

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

Nic Denny-Dimitriou - 27th July 2003

2 Samuel 12:1-14; Psalm 32

- First instalment last week – Nicky Ing’s sermon...
 - OT reading continued from last Sunday’s (2 Samuel 11) – should be read with today’s
 - David and Bathsheba – his act of adultery, and the murder accompanying it, to hide it
 - Today’s reading: David confronted with his own sin
 - David was a great king - arguably the greatest of all the kings of Israel,
 - Having uniting the formerly divided two separate kingdoms,
 - And presided over a period of great prosperity and progress spiritually and materially.
 - Writer of (at least most of) the psalms and
 - Highly regarded as a servant of God
 - Yet a great fall!
 - Why include such a passage in the Bible?
 - It makes God’s purposes known – including ways of dealing with nations,
 - And with people – all types and kinds,
 - Including the high & mighty (some of whom may have fallen) and the lowly & humble;
 - Thus about realities of human condition
 - ... And God’s responses
 - The Bible is not only about niceties, sweet proverbs & profound teachings from the good!
 - But about real people, and their encounters with God
 - What can we learn?
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- **David’s sins, including the cover-up**
 - David’s role... (Power and unquestioned authority of the king)
 - Bathsheba’s role (under the power of the absolute authority therefore no choice)
 - David probably thought it would be a one-off lustful romp; but sin is insidious;
 - Affair grew – and Bathsheba was pregnant – Serious Scandal Looming!
 - Attempts to cover-up ... involved further sin including an arranged murder!
 - Thought no-one knew except Bathsheba & trusted servants of the court

- **But God knew!**
- How could David, with all his prior knowledge and experience of God, not know this?
- Who knows? The delusions of sinfulness, perhaps.
- David feared public scandal, and sought to cover up his misdeeds
- “Yes – people in high places - They all do that!”
- Aaah! All of us want to cover up / avoid public embarrassment.
- In this sense, surely David represents humanity?
- But the whole truth is known to God

- **The Exposure**

- Today’s reading: focuses on the rebuke of Nathan, the prophet
- Spokesman for God in the king’s court
- Authority and courage to speak as he did
- (sometimes those with authority lack the courage)
- Told a parable – neither puzzling nor vague in its meaning – very clear
- David indignant at the terrible injustice in the parable
- He responded forthrightly...
- ...And in so doing, condemned himself
- Kings, if greedy, had unchecked power. David abused his power as king towards Bathsheba, and Uriah too.
- What David had done, was unworthy of a king, and especially of a person who owed so much to Yahweh
- Judgement & Punishment proclaimed: calamity upon David’s household
- Further chapters unfold what happened thereafter.
- (A few ex tempore comments on the effects of sin, and the “scarring” caused by sin...)
- Yet our passage highlights David’s repentance
 - **This was a defining moment in David’s life.** He did not evade the issue, nor abuse his kingly authority (which he could have done). He confessed his sin, and was prepared to accept his punishment of death. Instead, God showed grace by forgiving David, and allowing him to live. For the rest of his days, when he opened his eyes in the morning, David knew that he was alive for one reason: **the sheer grace of God.** That turning point changed the direction of David’s life, and deepened his relationship with God – which is usually the effect of understanding and experiencing God’s grace. Psalm 51 is David’s famous prayer of repentance. It involved no attempts at denial, and was far more than a "sorry, I’ll try to do

better" sort of thing, but a deep, heartfelt plea to God for forgiveness, healing and restoration. Psalm 32 is in similar vein, and has been included this morning in our lectionary readings because it ties in directly with the OT reading. That is why we are using it in the Prayers of Confession, which follow this sermon.

What more can we learn?

- **Repentance, Restoration – and the ongoing story of the Grace of God, still unfolding...**

To some, this is a story of judgment and condemnation. Others see it as a story of grace, restoration, and hope.

It is actually both - for those willing to admit their sin and accept God's judgment, grace, and restoration.

For those of us who have experienced moral failure, divorce, or other such life experience, it is a message of hope, healing, and restoration reminding us that God's agenda is not to crush sinners, but to heal us and restore relationship with God.

- **From Psalm 32:**

Unresolved guilt is an awful condition: "I said, I will confess ... And you forgave the guilt of my sin."

Sin is what I do to God when I resist the invitation of his boundless love. Initially David 'kept silent' about his guilt and felt in his body and mind the disintegrating effects of unconfessed sin. Perhaps God allowed this stress to remain until David was willing to confess.

But why did David delay?

Why do any of us delay repentance?

Embarrassment at failure, shame, pride, the superstitious hope that in time guilt may fade away like an old stain. Or perhaps spiritual guilt, a person's secret acquiescence in sinful behaviour, which dominates to such an extent that he cannot break free, but neither does he wish to. So (using the analogy of the Prodigal Son before he realized his condition and returned home to his father), we settle down in our mess instead of heading off home to the waiting Father as fast as we can.

We need not put off repentance. By confessing our sins we will find Christ in the situation. He is an inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness for the guilt of our sin, and cleansing from its effects, and release from its domination.

- **Conclusion: The story ends with...**
- A son born to David – Solomon – to follow later as king and to this day remembered as a very wise man of God!

- Even the genealogy of Jesus has the following:
 - o "David was the father of Solomon whose mother had been Uriah's wife" (Mt. 1:6).
 - o And there, in Jesus, is the line of God's grace for each one of us, even as it was for David.

- The best news of all is that **the story does not end with the consequences of sin.**

- Where there is sin, there are consequences,
- But where there is grace, there is restoration and healing.
- God never brings us condemnation without offering us grace and healing.
- This is a recurring theme of the Bible – God wants a close relationship with each of us, and goes out of God's way to invite us into that relationship.
- The point of the prophet Nathan's charge against David was not to punish him, but to restore him.
- **For us: We need to be willing to face God - and ourselves - with the same painful honesty that was David's first step toward rebuilding his life. Like David, we need to be honest with God and ourselves.**
- If, as Paul wrote, "everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence" (Rom. 3.23), there is only one way to be a person after God's own heart. It is by having "a humble and repentant heart."
- Each of us needs to depend on the grace of the loving God poured out for us and upon us in Jesus Christ.

(Follow immediately with Psalm 32, read by all, and the Confession)