

Repent and rejoice!
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15
6/27/2004

Pastor Jon Bergemann

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us, the fire of Your love! The Word of God for our consideration this morning is taken from 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12 (read text). In the name of our forgiving Redeemer, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Did you hear about the guy who took the souvenir baseball away from the little boy in Texas? Maybe some of you saw clips of this event on the news or read about it in the papers.

During a Texas Rangers baseball game, a 4 year old boy named Nick O'Brien was about to pick up a foul ball that had landed right next to him. However, before he could pick it up, an adult man by the name of Matt Starr knocked the four year old out of the way and took the ball for himself. He then proceeded to hold the ball up high in pride at his great achievement – taking a baseball from a 4 year old kid. Despite the angry protests of fans around him, Starr refused to give up the ball.

Well, it didn't take to long before clips of this were being played on the big screen at the ballpark. Many of the players ended up coming by the kid and giving him some more balls and souvenirs – including a ball signed by Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan. The clip of the villain who took the ball from the kid, including the look of disgust on his girlfriend's face, was replayed across the country.

What are your emotions when you heard this story for the first time or hear it now? I know what mine were. A bit of anger. I was a bit disgusted. It just seemed so wrong, so selfish of that man to take away the prize possession of that helpless little boy.

In our text today, King David hears a story that brings about similar emotions. The prophet Nathan tells him of a rich man who had a large number of animals. He was having some company over and wanted to make a meal. But instead of taking one of his own animals, he took the little ewe lamb from a poor, helpless neighbor. That little lamb had been raised by the poor man and his children. It shared their food and even slept in their arms. That lamb was like another member of the family. Yet that rich man took it and slaughtered it.

Oooh!!! David burned with rage, with anger. That wasn't fair!! What arrogance on the rich man's part! What selfishness! He shouted back to Nathan, **“As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”**

And then Nathan said four little words that hit David square between the eyes like a ton of bricks. Nathan looked David in the eye and said, **“You are the man.”** Those words were clear law that pierced the heart of David. Those words were dead on. Why?

David hadn't literally taken a lamb from his neighbor. Actually, he had done something much worse. Chapter eleven, the chapter just before this one, tells the sad tale of David's actions. It makes any soap opera plot look like a children's cartoon. What happened?

Well, one evening in spring, when David SHOULD have been out with the army fighting God's enemies, he was taking a leisurely stroll on the roof of his palace. His eyes happened to wander to the sight of a beautiful woman bathing next door, her name was Bathsheba. David abused the power he had as king and had her brought to himself. He slept with her and she became pregnant.

How many sins do we have so far? David is neglecting his duty as king, lusting after a woman, abusing his power as king in having her brought to him, and then committing adultery. Yikes!! Pretty ugly. It gets worse.

This was not a single woman. She was married to a man named Uriah. So David has Uriah brought back from fighting in the battlefield (where David was SUPPOSED to be!!) and tells him to go home, take some time off, and spend some time with his wife. (He's hoping that Uriah will go home and sleep with his wife so that the pregnancy can't be traced to back him!). One problem, though: Uriah says he can't go home and relax and lie with his wife when his fellow countrymen are sleeping on the ground in battle. He knows where he belongs. So he sleeps outside his house on the ground that night.

The next night David tries again. This time he has Uriah over for a nice meal and gets him drunk, hoping that now Uriah will go home and be with his wife. The problem? Uriah sleeps outside his house again. He won't go in.

Finally, David gets a murderous idea. He has Uriah sent back to the battle. But he tells the commander of the army to put him in the front lines, and then have the rest of the men in the line withdraw as they storm the city – in essence, leaving Uriah as a helpless target.

The plan is carried out. Uriah dies in battle. And what does David do? He marries the widow Bathsheba – giving the impression that he is being gracious and kind to this woman in distress.

Wow!!! How many ugly sins do we have now? We've already mentioned David neglecting his duty as king, lusting after a woman, abusing his power as king in having her brought to him, and committing adultery. Now we have lying, a cover-up, encouraging drunkenness, abuse of power, murder, and a good deal of deceit and hypocrisy as he tries to make himself look good by marrying Bathsheba. Ooooh!!!!

What a sad scene. This is the same David who struck down the giant Goliath in the name of the Lord. This is the same David who wrote so many of the Psalms we sing each Sunday. And now we see him like this. Wallowing in disgusting sin. What a disgrace. God had blessed him with so much, and this is how he returned the favor.

Can you see why those words, "You are the man!" struck him so deeply? They confronted him with his sin. But you know what, if the prophet Nathan was here today, he could do in God's behalf? He could look you in the eye, and me in the eye, and declare, "You are the man! You are the woman! You have sinned!"

What has our God done for us? He gave his life for us. He created faith in our hearts. He guides us with His love and gives us His Word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And He promises that heaven is just around the corner.

And yet what do we often do? We complain about our problems in life while forgetting about God's guidance. We lust. We cheat. We covet. We think unkind thoughts about those around us.

We know our sins. We know our "David moments", those times when we have done, said, or thought things that are ugly, and selfish, and disgusting.

You are the man, the woman who has sinned. I am the man who has sinned. And what would our God deserve to do to us sinners? Those who have often ignored His blessings and will and exerted our own selfishness? He would have every right to be enraged at us. He would have every right to feel the same emotions David did when he heard of the rich man who had taken the poor man's lamb, or the emotions we might have when hearing of one person being selfish and abusing another. He would have every right to pronounce the decree that David did upon the man in the story, the decree that we deserve to die – both here and hereafter in hell.

What did David do after he heard those four words, "You are the man," that pierced him so? With a humble heart he sighed, **"I have sinned against the LORD."**

And what does Nathan say in response? "Yes, you have, but it's too late now! You're finished!" or "Yes, you have, and now you will have to do 500 good works to try to make up for it, then we'll see if God likes you." No. What does he say in response?

"The LORD has taken away your sin."

"The LORD has taken away your sin." But David's sins were so many and so bad! Lust, murder, adultery, betrayal, hypocrisy, selfishness, greed, lying, etc., etc.!! What does Nathan say? **"The LORD has taken away your sin."** Every one of them.

Do you know what Nathan would say on God's behalf to you and me today? As we confess that we've sinned, as we try to erase from our minds the images and memories of our greatest spiritual failures, Nathan would look you and me in the eye and say, "The LORD has taken away your sin." It's done. It's gone.

