

A Tested Heart
Sermon for Sunday 11th July 2021
Preacher: Rev Hamish Galloway
Text: 1 Chronicles 29

Introduction

I listen to the radio station Magic. This week they profiled an old favourite song of mine:

Drop Kick me Jesus, through the goal posts of life,
 End over end, neither left nor the right
 Straight through the heart of them righteous uprights
 Dropkick me Jesus through the goalpost of life!

Is that how we want to live life? To be remembered as someone who lived life absolutely on target? As we come to the end of King David's life how did he measure up in this regard. Our reading today finds David dying. People are gathering around. He looks back on his life, which seems to have gone so quickly. At one level it has been a long and full life; he is 70 years old and been king for forty years. Yet, in verse 15, he acknowledges how fleeting life is: we occupy this earth like 'foreigners and strangers', implying that we are just passing through. Our days on earth are 'like a shadow', fleeting and insubstantial!

So the question is what do we make of his fleeting life – how do we remember him?

1 Chronicles remembers him like this:

He ruled for 40 years, he died at a good old age having enjoyed long life, wealth and honour, and his son Solomon succeeded him (v26-28)

Historians remember him as Israel's greatest king! I decided to test that with a report card on his achievements:

Category: Outward Success	
Work Life	State of the Nation: David oversaw a time of expansion, prosperity and peace for Israel and Judah. He established Jerusalem as capital and built a beautiful palace. A+
Culture	David was an outstanding supporter and exponent of poetry and song. A+
Family Life	This was David's Achilles Heel. Failure in his department dogs him from earliest exclusion from the line-up to select a new king, to the taunting of his older brothers when he turned up to fight Goliath, to his wife Michah's disgust when he danced for the Ark, to the sexual abuse between his children and the subsequent rebellion against him led by his favoured son Absalom. Even as he lay dying, one of his sons made an illegitimate grab for the kingship. D-
Morality	One incident dominates David's legacy here – adultery, lies and murder perpetuated in the incident with Bathsheba and Uriah. This blotted an otherwise admirable display of character in most situations he faced. C-
Goals	As displayed by this report card, David did achieve many goals of good kingship. However, he had a driving goal to build a temple in Jerusalem, 'a

	place for God.’ The civil war with Absalom distracted focus, time and money from the goal – he did not achieve it!	C
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A mixed report card actually. Some amazing success and some significant failures and disappointment.

A pause to comment on failures:

His dysfunctional family life, moral slips and unmet goals give David a fragile human dimension that makes him accessible to us frail humans! He was far from perfect, yet he maintained a living a sustaining relationship with God though all the highs and lows of life.

One commentator puts it this way:

‘This is a theological story of God keeping covenant through the turbulent uncertainties of human sin’ it’s flourishingly brilliant in the way it connects with our human condition.’

And David was wise enough to apply a different test to know how well he had lived:

The Heart Test

For King David, the test was a heart test! His story begins and ends with a heart test. Remember when he was chosen as just a boy, he passed the selection test because he had a good heart. When looking at the different contenders God did not look to outward appearances but to the inner qualities of the heart. David passed that test because he was seen to be a ‘man after God’s own heart.’¹

Then, at the end of his life, David acknowledges that God’s test of a life is also a heart test:

I know, my God, that you test the heart (1 Chronicles 29:17)

Have you ever had a heart test? I did one once. I got on the tread mill and ran for it with all sorts of cords attached to me, connecting to a machine testing my heart’s response to exercise.

Or have you ever had a fit-bit type of watch that monitors the heartbeat? I was wearing one when I had my recent bike accident and was interested to see that there really was no change of heart rate at the time of the accident!

The Heart Test Report Card

So, how did David go with his heart test?

There were many pass marks for David. Some of them we have assessed in previous weeks. His report card might look like this:

Category: The Heart Test (inner life)	
Humble Heart	David excelled in this area. He was prepared to accept fault when he failed. At the end of his life, when struggling, he turned to focus off himself and towards God. Indeed, his prayer of praise and thanksgiving in 1 Chronicles is not in praise of my great reign, but rather acknowledging everything he has comes from God. A
A Brave Heart	No doubt. Outstanding evidence form early days protecting his sheep from lions and bears. Gold standard achieved with Goliath and continued to demonstrate great courage as a fugitive from the angry King Saul, and as a soldier and king. A+

¹ Acts 13:22, 1 Samuel 13:14

A Soft Heart	David wore his heart on his sleeve. He was emotionally available to God and in time as lament and of praise. He is a great example for all people of emotionally healthy wellbeing. A+
Wholehearted	David's uninhibited and exuberant dance before the Ark of the Covenant was typical of his embracing of all life had to offer. A

Conclusion:

As we approach the end we must not only look back, but also forward.

How did David do here? Partly this was about accepting he had not achieved all he wanted, particularly obvious is the lack of a temple.

He looks forward to the next generation with a heartfelt desire to empower them to complete what he couldn't!

Succession Planning	<p>He handed over well to Solomon! Of all the sons, he knew he was the right one ✓</p> <p>He inspired confidence in him and bequeathed him the resources to rule well and, most importantly, built the longed for temple. After the hiccups with previous sons and their grabs for power, he does well here.</p> <p>He bequeaths his wealth to Solomon to build the temple, but also his legacy of good kingship - a legacy of both example and a prosperous, secure kingdom. And he prayed for Solomon 'to have a whole-hearted devotion to God' – that he would, indeed, be a chip off the old block!</p> <p>A ✓</p>
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What about you and me? There is an old X Box Advert that shows a person propelled from his mother's womb, out the window of the hospital on an upward trajectory, aging as he speeds upwards and then downwards landing in the grave. The screen then goes black and the words appear – Life is Short, Play Hard!

David realized that as he lay dying and people around him summed up his life in terms of failure and success.

May this give us pause to think about our life and particularly the state of our heart before God!