



King David: A Man After God's Own Heart  
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Sermon on 2 Sam 12:1-9, Psalm 51:1-9; Oct. 19, 2014

Please pray with me: Speak, O God, in words that we can hear. Open our hearts to your word, and plant the light of your grace, deep in our hearts. Amen.

The great and mighty king sat on his throne and recalled all that he had accomplished.

He remembered the feel of the oil trickling down his forehead and the shocked look on his brothers' faces as one by one, they were each passed over to be king, and instead, this youngest, smallest shepherd boy was anointed as king over all of Israel.

He could still feel the rough stone in his trembling hand as he went out to kill the giant whom everyone else was terrified to even face.

He remembered the many victories he had led his people to, how he had united the kingdoms, and written many Psalms to God in the process.

As King David sat on his throne that day, he remembered all that he had accomplished, and the many giants he had overcome with God's help.

And yet there was something in his long list of accomplishments that the king did not want to think about, that he did not want to remember.

But his best truth-teller, the prophet Nathan, gave him no choice. He entered the throne room and told him the story of a rich man who own many lambs, but who needlessly stole a poor man's beloved lamb in order to kill it and feast on it. And as David heard the story, he could feel his blood curdling, his anger rising, until finally he cried out to Nathan that the rich man should die.

And there must have been a moment in that throne room when you could hear a pin drop as this great and powerful king met the unwavering gaze of the prophet Nathan, and knew exactly what the next word would be.

"You are the man," Nathan says, and suddenly David's sin is completely exposed and he must face the truth.

Now in case any of you are unfamiliar, the previous chapters explore in great depth David's sins—his adultery with another man's wife, then having the man murdered so that he could take the woman as his own wife. If we were to examine the story closely, we would find nearly every commandment broken, and many, many sins to count up.

The length and depth and breadth of David's sin is great, and now the gravity of that sin stares back at him from every mirror.

And a temptation here for us is to put ourselves on a pedestal over and above David. At least we aren't like David, we might think, because our sins are not THAT bad, not THAT significant. But comparing ourselves to other people really doesn't do us much good.

And while it IS likely that murder is not the most tempting of sins for us; but it is not at the top of our list of temptations, then something else is.

And in some ways we are very much like David:

When we know we've done something wrong, it's in our nature to want to hide or pretend that our sins aren't real, and sometimes we just need a reality check—a good, solid look in the mirror. It is a very human, understandable thing to do. Sometimes we lie to ourselves and pretend we haven't done anything wrong at all. We can rationalize, we can tell ourselves that there is no need to focus on the past, or we can tell ourselves that we are pretty good people. And we are pretty good people, but pretty good people who don't always get it right, and who are in need of Christ. We often do all this pretending because it often feels like the truth will be too painful to face.

But here's the thing: with Christ on our side, there is no reason to fear, no need to hide, and no need to pretend, either.

Martin Luther, when talking about sin: said this: God doesn't save imaginary sinners. He saves real sinners. So be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger."

Let your trust in Christ be stronger.

Now obviously David did not even know about Jesus in order to trust him, but we do hear something else intriguing about him; twice David is called a "man after God's own heart," and yet we have before us this story of enormous sin, which seems to tell us otherwise. I found website after website with people arguing that David does not deserve this title,

So I wondered what someone after God's heart would actually look like.

- So when I say: someone who is after God's own heart, I want you to draw to mind someone, and picture their face. I don't care if it's someone you know personally or someone you heard about on the news, just someone who you think is after God's own heart. And give me some head nods if you've got someone in mind. Someone who is after God's own heart.
- And now I want you to think for a second about what it is about that person that makes you think that they are after God's own heart. What quality do they have? What is so special about the person you are thinking about?

An obvious example might be someone like Mother Theresa, someone who lived a life of humble service.

- So here's a question for you: what are some other qualities that might make us label someone as: after God's own heart? What does it mean to be after God's heart? What qualities

- As I thought of people in my life that I would give that label to, they were people who are patient with me, people who have endured hardship but are wiser for it, and people who... I'm sure we could come up with a long list if we tried.
  - To be someone after God's heart, then is to be: patient
- And though I'm guessing you didn't think of your own face just now, I want to challenge you to label yourself that way, as someone who is after God's heart. It might feel a bit odd to try that label on for size, because it sounds like the kind of thing we'd say about a saint, or someone very holy. But I want to point out that you're here today and probably it's because you, too, are seeking God. Probably it's because you'd really like to do a bit better in this whole loving God and loving your neighbor thing, and that is exactly what I think it means to be after God's own heart.

But still we have not answered the question of whether sinful David will pass this litmus test. If we were to read farther in the text, we'd find out that after his sin is exposed, this great king spends 7 days face down on the floor, fasting and praying, likely composing the words to Psalm 51: so I want to invite you to close your eyes and now that you know all this about David, to picture someone face down on the floor as they pray these words:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. You desire truth i

That is indeed the prayer of someone after God's own heart. That is our prayer. It is the prayer of a forgiven sinner who know they can't do it without God. It is the prayer of an imperfect saint who has made some big mistakes but who wants to learn to love more and live better.

It is the prayer of someone who knows that though our sins are great, the breadth and depth and height of God's love is far greater. Amen.