

Introduction

1. David and his men had recently put down the rebellion of Absalom
2. It was time to reunite the country (reference 19:11-15)
3. However, it wouldn't be an easy task as we learn in our passage today
 - a. There are those who are intent on division and disharmony
 - b. There are those who are insubordinate and self-willed
 - c. However, there are those who remain faithful

A. There will always be those among us who cause division and disharmony (19:40-20:2)

1. Before David could even make it back to Jerusalem there was disharmony (READ 19:40-43):
 - a. The people of Israel (northern 10 tribes) became upset because the people of Judah had transported David and his family across the Jordan with only half of the people of Israel
 - b. Israel accused Judah of two things:
 - 1) The first was "**stealing**" David away: the implication here is that Judah had covertly or secretly whisked David across the Jordan and deliberately excluded much of Israel in the process, possibly in an attempt to secure David's favor

Joking about how all that David Baeten does makes him Mom's favorite son

- 2) The second was treating the northern tribes with contempt: hiphil stem suggests the actions of Judah caused Israel to become accursed or of little worth to David
 - c. Judah defended their actions by suggesting they had a position of privilege with David—he was their relative, but also denied they did nothing wrong (42)
 - d. Israel responded by citing their numerical superiority (ten tribes to Judah's two) and ultimately with the "but it was our idea" defense (43)
2. The passage now mentioned one particular man who took advantage of the division and disharmony; his name was Sheba (READ 20:1-2):
 - a. He was a Benjamite which normally means he would have been part of Judah like David, but he lived in and aligned himself with Israel (20:21)
 - b. He was a soldier and served in Israel's army (suggested by blowing the trumpet and his ability to persuade the rest of the Israel army to leave with him)
 - c. Most importantly, he is referred to as a "**worthless fellow**" (lit. "a man of worthlessness"):
 - 1) The word for worthless here, belial, occurs 27 times in the OT and once in the NT
 - 2) Outside the OT belial is another name for Satan (as Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians 6:15)
 - 3) It's generally translated as worthless or wicked, even scoundrel or troublemaker
 - 4) We might think of an American idiom: someone who is "good for nothing"
 - d. We see his worthlessness and status as a trouble maker on full display here:
 - 1) He takes advantage of the division and disharmony between Judah and Israel
 - 2) He sounds his trumpet which in this context is a call to retreat

- 3) He claims that David's loyalty laid only with Judah: **"We have no portion in David, nor do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse"** (1b) –in other words, Sheba was claiming that as king, David would only have the interests of Judah in mind, not Israel (see also 1 Kings 12:16)
 - 4) He apparently had some clout (possibly a high-ranking military commander) because he was able to convince all of Israel to abandon David and retreat to their tents/homes, essentially re-dividing Israel and Judah
 - 5) Lest we think this was just an example of someone taking their ball and going home, it was an attack on David and an attempt to usurp his role as king (20:21)
3. Now that Absalom had been defeated, it should have been a time of rejoicing and celebration that brought God's people back together, but instead it led to disharmony and division over petty emotions and selfish desires:
- a. This reminds me a bit of what we see in the church at Corinth:
 - 1) They fought over their favorite Apostles (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) which lead to jealousy and strife (3:3)
 - 2) They were suing one another (6:1-7)
 - 3) They were taking advantage of one another by abusing their liberty (chapter 8) and abusing the love feast (chapter 11)
 - 4) They were misusing their spiritual gifts and using them for their own personal benefit (chapters 12-14)
 - 5) All of this led to a highly dysfunctional and disjointed church
 - b. This is why the Bible warns us about causing divisions and calls on us to strive for unity:
 - 1) Romans 16:17-18
 - 2) Titus 3:9-11
 - 3) Ephesians 4:3-6
 - 4) Colossians 3:12-15

B. There will always be those among us who are insubordinate and have their own agenda (20:4-13)

1. David recognized the threat that Sheba posed, so he called on Amasa, the commander of his army, to ready the troops and pursue Sheba before he could escape (READ 20:4)
2. When Amasa takes too long, David assigns the task to Abishai, the brother of Joab his former commander (READ 20:5-6):
 - a. David had apparently lost faith in Joab—maybe because of Joab's confrontation after Absalom's death, or maybe because he suspected Joab's role in killing Absalom
 - b. So, David replaced Joab as commander with his nephew Amasa who had commanded Absalom's army during the rebellion (19:13)
3. This apparently didn't sit well with Joab because as we learn in our passage today he murdered Amasa and essentially takes over the campaign to pursue Sheba (READ 20:7-12)
4. Joab ultimately succeeds when Sheba is killed and once again is made commander over all of the army (READ 20:13-26)
5. The problem with Joab:

