

**South Lansing Christian Church**  
**April 29, 2018**  
**Fierce**  
**The Wise Woman of Tekoa**

**NOTE: This sermon was not delivered as planned at SLCC. Instead, the entire church took part in I Love My City, an effort of several churches in Lansing to bless our community. The following are the notes of the sermon I wrote before we finalized our Love My City plans.**

I grew up in a church where the New Testament was valued more than the Old Testament. The Bible that we read has two major divisions. The Old Testament tells the history of God making a covenant with Abraham to be his God and to create from Abraham's offspring a people – the Jews – whom God would love. The New Testament details the coming of Jesus as Abraham's descendent and God's Son, and what that Jesus did to reconcile the world to God.

We were a New Testament church, and I can understand why. Churches of Christ and Christian Churches are firmly rooted in the New Testament. We're part of a group of churches sometimes called The Restoration Movement. The movement began in the 1800s with the purpose of unifying Christians in different denominations. The idea was to unite Christians from all different faith backgrounds around the restored practices of the ancient church.

That being the case, the church of my youth spent most of its time studying and imitating the New Testament. South Lansing Christian Church comes from the same faith tradition. We, too, are a "New Testament church" but we try to be intentional about making sure we read and apply the entire Bible. Paul – the most prolific author in the New Testament – reminds us how important the Old Testament is:

*Romans 15:4*

*"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope"*

Hope is what we're doing as we participate in I Love My City. Together we helped:

- Landscape public schools
- Clean up city parks
- Provide clothing for people who need it
- Encourage college students heading into Finals' Week
- Wash windows at a retirement center
- Bless our neighbors in Marscot Park

Those are the project, but the purpose is to provide hope. If you're like me, the stories we've looked at these past few weeks – stories of Fierce women like Jochabed and Deborah and Jael and Abigail – have inspired you and given you hope! As we conclude the series I want to take just a few moments to tell you about another Fierce woman. Like many of us, she never made a name for herself. We only know where she was from and that she was wise.

Here's the situation: David is King of Israel, but his life is far from perfect. He has multiple wives and children from each. Naturally, the mothers want their sons to succeed David as King, so there is plenty of rivalry in the palace. One of David's sons, Absalom murdered his half-brother, Amnon. The motive is a story for another day but suffice it to say that some would call it a justifiable homicide. Still, as chief law enforcement officer, King David banished Absalom from Jerusalem. With one son dead and another banished, the line of succession to the throne was shaky. With king David approaching sixty years old, Absalom's absence became an issue. One which Joab, the commander in chief of David's army, wanted to solve. So, Joab devised a plan to reconcile the two men:

*2 Samuel 14:1-3 (NIV)*

*Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom. <sup>2</sup>So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there. He said to her, "Pretend you are in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes, and don't use any cosmetic lotions. Act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead. <sup>3</sup>Then go to the king and speak these words to him." And Joab put the words in her mouth.*

Tekoa was a little town about ten miles south of Jerusalem, where David's palace was located. It was famous in Israel as the ancestral home of the prophet Amos. For Joab's plan to work he needed someone David wouldn't recognize. The woman he chose had to be convincing, but still unknown to David. The woman he chose was the actress, but Joab wrote the script:

*2 Samuel 14:4-11 (NIV)*

*When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell with her face to the ground to pay him honor, and she said, "Help me, Your Majesty!"*

*<sup>5</sup>The king asked her, "What is troubling you?"*

*She said, "I am a widow; my husband is dead. <sup>6</sup>I your servant had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field, and no one was there to separate them. One struck the other and killed him. <sup>7</sup>Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant; they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother down, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed; then we will get rid of the heir as well.' They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth."*

*<sup>8</sup>The king said to the woman, "Go home, and I will issue an order in your behalf."*

*<sup>9</sup>But the woman from Tekoa said to him, "Let my lord the king pardon me and my family, and let the king and his throne be without guilt."*

*<sup>10</sup>The king replied, "If anyone says anything to you, bring them to me, and they will not bother you again."*

*<sup>11</sup>She said, "Then let the king invoke the Lord his God to prevent the avenger of blood from adding to the destruction, so that my son will not be destroyed."*

*"As surely as the Lord lives," he said, "not one hair of your son's head will fall to the ground."*

The woman set David up perfectly. Just as Joab expected, David was merciful toward the woman's son. The woman handed David the brush and David painted himself into a corner.

*2 Samuel 14:12-13 (NIV)*

*Then the woman said, "Let your servant speak a word to my lord the king."*

*"Speak," he replied.*

*<sup>13</sup>The woman said, "Why then have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, for the king has not brought back his banished son?"*

I wish we had video. I would like to see David's face when he realized what was happening. If David was willing to pardon a man he never met and didn't know, why wouldn't he do so for the presumptive heir to the Kingdom? On the one hand, David might have felt manipulated, but on the other, he was finally able to see the necessary justification for pardoning Absalom.

But then the wise woman of Tekoa said something that we all need to hear. It is something that all of us need to hear. It is appropriate for days like I Love My City when we serve our community, and it is appropriate for *every day* as we act as ambassadors for Jesus:

*2 Samuel 14:14 (NIV)*

*Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires; rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him.*

There is a lot of theology in this one verse. It starts with understanding perfection. The chief problem with sin is that it separates you from God. God is perfect and cannot accept imperfection. Rather than turn his back on his wayward children, God provided a way for them to be reconciled to himself. What this wise woman was saying is: when your time is up, your time is up. But the separation of death is not what God intended. It is not what God desires. What God desires is for you and me to be with him forever.

God does not turn his back on his children. He is always looking for a path to reconciliation. ***There is nothing you have done or could do that puts you beyond the love of Jesus.*** I love that. It is a message you need to hear, and a message the world needs you to share.