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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 21, 2016
14th after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Acts 20:17-38; Matthew 5:13-19
Hymns: 363; 22; 330; 313:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 2 Samuel 12:1-14

Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. ³But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

⁵So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ⁶And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

⁷Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! ⁹Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of

Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ ¹¹ Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’”

¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: David - a man after the Lord’s own heart.

That is the way the Holy Scriptures describe David (Acts 13:22). What’ it take to be a man after the Lord’s own heart? David was a saint. He was holy and righteous before the Lord. However David’s life was not without sin, and grievous sin at that. The Holy Spirit reveals David’s sins as well as his great acts of faith because it is important that we learn from all of David’s life, that we may grow in our faith and in our lives, that we also may be men and women after the Lord’s own heart.

Our text follows the account of one of David’s most grievous periods of sin, when David fell into the sin of adultery, and then, in an attempt to cover that sin, was also guilty of murder, cold blooded murder.

In these most serious times in David’s life we are introduced to a prophet of God named Nathan. God sent Nathan to call David to repentance. Nathan did so by using a parable which was presented to David as a true account that demanded justice. --

THEME: Nathan's Parable Teaches True Repentance.

One cannot miss the lesson on --

I. The Seriousness of Sin.

Nathan's first objective was to reveal the arrogance of David's sin.

Nathan was sent to the David by the Lord. He was sent with the mission of rebuking David because of his sin. We think of David as the shepherd boy, perhaps as the poet who wrote so many of the psalms, or one might think of David as the musician who soothed King Saul troubled spirit. The people over whom David reigned knew David as a mighty man of war, a violent man who also possessed a violent temper. He was a king who in battle had killed many times with his own hand, starting with the great Philistine giant Goliath. David had won many wars, including a civil war to consolidate his own reign over a united kingdom.

Kings were rulers with absolute authority. They could and often did command that people be put to death. Nathan was given a dangerous task to address the sin of a man who already had abused his power over life and death. Nathan was sent by the Lord, with the authority of God, and Nathan **went** as sent by the Lord.

Nathan addressed this arrogant abuse of power by David with the parable that makes up a large portion of our text. He told David of two men, one rich and powerful with many flocks, and the other poor and humble with a young lamb that was not only like a pet, but like one of the family. Nathan told David that when this rich man received a guest, he refused to take of his own flock to prepare a fine dinner for his guest, but rather took and butchered the poor man's lamb.

David was quick to condemn the rich man who had no pity for those who were poorer and weaker than he was, who had abused his position in the world, and arrogantly had taken from the poor man that which was precious to him.

At this point we need to appreciate David's reaction, David's outrage. David was incensed at the man's arrogance, and would

have this man put to death, not because taking and butchering another man's lamb was in itself a capital offense, but because the man had no pity. He didn't care whom he hurt with his sin as long as he got his way. He had been selfish and arrogant to the extreme!

So often we fail to ever realize how seriously we hurt other people when we sin. We are so focused on self and getting what it is that we want that we arrogantly trample other people and their feeling. That aspect of sin is serious in and of itself. It is an aspect of sin that even the world recognizes, and often condemns as criminal, even as what David did was criminal. However, this arrogance and abuse is present with sin far more often than what the world, or what we ourselves recognize or are willing to admit. We also arrogantly hurt others, often without thinking about it. So often it is true for us that when it comes to getting our way, we can be without pity. WE fail to even give other people's feelings a thought. If David was incensed by it, so is the Lord.

That is but the beginning of what makes sin serious, so serious that we need to be shaken from our own complacency. Nathan surely shook David from his complacency about his sin when he responded to David's anger by condemning David with the words, **"You are the man!"**

You know what's coming next, don't you? The Spirit had this recorded for our learning. He speaks to us. He charges us with sin. He says to each and every one of us, **"You are the man!"** or the women, or boy or girl, who has arrogantly, heartlessly hurt others, and sinned against God.

Nathan went on to tell David how God saw this sin as a despising of God and a despising of the Lord's blessings in David's life. The Lord had given David the kingdom with all that went with it. David had been richly blessed in many ways by the Lord, including wives, and riches and power, and yet for David it wasn't enough. He decided to take for himself that which the Lord had not given him. His sin was an affront to God and God's gracious kindness in David's life. David went so far in his callous sin to arrange for the death of Uriah who had been a man of valor and a faithful servant to David. So yes, David's sin in taking Bathsheba was a great sin against Uriah, but also a great sin against God.

