

## Already and Not Yet

### *Psalm 37:1-11; Matthew 5:1-11*

So David sang, more to himself I think than to anyone else, he sang, *“Do not fret yourself over evildoers; be not envious of those who do wrong! For they will fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb.”* One of the paradoxes of loving God and wanting God is that his Spirit in our hearts, his Word in our minds evokes from us a longing for life to make sense, for the good guys to win, for everyone to live happily ever after. But sin in peoples’ hearts, sin inside us and all around us scrambles life so that the beauty and order we find in the presence of God is swept away by the passions and melodrama and chaos and violence that grows from living for and thinking of only ourselves.

Life defies our happy hopes and tidy plans. And few people understood that better than David. David’s first love was a woman named Michal. She was no ordinary woman, she was a princess, the daughter of Israel’s first king, Saul. David and Michal fell in love during the years that David rose from a palace minstrel, to a national war hero, and then to a brilliant commander, a nobleman in Saul’s court. The old king did what he could to keep David and Michal apart. Saul made it as difficult as he could for David to have the princess as a bride. But God blessed David in such a way that he became too prominent to be kept out of the royal family.

So David and Michal were married and Saul was saddled with a son-in-law that he neither loved nor trusted. As David’s star rose and Saul’s fell, the old king suddenly and violently turned against the hero his daughter had married. And as Saul’s secret police appeared in the streets around David’s house, it was Michal who deceived and delayed them so that David could escape alive. She paid a bitter price for this, as the old king, furious with David and Michal both, accused his own daughter of treason and forced her into a marriage with a loyal courtesan to rehabilitate her from David’s influence. So David went out of her life during all the years Saul hunted him as a traitor.

So the mad king branded an innocent man a traitor, and in the same moment took away the woman who had first lit up David’s heart, leaving David disgraced and bereft, roaming Israel’s desert regions with a growing band of men who had also fallen afoul of the old king’s madness. And in Psalm 37, David picks up his lyre on some desert hilltop and sings to himself, *“Do not fret yourself over evildoers; be not envious of those who do wrong!...Trust in the LORD and do good, dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.”* The point being that God had left David with few other options.

Saul still held Israel’s throne and commanded Israel’s army, and Michal was in Saul’s camp in another man’s house. For years, David would live in the wilds only one step ahead of the hunting

parties Saul sent after him. And the question I find myself asking is “How bitter would it make me? How much would I rage and storm against the path God had chosen for me to take?” No wonder David sings to himself, “*Don’t fret...don’t be envious!*” For what goes beyond our reach, for what irretrievably breaks our heart, David is teaching us to ground ourselves in life’s most essential truth.

God is sovereign, and God is good. So he sings to himself, “*Trust in the LORD and do good, dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, wait on him and he will do it!*” And God did! After years of twisting and turning and fight to stay beyond Saul’s reach, the old king went down, and David was made Israel’s king, only to spend years more fighting a civil war against one of Saul’s sons. He really had to wait on God before the wrongs he suffered could begin to sort out for right.

And what do you think was the first thing he did once Saul’s family was beaten and the throne was all his. He sent for Michal to come back and be his wife again. So she was taken from a weeping husband who had loved her for years and returned to a new, different royal court, ruled by David, a man who had become a stranger to her. And how do you think that worked? Life with a man who had vanquished her own father and brothers, who would rule the land entirely differently than anything she knew or understood or cared about.

David wanted her and had her, but he had lost her heart and he would never regain it. After a dramatic fight, in which David was both right and desperately flawed, Michal was sent to live in some far corner of the palace where she was never heard from again. David had trusted God for so much, and had seen God do so much for him. And yet he learned that, in this life, we are never made, never there, until God has taught us all we need to learn to be at home in heaven. So he sang, “*Commit your way to the LORD, and wait patiently for him; trust in him and he will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the dawn, and your justice as the noonday.*”

The point being that the moment we trust Christ and give our lives to God is “*dawn*” for us. We depend on him and he grants us “*righteousness*” as a gift. So from the get go with God, we are already righteous, but we are also not yet righteous. Our actually being righteous, our actually living out the honesty and faithfulness and goodness God is teaching us waits for “*noonday*”, which in the New Testament is the coming of Christ in glory to judge sinners and to bring his own to heaven.

So between dawn and noon day, Jesus taught that we are “*blessed*” if we learn how “*poor in spirit*” we really are, “*blessed*” if we allow sin and injustice to bring us to tears, “*blessed*” if we don’t take wrath and justice into our hands but instead learn to be “*meek*”. So from his desert hilltop David sings to us “*Cease from anger ...forsake wrath! It only leads to evil. For evildoers*

*will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD will inherit the land...the meek will inherit the earth and delight themselves in abundant peace.”*