# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“David and Shimei”**

**2 Samuel 16:5-13**

 **August 22, 2021**

When last we were with David in 2 Samuel, we learned of his adultery with Bathsheba and his arranging for the death of her husband, Uriah. We read together how God sent the prophet Nathan to David, telling David the story of a rich man who stole and killed the only lamb of a poor man. David was incensed that a man would do such a thing to another man, and declared that the rich man deserved death. Nathan said, “You are the man.” Upon hearing God’s judgment, David confessed: “I have sinned.” Nathan went on to say that while David was forgiven and would not die for his sin, there would be consequences. “Your child will die.” And that happened. “Your wives will be taken advantage of in public.” And that happened. “Your family will turn against you.” And that happened.

As we pick up David’s story in 2 Samuel 16, his son Absalom has led a rebellion against his father and has usurped the throne. Absalom is reigning as the king and David is on the run. He has fled his palace in Jerusalem, taking with him those who are still loyal to him. He is as low as he has ever been in his life. And in that desperate situation, a man named Shimei comes out of nowhere to add to his misery. Has that ever happened to you? At a time in your life when you felt really down, when some decisions you had made turned out to have terrible consequences, when life just couldn’t seem to get any worse, someone came along and began taking shots at you. How did you respond? I invite you to turn with me to 2 Samuel 16:5-13 and we will see how David responded

As King David came to Bahurim, a man came out of the village cursing them. It was Shimei son of Gera, from the same clan as Saul’s family. He threw stones at the king and the king’s officers and all the mighty warriors who surrounded him. “Get out of here, you murderer, you scoundrel!” he shouted at David. “The Lord is paying you back for all the bloodshed in Saul’s clan. You stole his throne, and now the Lord has given it to your son Absalom. At last you will taste some of your own medicine, for you are a murderer!” “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?” Abishai son of Zeruiah demanded. “Let me go over and cut off his head!” “No!” the king said. “Who asked your opinion, you sons of Zeruiah! If the Lord has told him to curse me, who are you to stop him?” Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “My own son is trying to kill me. Doesn’t this relative of Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to do it. And perhaps the Lord will see that I am being wronged and will bless me because of these curses today.” So David and his men continued down the road, and Shimei kept pace with them on a nearby hillside, cursing and throwing stones and dirt at David.

Shimei was the kind of person who kicks you when you’re down. Hurling stones and dirt at David and his entourage, as well as accusations, Shimei revels in the painful circumstance in which David finds himself. And Abishai, one of David’s military commanders, knows just what to do. “Let me kill him for you, David.” Isn’t that the way we’re tempted to respond when accusations come our way, to somehow get rid of them? We might not desire someone’s death, but we’d love it if someone shut them up. “You don’t have to take that. Stand up for yourself. Fight fire with fire. If he goes after you, you go after him with all you’ve got.” That sounds like what most people would do, doesn’t it?

But, as followers of Jesus Christ, you and I are not to be like most people. And, as a man after God’s own heart, David was not like most people. Refusing to retaliate, David remained calm. Instead of fighting back, David said, “The Lord is in it.” David knew that God was using this man Shimei in his life to teach him an important lesson about sin and forgiveness. Just as God had forgiven David, so God was teaching David that he needed to forgive others, including people like Shimei who would come after him with threats and accusations. How was David able to do that?

David had thick skin and a godly heart. As Christians, we need to develop thick skin, like an elephant’s or a rhinoceros’ skin. Not sensitive skin, so delicate that the slightest pinprick will cause us to want to retaliate, but thick skin that is not easily penetrated. You and I need that kind of skin. Shimeis are out there all around us, doing all they can to prick us Christians, trying to get a rise out of us so we will treat them just like they treat us. And, when we do so, they can point their finger at us and declare: “Look at those Christians. They’re no different than the rest of us. When they get slapped, do they turn the other cheek like Jesus told them to? No, they slap back even harder. What a bunch of hypocrites!” We need thick skin, like David, like Jesus who when brought before his accusers who told lies about him, did not lash out at them but left justice up to his heavenly Father. And then, on the cross, he said about those who hated him, “Forgive them Father.”

A thick skin and a godly heart. A godly heart is a forgiving heart. A godly heart receives an offense and instead of offending in return, chooses to forgive. This is what God does with us, and this is what he desires that we do with one another. Not only because forgiveness mirrors God’s heart, but because lack of forgiveness always leads to further sin. When I have been offended and I chose not to forgive, I will begin to resent the one who offended against me. That resentment will grow into anger, and anger will grow into revenge. Resentment, anger, revenge – all fertile ground for further sin on my part in response to the initial sinful offense directed against me.

Like David, you and I have been forgiven by a loving God who has had more accusations and untruths hurled at him than you and I can even imagine. In fact, I have done some of my own accusing of God in my time, and I’m sure you have also. Yet, with his thick skin, so to speak, and his forgiving heart, he has called us to himself and, through his Son Jesus Christ, he has completely and for all time forgiven us. Like David, may each one of us develop a thick skin and a forgiving heart towards others.