

The only Son from Heaven - but not the only son

V - My Son Absalom

II Samuel 15:2-6, 10-14, 23,30-31a, 18:6-10, 14; 19:5-8

So easily we forgive those we love, and those we like. Or is it really *forgiving* we do when we ignore or excuse the most awful behaviour from *some* people, because we love them, or like them, and allow them to inflict whatever wrong they feel like inflicting upon others?

Most certainly Joab was right in rebuking David for his behaviour at the death of his rebellious son.

Not that David was to be blamed for loving his rebellious son, or for grieving for his death. But it was wrong of him to allow his own personal grief to overshadow his obligations to the people God had entrusted to his care, what he owed to his faithful servants, and to the victims of the evil his beloved son had done.

It was the Roman Emperor Augustus who invented the goddess *Iustitia*, the inspiration for the figure *Lady Justice*, used even today to represent the concept of *the rule of law*. And in spite of its heathen origins, it is right that the rule of law is portrayed as *blindfolded*. For unless justice, in determining what is right and wrong, is blind to anything other than facts and merits, represented by the scales held by Lady Justice, it is not justice at all.

When judgements are made solely based on the personal preferences of judges, or that of mobs, based on which of the parties involved they like or dislike, or which of the parties is *one of their own*, or their preferred *kind* of person, as is so often the case in our day and age, rather than on the law, and the facts and merits of the case, in so far as they can be established, it is an evil thing. It was that in the days of racist white juries and judges and lynch mobs; and it is that in this day and age of identity politics, progressive judges basing rulings on personal preferences, lynch mobs ruling on the internet, and murderous mobs ruling in the streets.

Absalom had done evil, and the evil he had done called for punishment; more importantly, he was *in the process* of doing evil, and it would have been wrong to allow him to continue what he was doing. Those who had thwarted him had proven themselves faithful servants in doing so, faithful servants to the king, and faithful servants to God. And although it was unfortunate that Absalom had died in the process, it was still wrong not to acknowledge his wrongdoing, and not to acknowledge that the king's servants had done right.

Absalom had sinned against the Commandment of God: *Honour your father and your mother!*; well, he had sinned also against the prohibition against gossip and other evil speech, as well as against the prohibition against coveting that which belongs to somebody else, and enticing others away from doing their duty. But most significantly, he had rebelled, not only against his father, but against his rightful ruler, which also is sin against the Fourth Commandment. And this was a wrong that had to be made right. As king, appointed by God, David had no right to put up with it. For as king, entrusted with authority by God, he had a duty not only to protect his people from *potential* wrong, but also to punish past wrongdoing to *carry out the wrath of God upon the wrongdoer*, as the holy Apostle Paul writes it.

Now, no one can blame David for grieving for his rebellious son. What parent would not? David had known Absalom as a child. How could he not grieve for what his son had become, as well as for the frightful fate that had befallen him, to die in such shame, hanging helpless from a tree?

Justice being blindfolded does not mean that it is necessarily blind to the circumstances that cause evildoers to do evil. This, also, is represented by the scales held by Lady Justice.

And David had himself wronged his son, and this was probably part of what had caused his son to turn against him. It is one of the many examples in Holy Scripture of how polygamy leads to rivalry and conflict. Absalom's sister Tamar had been raped by their half-brother Amnon. And although David had been angry, he had done nothing about it. It had been up to Absalom alone to avenge his sister. He had kept silent for years, taking the time to create confidence and ease, And then he had trapped and killed not only Amnon, but also his other half-brothers. He really does seem in general to have had a talent for scheming.

Most likely, in his grief for his rebellious son, David was plagued also by guilt for having failed him.

Justice being blindfolded does not necessarily mean, either, that justice must be without *mercy*; as the justice of the mindless mob usually is, which sees its victim, not as a human being, but only as an object of hatred.

David's grief for his son reflects the love of God for sinners; as does the grief of any parent at the misfortune of a child, and the instinct of any decent human being to have compassion when seeing someone suffer; anyone who has not been turned into a mindless monster, that is, blinded by hatred and rage, as members of the mindless mob allow themselves to be.