It was a great sin against God in more than one way. Not only did David despise God's blessings in David's life, he who was supposed to be that man after God's own heart had made a joke of what it meant to be a believer, a follower of the one true God. In the last verse of our text Nathan makes the point that **"by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme"** (2 Samuel 12:14). Everything Jesus made clear in our gospel lesson about the child of God; that we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that we are to stand up against sin and wickedness in the world, fell flat with David because of this sin. People were in a position to mock the true faith in the one true God because David made it appear that it really was no different than any false god or following no god at all.

This is what happens when we sin. Even when we think what we are doing is not such a terrible sin. (David didn't think what he did was that bad either, really! And he thought he had gotten away with it! Sound familiar?) Sin is a serious matter, not only because it makes our Savior look bad before the world, but when we lead others to blaspheme and mock the Lord, it discredits the gospel which they then despise. Sin is such a bad business. It does so much harm.

Indeed we learn from David that because of this offense when people would blaspheme the Lord one's own life is messed up. We hurt ourselves with the consequences of our sin. The consequences that came into David's life made his life not only far more complicated but sad and often terribly painful. The sword would never depart from David's house. One of David's sons would assault one of David's daughters. Another of David's sons would then murder that son. Absalom would lead a rebellion against David that would seduce one of David's most trusted advisors into turning against David. Absalom would be killed. It would begin with the death of the child born to David and Bathsheba.

Sin is what makes life bitter. Even when such a direct correlation between sin and its consequences can't be made, it is sin that makes life bitter. It is sin that makes it necessary for the Lord to bring correction onto our lives. And so it written: **"Whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He**

receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (Hebrews 12:6-7).

Sin is such a burden. It weighs on one’s body. It weighs on one’s soul. In connection with this episode in David’s life David wrote:

Psalm 32: 3-4 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. ⁴For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

Do you hear the agony that afflicted David because of his sin, a sin that burdened his conscience even as David tried to deny its presence in his life? It weighed heavily on him so he felt his bones aging through his groaning all the day long! Sin is such a burden! Sin is such an **unnecessary** burden. David continued to write in that same psalm:

Psalm 32:5-6 “I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah ⁶For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found.”

The lesson that the Spirit brings us through Nathan and the parable presented to David is ultimately about –

II. The True Mercies of God.

2 Samuel 12:7 “Nathan said to David, ‘You *are* the man!’”

2 Samuel 12:13 ¹³“So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.’”

David responded to the Lord’s prophet and the Lord’s rebuke with humble confession, **“I have sinned against the Lord!”** No longer was David trying to hide or excuse or ignore his sin. He confessed his guilt before the Lord, and laid himself on the mercies of God. This was sincere penitence, and this brought David the relief he so desperately needed. Pure gospel came from the prophet’s lips: **“The Lord has put away your sin.”** David’s sin was taken out of

the way, out of the way between David and the Lord. More than that, Nathan declared “**You shall not die.**” Sin’s wages are death, but God’s grace grants a grand reprieve from sin’s death sentence.”

By faith David comprehended this wonder of forgiving grace. David wrote of this in another of his penitential psalms.

Psalm 51:7-10 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸Make me hear joy and gladness, *That* the bones You have broken may rejoice. ⁹Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Purge me with hyssop is a reference to the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice with its purging effect. This is not only an Old Testament connection, but a New Testament fulfilment in Jesus at the cross. Ultimately, it is Jesus’ blood that cleanses us from all sin, and David believed that every bit as much as you or I. By God’s grace, and the Spirit’s working in our hearts we believe this every bit as much as David. We know that the Lord has put away our sin because of Jesus’ blood and righteousness. We shall not die because Jesus died in our place, and He rose again, and we have life in His name!

This morning as we come before the Lord’s altar we shall again receive the very body and true blood which Jesus offered upon the cross to redeem us from sin and death. We receive the individual, personal assurance that this forgiveness is for you and me as individual recipients of God’s forgiving grace.

With this assurance of God’s love and forgiveness we can comprehend the wonder expressed by David in the opening words of –

Psalm 32:1-2 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

It is this blessing of God’s grace that made David a man after the Lord’s own heart. It is this same grace working in our hearts through this same gospel proclamation that brings us into this same

grace, that God has created clean hearts and renewed steadfast spirits within us also. Praise our Savior God who has delivered us from sin, death, and the power of the devil!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.