

Year C*Pentecost 3*2010*Repent!
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Sermon Notes

Today's scripture are dramatic. Each one calls us to recovery from sin.

The David story is a story of the misuse of power driven by lust. We enter the story halfway through. What's already happened is that the Great King David at the height of his power and popularity sees a woman, a married woman, bathing on a flat house top below his own and he wants her. So he sends for her and she becomes a willing participant in their adultery.

When the woman, Bathsheba tells the king she is pregnant he sends for the woman's husband who is fighting a siege battle for the king. Uriah, the husband returns from battle is greeted by David and sent home for a "rest". But Uriah is an honorable man and will not go into his wife while his own men are fighting in the field. So he spends the night in the barracks.

Upon learning this David invites Uriah over for dinner the next night and makes sure Uriah has plenty to drink hoping to loosen him up a bit. Feeling no pain Uriah stumbles back to the barracks to sleep it off.

Then, in one of the most ironic scenes in all of scripture David calls Uriah and sends him back to the battle with sealed orders to give Joab, David's general in the field. Uriah takes the sealed orders, delivers them to Joab. Joab opens the letter and it reads; "*Place Uriah and his men at the point of the battle. At its worst pull all your men back except Uriah and his men.*" Unbeknownst to him Uriah was delivering his own death sentence from David to Joab. Joab follows orders and Uriah is killed in the battle.

Now murder is added to adultery and David is guilty.

Today is the story of how the prophet Nathan exposes the king's sin by telling a little parable about a rich man and a poor man, tricking David into condemning himself.

"You are the man!"¹, Nathan said to David,

In other words David is busted.
His sin has caught up with him and his shame is exposed.

But this is the key moment.
What will David do?
Lie, obfuscate, deny, fire his prophet?

¹*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (2 Sa 12:7-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

David repents.

And while the rest of the story is really hard for us moderns in that it says the Lord struck the child with illness, it probably would not have surprised the ancients. And we miss the point if we allow that injustice to determine the value of the story.

The great king is not above the law of God.
The great king must repent just like the rest of us when he sins.

The Jesus story is remarkably similar.

Here's the scene.

A Pharisee named Simon invites Jesus into his home. But he withholds all the gestures of respect commonly afforded a visiting rabbi. He doesn't send a servant to wash Jesus' feet or give him oil to cool his head. It's an affront. But Jesus remains quiet. Then a woman, a sinner, comes in off the street and washes Jesus' feet with her tears and dries them with her hair.

Just like the prophet Nathan Jesus tells a little story about two people, one forgiven a little and one much. . . Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"²

And, of course, Simon hasn't seen her. He's seen her but not as a child of God, only as a sinner who should be pushed away.

Simon is busted.

God is about compassion, kindness and mercy.

God loves the person who knows their sin, is sorry for it, and repents.

Hard-heartedness is the bigger problem.

Self-righteousness the greater sin.

David is busted by the prophet Nathan.

Simon is busted by the Savior Jesus.

The goal is to bust ourselves.

It is critical that we recognize our sin against the Lord, repent in sorrow, seek help and make amends.

²*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 7:40-44). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Do you know why?

There are many reasons why. But this is the one that came to me last night.

We have brothers and sisters who need us,
who are waking up in ICU waiting rooms,
who are waking up this Sunday morning for the first time without someone they love,
who are in the grips of their own struggles with sin,
who are ill and fighting their way through treatment.

They need us.

They need us to be clear channels through which the grace and mercy of God can flow.
They need us to be hopeful, prayerful, trusting.

They are relying on the full, free, flow of spiritual energy to help them this day.
If our lives are clogged up with pride, or jealousy, self-pity, self-preoccupation, lust,
envy, the flow of healing, redeeming, forgiving love is disturbed.

Others need that spiritual energy flowing through us.

I never tire of remembering the old teaching from our catechism. . .

Q. What is our place in the universe?

A. We are called to enjoy it.

We have been created for joy.

Sin is not the enjoyment of an illicit pleasures.

Sin kills pleasure.

Sin sucks the life and joy and hope out of life.

Repentance restores us to true joy and pleasure.

The great task set before us is to enjoy God's world.

The great ethical task which springs from this is to create conditions in society where
others can enjoy God's world too.

We are freed to free others.

We are forgiven to forgive others.

We are blessed to bless others.

There have been times, my friends, when I could not pray,

I could not believe,

I could not see any hope.

I could not feel forgiven.

And you picked me right up in your hope and carried me until I could see again,
feel again,

think clearly again.

All I'm saying this morning is this. Others need us to be clear channels of God's love.
Sin clogs the channel.
Repentance clears it.

So... repent!
Confess your sins to the Lord,
Receive the mercy of God.
Make a determined step to get help.
Become a channel of his grace to your brothers and sisters who need hope,
who need prayer,
who need faith, today.