

5 PENTECOST
JUNE 18/19, 2016

David and Bathsheba

Psalm 51:1-17; Luke 23:39-43

FIRST, MARSHALL
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2 Samuel 11:26-12:9, 13

You will know the truth and the truth will set you free

Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Please look at the screens and recite with me the first 5 steps of A.A.

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (sin) – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

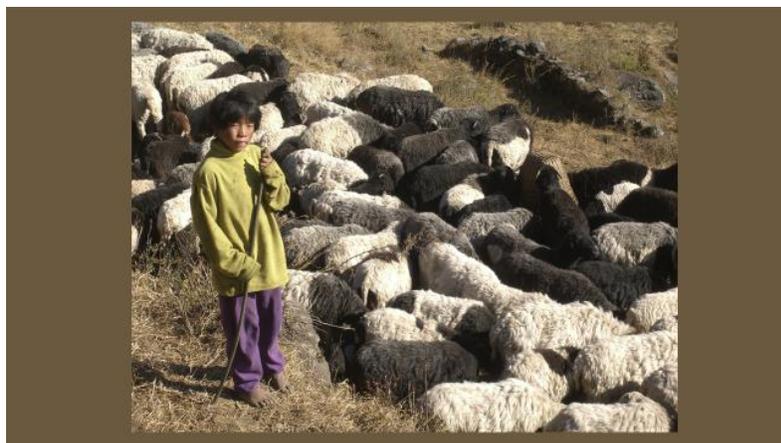
Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Today I'll focus on Steps 4 & 5, although the story of David will lead us to step 5 first.

David is one of the greatest characters in the story of our faith:

- the boy who killed the giant warrior Goliath
- the lowly shepherd who became the country's greatest king
- the saint who proved to be a sinner
- the child of God who became a forefather of
God's only beloved Son
- the most mentioned person in the bible



I want to start this story about David's greatest trial by going back to the beginning, for it's there that we'll find the seed, the kernel, the nugget of truth that will help him recover from his fall from guilt to grace.

God sends the **prophet Samuel** to Bethlehem (I Samuel 16), to find the **new** king that God wants sitting on the throne of Israel. In a format that was **probably** the idea behind the hit t.v. shows ***The Bachelor*** or ***The Bachelorette***, Samuel is sent to the home of Jesse where God intends to choose one of his sons to be anointed king.

Seven of them line up to greet the prophet and hope that they're the one selected. The oldest, of course, goes first, and apparently he was the quintessential man's man for Samuel is sure that **this** is the one whom God wants to be king. But the Lord says to the prophet,

“Do not look on his **appearance**, or on the **height** of his **stature**,
because **I** have rejected **him**;
for the Lord does **not** see as **mortals** see;
they look on the *outward appearance*,
but *the Lord looks on the heart*” (I Samuel 16:7)



All seven of those sons are rejected by God, so Samuel finally asks Jesse, “Do you have any other boys?” So they finally send for David, the youngest, who’s out tending the sheep, and **immediately** God says to Samuel, “***Rise and anoint him; for **this** is the one***” that I choose.

The Lord looks on the heart...

What would be your expectations for this King, who was hand-picked by God because of the condition of his heart?

If you're like me, you'd expect a certain **Mary Poppins** sort of excellence, right? She who is *practically perfect in every way*...

Yet, though David was **very** good at **many** things, he was **also absolutely human** – and **demonstrated** the brokenness of sin in his life with an **appalling** callousness and cruelty....

The story is told in 2nd Samuel 11. Though David's army is at war, he decides to stay home and just happens to notice a beautiful woman bathing on the roof of a nearby house. Even though she's married to Uriah, one of his best generals, still he orders her to his bedroom...

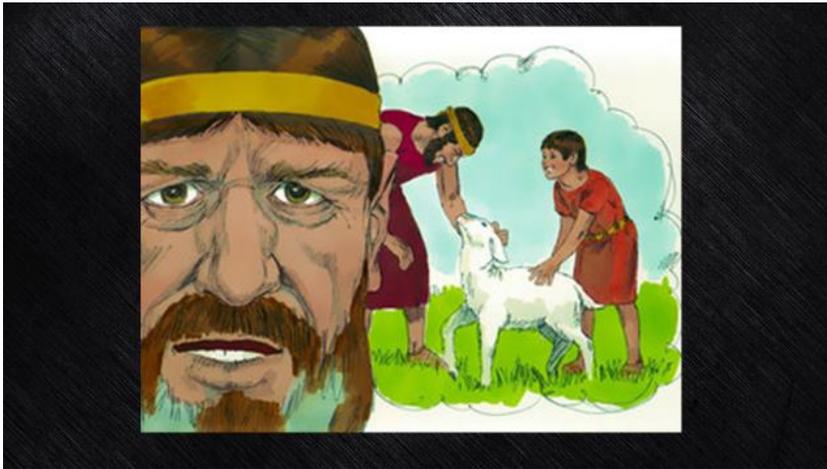
And, as things can happen when sex is part of the equation, the king soon receives word that Bathsheba is pregnant. Since it happened while her husband is away fighting the king's battle, it's no mystery who the father is. To make matters worse, David tries to hide his sin.

He orders Uriah home from the front, supposedly to discuss the war. David hopes that Uriah will sleep with his wife, and then believe that the *child-to-be* is his. Unfortunately for the **king**, Uriah is **also** a man of heart – and he **refuses** to sleep in the comfort of his home while his **men** are sleeping on the hard ground of the **battlefield**.

Unable to break his general's resolve, David decides that the only safe way to silence this good man...is to **kill him**.