It reflects the grief of God for all His beloved, made for His goodness to share all glory with Him, for what we have become, and the evil we do, and the fate that has become ours, of eternal death and damnation. *O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!*

David's grief also reflects that of God for His most Beloved, who did exactly that, die in the stead of sinners. The Son of God, Himself God from eternity, had Himself baptised with sinners to take our sin upon Himself as His own and bear it for us, and the judgement of God against it, and die upon a tree, crucified and cursed for us, hung up high toward Heaven, clothed in the sin of all sinners, presented to God for His judgement and judged for it, into the fullness of death, the righteous wrath of God against all wrong and all wrongdoing, His holy hatred of evil. And this He did in our stead, on our behalf, to rescue us from the eternal death and damnation we have earned by our sin, ungodliness and unbelief and impurity and evil, in our hearts and minds, and in our lives.

And although the Father grieved at the sufferings of His beloved Son, He did condemn His Beloved and leave Him to suffer for sinners, for love of us, for our salvation. Such is His love for us that He would pay this terrible price for our salvation. And a terrible price it was, to have His beloved Son suffer and die hanging from a tree, and not a rebellious son, either, rather, He who always loved the Father with that full and complete love which always was in God, between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. *O my Son, my Son, my Son!*

Justice is *blindfolded*, but not *blind*; it is a deliberate position justice takes when it sees only the facts for facts, so as to judge rightly and rightfully.

The justice of God is not blind, either. It is not blind to suffering, not even to the suffering of sinners; nor is it without compassion or mercy. But justice it is; the evil that sin is calls and cries out for judgement. Anyone who has ever been severely wronged will understand this. Wrong must be made right; that is justice. And God is just.

But God is grieved at the sufferings of His children, sinful as we are. He suffers with us. And He sent His Son to bear the fullness of suffering for us, His righteous judgement against all wrong. As He has had His holy Apostle Paul write it, *He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an atonement for sin, and thus He did condemn sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.*

Or, as the Apostle also writes it elsewhere, *Him who know of no sin God made to be sin for us in order that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. And yet elsewhere: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written: "Cursed is anyone who is hanged upon a tree".*

With the sufferings and death of the Son, God has Himself paid the price and penalty due for all sin. He has Himself borne His own judgement for all evil done against Himself.

His goodness is goodness that is just, and not blind to evil. He does not ignore the evil others do to you; but He also does not ignore the evil you do to others, nor the evil we all do to *Him*. Rather, He has taken it upon Himself to make all wrongs right. Justice has been executed on all wrong. God has judged and condemned sin in the flesh. And He has borne all judgement and condemnation Himself.

O my son Absalom, David cried out in his helplessness, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!

The love of God has proven itself to be anything but helpless, though. His goodness and hatred of evil has outdone evil, and *undone* it, rather than ignored and excused it, which justice could not allow, as that would not be justice.

Nor is the love of God blind. It is not that He is ignorant of our sin. At the most, one could say, He *blindfolds* Himself to it: He deliberately sets something else before His eyes, what the Son has done for us; which actually means that He *sees all*; He *sees the whole truth*. He *sees* our sin taken away from us so that it is no longer ours; He *sees* our sin dealt with and done away with; He *sees* in us the righteousness of the Son, His perfect goodness and innocence, which He declares and makes to be our own, and with which He really *makes* us righteous, pure and perfect in His sight, bright and beautiful and beloved, as His children and heirs to His heavenly Kingdom and His eternal life. And in ourselves and in our hearts and minds He *sees* not ungodliness and unbelief and impurity, but rather the faith He Himself works in us, with His Word of salvation, as He gives His own Spirit to us, His own life, to live in us.

All this He does, not ignoring and excusing evil; evil has received its due reward, as all real righteousness and right demands. In this, the goodness of God is shown revealed in its fullness, that it really *is* goodness rather than accommodation of evil. His goodness has outdone evil, at the greatest cost to Himself. So good is God, and just.

Blessed is He that comes, in the name of the Lord. *Amen.*