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Lent Day 5: The Lion

3-4 minutes

Genesis 49:8-12 (ESV)

*Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.
Judah is a lion's cub;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?
The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
Binding his foal to the vine
and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
he has washed his garments in wine
and his vesture in the blood of grapes.
His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth whiter than milk.*

On his deathbed Jacob prophesied the future of each of his twelve children, foreseeing their future ascendancy or demise, prosperity or impoverishment. For some, the future would be full of violence

and heartache. But for others, theirs would be a future of prominence and victory.

For Judah, the fourth among Jacob's sons, his was a future of distinction. He would be held in esteem by his brothers (v. 8, "your brothers shall praise you") and receive tribute from all nations (v. 10, "to him shall be the obedience of the peoples"). His reign would be enduring and unchallenged (v. 10, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah") and a time of overwhelming abundance. Because grapevines require attention and care, wine was a luxury for nomadic people in the ancient world. Yet under the reign of Judah, there would be such an abundance of vines that one could tie his donkey to one without fear that it would be damaged, wash his garments in wine without depleting the supply, and even drink until his eyes took on the color of wine itself (vv. 11-12). Judah's reign would be a glorious one indeed and it is no wonder that Judah himself would be called a lion (v. 9).

In Revelation 5, John has a vision of the enthroned Lion of Judah, and yet this vision is juxtaposed with a Lamb who was slain. Why? The Gospels show us that Jesus demonstrates his greatest power through weakness, his lordship through service, and his sovereign reign through self-sacrifice. In other words, Jesus was slain because he was the Lion and enthroned because he is the Lamb. In your moments of brokenness, heartache and hardship, do you see that Jesus Christ experienced brokenness for you so that you might experience the abundance of his reign over your life?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we are amazed that you reign not through a demonstration of power, but of service; not through exaltation, but

humiliation; not through might, but sacrifice. Help me to see that you were the Lion who was slain like a lamb, so that in my humiliation I might experience your exaltation. In Christ's Name, Amen.

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