

“Sanctification, God’s Work In Us”



Rev. Peggy Casteel-Huston
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Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Psalm 51

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- ⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

***Before I begin my second reading of the word today, which as you can tell, is the next reading following last weeks' sermon, it is important for me to say that as I read and preach sermons, I am not a looking at scripture in a linear, literal way, I am a theologian. After last Sunday, someone declared that the irreparable damage that David caused went through generations. While some, who read scripture would make that assumption based on the terrible things that did happen post David's indiscretion within his family, as a theologian, I always asking, "What does this say about God?" As a read other theologians and as I listen carefully to what theologians of history have to say about God, not one believes that God takes God's fury for your choice or mine out on generations that are to come, no one believes that God kills children to punish people. What is true is that our choices impact future generations so that each generation must learn and must have their own sanctification process, their own transformation, and their own experience of God.

Now please listen with me for the word of God as it comes to us from 2 Samuel.

2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:13

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. **27** When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, ¹ and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds; ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ Now there came a

traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." ⁵ Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; ⁶ he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

⁷ Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; ⁸ I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. ⁹ Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. ¹¹ Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within 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 very sun. ¹² For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." ¹³ David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan said to David, "Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die."

This is the word of the Lord

In the 4th century was a Christian monk and ascetic by the name of [Evagrius Ponticus](#). Evagrius is one of the most influential theologians in the late fourth-century church. He studied and looked at the various forms of temptation and made a list of eight evils which Evagrius and others believe are the root of all evil and the beginning of sin. Evagrius called them the 8 temptations of man:

- Gluttony
- Lust
- Acedia (apathy) and sorrow (sloth) Pope Gregory of the 6th century combined acedia and sorrow

- Greed
- Anger
- Vainglory
- Pride

These are now known as the 7 deadly sins.

Lust, acedia, anger, greed, gluttony and sloth are all bad, the sages say, but pride is the deadliest of all, the root of all evil, and the beginning of sin. We are not talking about a feeling of delight like we have in a child, but rather the dark side of pride.

Pride is the perversion of the faculties that make humans more like God—believing they have the same dignity and holiness as God. It is dangerous, it is corrupt selfishness, the putting of one's own desires, urges, wants, and whims before the welfare of anyone else.

[C.S. Lewis](#) writes, in *Mere Christianity*, that pride is the "anti-God" state, the position in which the ego and the self are directly opposed to God.

Understanding the nature of pride, leads us back to the story of David and Bethsheba.

If you remember from last week, Uriah, husband of Bathsheba, is dead by the hand of David. Scripture doesn't say, but we assume that David is not seeing himself or his actions as a problem. He is not seeing his pride or that he is putting his own desires before the welfare of one of his soldiers.

Why should he? After all, David is king over all of Israel, he wins wars, other nations fear him, he has power and he has the loyalty of the people, he can do what he wants.

But David forgot something. David forgot that he is not an autonomous person, or a person who is not accountable to God. David was living into the warning of the psalmist in psalm 14 that reminded us that it is foolishness on our part to live in the denial of God's reality and pertinence to our lives.

Even though David may be living away from God in that moment, it is important for us to remember that God did not move away from David. God sends the prophet Nathan to speak to David reminding him of his accountability to God and to the nation of Israel.

How does Nathan help David see himself? Nathan tells David a story about a rich man who had many lambs but takes the only lamb a poor man has away from him for his own gain. Through this story David sees his own corrupt selfishness and how he put himself over the welfare of others.

Lest we think King David was the first to be prideful, let's take a short tour:

Adam and Eve – 1 commandment was given. It was to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Both fell prey to the promise – you will be like God.

Cain takes his brother's life in a jealous rage over their offerings to God. God tells Cain that he needed to rule over his own desire.

Sara and Abraham want what they want which results in the birth of Ishmael.

Rebekah connives with Jacob to steal the birthright from Esau – son's of Isaac. Joseph's brothers plot against him for their own gain.

Over and over in biblical history we see the "anti-God" state that C.S. Lewis describes play out and – truth be told - perhaps we can think of times in our own history where we have put our own desires over the welfare of others.

What does it take for us to see our own ways that we put self above others?

God knew what David had done, God knew what Adam and Eve had done, God knew about the choices of Abraham, Sara, Rebekah and Joseph's brothers just as God knows our choices too. God knows when we have cheated or lied, gossiped or betrayed another. God knows when we have plotted in our hearts to hurt another and God still, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will find a way not only to reveal to us our complicity but to restore us.

God doesn't reveal our difficulties to show us how fallen we are or how corrupt we are. The process for confessing sin, the process of being able to look in our own mirror and see ourselves is for one purpose and one purpose only - TRANSFORMATION. If David, the most powerful king in all of Israel, experienced transformation, we can too.

We know that King David was transformed. All one needs to do is read and listen to Psalm 51, to see it.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Those are requests from a man who is being transformed by God. It is the work God is seeking to do in all of us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God **IS** doing a work in me and in you. In theological terms we refer to it as the ongoing process of sanctification. Sanctification is a process that seeks to restore the broken image of God in you and me, so that God can work through us.

Rev. Dr. Byron Kirk Jones wrote about the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in this way: "you think you know me today – but you don't. Because of my time with the Lord and my submitting myself to the gospel I am always being transformed. The person you meet in me today is not the person you met yesterday. Hopefully, every day that I learn more about Christ and what God desires in me, it leaves me changed."

This is what the table of communion should be doing for us too. As we come to this table to receive God's gift of nourishment for our souls, let our prayer be that through God's Holy and sacred spirit God is changing us, transforming us so that the sin of our self-reliance, our strong desire for what we want will be surrendered to God.

Let us pray:

Thank you Holy One for not only loving us but continuing to do your work in us. We are those people who the Apostle Paul would say that we are treasures held in clay jars. Our jars may have cracks or places that are worn but You see the treasure that is our image of God in each one of us. Continue to be the potter. Continue to mold us so that every day we live we become more of a reflection of you. Amen