- a. Joab was certainly a mighty soldier, excellent military commander, and did much good for David and Israel (commanding victories over a number of their enemies)
 - b. However, there was a problem: he was a wicked man, self-willed, constantly ignored the will of King David, and always seemed to have his own agenda—in a word he was insubordinate (defied or rejected authority):
 - 1) He murdered Abner out of revenge against David’s wishes, and did so after David and Abner had come to a peace agreement (2 Samuel 2:13-3:21; 3:27)
 - 2) He murdered David’s son Absalom knowing it violated David’s direct order
 - 3) In our passage today he commits murder again when he kills Amasa, the one David had assigned to lead his army
 - 4) We see one more such incident when Joab directly opposed David’s will regarding Solomon becoming king, and aligned himself with David’s other son, Adonijah who attempted to usurp the throne from Solomon (1 Kings 1:5-7)
 - c. Joab ultimately paid the price for such insubordination and disloyalty (see 1 Kings 2:5-6; 28-35)
6. Do you think we ever see this sort of thing in the Church?
- a. The Bible warns us about leaders who are self-willed and insubordinate:
 - 1) Titus 1:7: **“For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed...”**
 - 2) Titus 1:10-11: **“For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.”**
 - 3) Paul also wrote of such men, **“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”**
 - 4) This is the direct opposite of what we see modeled in Jesus Christ who was perfectly obedient to His father, and well as what we see in the Apostles like Paul and Peter
 - b. The Bible also warns us as believers against insubordination by calling on us to develop a submissive spirit—first and foremost to God (James 4:7), then to leadership within the local church (Hebrews 13:17), to governing authorities (1 Peter 2:12-14), and ultimately to one another (Ephesians 5:21)

**So, there will always be those who seek to cause division and disharmony among God’s people, and there will always be those who are insubordinate and self-willed with their own agenda, but there’s good news...

C. There will always be those among us who remain faithful to Him (20:13-22)

- 1. We see two instances of that here in our passage today:
 - a. The first are the men (soldiers) of Judah (20:2b): **“but the men of Judah remained steadfast to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem”**
 - b. The second is an unnamed woman from the city of Abel Beth-maacah:
 - 1) Sheba takes refuge in a city named Abel Beth-maacah and Joab prepares to attack the city (READ 20:13-15)
 - 2) But then a **“wise woman”** appears and saves the city from Joab (READ 20:16-21):

- a) She recounts the city's heritage as a place of peace, wise counsel, and faithfulness to the Lord (including herself personally, **"I am of those who are..."**)
 - b) She calls out Joab for seeking to destroy the city and **"swallow up the inheritance of the LORD"**
 - c) She ultimately convinces the inhabitants of the city to execute Sheba (in accordance with the Law) and throw his head over the wall
 - d) Did you notice that in all of our passage today, this woman is the only one to mention the Lord?
2. These two examples of faithfulness—Judah's faithfulness to David and the woman's faithfulness to the Lord—stand in stark contrast to what we see in the men of Israel who abandoned David, and Joab who was insubordinate and generally more interested in his own agenda than David's (or God's)
 3. One of the things the LORD reminded Israel of over and over in the OT is that in spite of the rampant unfaithfulness, there would always be a remnant that would remain faithful to Him—in fact, when Paul was referring to Israel in Romans 11, he states that even now there is a remnant of Jews who have remained faithful to Him

Conclusion

1. This leads me to some concluding thoughts
2. One is that in spite of all the unfaithfulness that we saw in Israel God still accomplished His purpose and plan, and will ultimately fulfill those plans for Israel
3. The second thought is that there will always be conflict within the Church, and within local churches, and there will always be those who cause it because they are more interested in their own agenda than God's agenda
4. The third thought is that in spite of this—growing unfaithfulness, rebellious, self-willed leaders with their own agendas, false teaching, etc.—God is accomplishing and will continue to accomplish His purpose and plan
5. One commentator said it this way: **"Sheba's defeat should give us hope—despite the conflict and treachery God's kingdom through David was preserved. So we can have hope that God's kingdom through David's greater Son, Jesus Christ, will persevere as well in spite of the threats it faces."**
6. The question for us, are we the ones causing conflict or are we the ones who seek unity and peace?