He sends Uriah back to the front with a sealed message for his commanding officer. The order states that Uriah must die in battle.

How ironic is that? David trusts that Uriah, a man of honor, will not read the order for his own execution. So the king commands, and so Uriah dies. When Bathsheba hears of her husband's death, she goes into mourning. And when **that** time is ended, David makes her his wife...
All's well that ends well, right?



But then **God** sends the **prophet Nathan** to help **David** tell the **truth**. The story he weaves is a classic, isn't it?
 -A poor family with one little ewe lamb...
 -A greedy man who kills that lamb instead of serving one of his own...
 -And David, who becomes **righteously indignant** at this **injustice**... ready to **punish** that **perpetrator**, saying, *The man who has done this deserves to die!*...and then Nathan says: *You are the man!!!*

So... *What do you think should have happened to David?* God's Law was pretty clear about **adultery** and **murder**, to say nothing of failing to live a life **worthy** of being the nation's leader...

If you're like me, you expect that a sense of **right-ness** will guide our lives, that a sense of **balance** should be kept, that a certain version of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' is necessary – **would you agree?** **Can I get an Amen??**

We **expect** that...

- until we're** the ones in the hot seat,
- until **we're** one of those who cross the line and cause someone **pain**,
- until **we've** broken our contract with society and find **ourselves** on the receiving end of that punishment...

As you know, this isn't some sterile religious topic for pastors to preach about or theologians to theorize about, while the rest of the world goes on about its business. Daily we're confronted with the struggles of forgiveness and sin. From the violence in Syria to the horror in Orlando, and from awful episodes in our own past to personal problems in the present, confession and forgiveness lie at the heart of our ability to forgive and be forgiven, to love and to be loved.

Why, then, is it so hard for us to confess our wrongdoings? Why is it such a challenge to admit our sins and to ask for another's forgiveness?

Thankfully, and in the case of David **especially**, we're reminded that **no burden** is too heavy for God to bear, no memory too **disturbing** for God to **forgive**, no wound in our **hearts** too deep for God to **heal**. It won't be **easy**...but it **will** be **good**. Take a look at the screens, says the author of the book:

"Yes, 'the truth will set you free' as Jesus says, (John 8:32), but first it tends to make you miserable" (Rohr, p. 31).

After Nathan convicts the king with his biting verdict: ***You are the man***, David confesses to Nathan, *I have sinned against the Lord* (2 Sam. 12:13). This is actually the 5th Step in A.A., isn't it?

Step 5:

*Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being
the exact nature of our wrongs.*

Though it used to be thought that someone in recovery had to go through the 12 steps in order, that's not the case anymore. In this regard, they're more like the stages of **grief** – you never know where your heart will lead you on any given day. As one person said,

Ultimately you have to work the program in a way that makes sense for you. - <https://www.recoveryplace.com/blog/do-the-12-steps-have-to-be-taken-in-order/>

After his admission, David's life truly becomes miserable for a time. Imagine the broken trust he experiences with his army, his advisors, his family and friends, with the people of the nation!

And yet, at the **same** time, imagine the **freedom** that **finally** comes to his tortured heart when the **lies** he was living are finally brought to light. Indeed, *the truth will set us free!*

We **all** know what it feels like: to harbor a lie, or **multiple** lies, and then live in **fear** that the **truth** will get **out**. Yet, this is the **exact** point where the measure of a person's **heart** comes to bear...

The prophet Nathan tells David that Bathsheba's baby will die as part of God's punishment. When the child becomes deathly sick, we're told:

¹⁶ David pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷ The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. ¹⁸ On the seventh day the child died." (2 Samuel 12:16-18).

The **heart** of the matter is that the story of **David** is a **matter of the heart**. And **nowhere** is it more clearly seen than at this deepest and darkest moment in his life.

Here, in the depths, David doesn't **give up**, but admits his wrongdoing to God and to Nathan, then he prays and waits with the child that lay dying. Says our author:

**God brings us –
through failure –
from unconsciousness to
ever-deeper consciousness
and conscience (Rohr, p. 35)**

It's during that waiting time in prayer, it seems, that David works the 4th Step: *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of himself.*

Certainly a significant part of the 4th step is to inventory **all** of our **defects**: the struggles we've had, the lies we've told, the hurtful and harmful things we've done. But the **other** part of the 4th step is to **also** list all of our **assets** – in **fact**, it's suggested that we name **twice** as many **assets** as **defects**, or we'll simply slip into beating ourselves up – which will do no one any good.

Note what happens to David. When the end finally comes, when the child finally dies, we're told that ²⁰ *David rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the Lord, and worshiped; he then went to his own house; and when he asked, they set food before him and he ate.*

David rises, cleans up, and then goes to the temple to worship God's goodness, starting to put the pieces of his life back together. That act alone takes a lot of heart...



That the truth will set us free is truly a matter of the heart. Tradition has it that our Psalm for today was David's confession:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me*
Psalm 51:10

So that's the matter of **David's** heart...now, what about **your** heart and **mine**? If you're like me, about the only thing you can claim here is that you haven't done as many bad things as David did...but then, that's not going to get us very far, is it?

Yet, there's some good news here too, in fact some VERY good news for us.

It's that when God looks on us – he sees **not only** our wholly human, hungry, hardened, or haughty hearts...God **also** sees the wholly ***holy*** heart of Jesus Christ within us.

He is the One who died for our sins. He is the one who was raised from the dead to set us free from sin. He is the one who died and rose that you and I might live to love and serve God's people. That's the truth – and it will set you free. Amen.