity-president-jimmy-carter-shuns-riches-lives-modestly-in-his-georgia-hometown/