



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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June 24, 2007

4th Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 32

Second Lesson: Galatians 2:11-21

Gospel: Luke 7:36-50

The Lord Takes Away Sin

Throughout your life you have probably become acquainted with some home remedies, right? You have a cold; you get some chicken soup, right? Maybe you have your own special way that you think you are going to get rid of hiccups or whatever it may be, but there are all kinds of home remedies. I looked on the internet, searched the other day, and found a home remedy for hay fever that involved mincing some grapefruit, boiling it and putting it together with something else and then drinking that every day.

I have had kidney stones in the past and I saw that on the side, so I looked that up and found out I was supposed to cut up kidney beans a certain way, boil them, strain them through muslin, and then strain it again through muslin and then drink that every day and the kidney stone would go away. It sounded about like as much effort as passing the stone by the time I was done reading it.

I saw one for a cold that said do this and drink it every day for 30 days and then your cold would be gone. I don't think I've had a cold that has lasted 30 days. So sometimes these remedies make you wonder. Some of them are probably based on things that actually work, something that is in the food they are suggesting you use. But over and over, throughout history we have always tried to come up with some kind of homemade remedy to get rid of things, but there is one thing that we have tried and we are still trying and we still work at coming up with this homemade remedy to get rid of and we are never going to do it. That of course is sin.

In the account of David and Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, David came up with all kinds of creative ways to get rid of his sin, to cover it up, to hide it, to ignore it, to deny it was there, to act as though it didn't happen. In the Psalm this morning when we sang the Psalm, did you notice how he described what he was going through when he tried his own homemade remedies for sin? He wasted away as in the heat of the summer when he denied his sin and then he said "I confess my transgressions to the Lord and you remove the iniquity of my sin."

We aren't a lot different from David. There are times when you and I sin and we come up with our own creative ways of trying to rationalize it, explain it, hide it, and cover it. But the Holy Spirit confronts us with this one single truth that we need to know in life and that is, the Lord takes away sins. Our efforts are only going to make things worse, but God's cure, God's remedy for sin is permanent. It's complete. It's always effective.

We see a lot of ourselves probably in David as you think back to what you know about the story of David and Uriah's wife. You notice how in what we read this morning that God continually says "Uriah's wife." He never says Bathsheba because he is stressing the guilt of what David had done.

It was spring, the time when Kings go to war, but David was up on his roof that night. What is that old saying you probably learned?—idle hands are the devil's workshop. He is bored, so he is up on his roof at night and he happens to notice that there is a beautiful woman. He sends for her and thinks it's good to be the King. So he sends one of his servants and the servant comes back and the servant even tries to tell the King what he is doing isn't right and says, "Is not that the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" It doesn't matter. David sends for her. He has sex with her and she becomes pregnant. Now he sees that people are going to realize that Uriah wasn't around. He was off fighting with the Lord's army. So he sends for Uriah. He brings him home from the battle front and tells him to go home to his wife. He says, "No, how can I do such a thing when the Ark of the Lord is in the field and the Lord's army is in the field?" He slept by the gate of the palace.

So the next night, David comes up with another plan to cover up his sin—"I'll get him drunk. Then when he is drunk he won't be such a goody two shoes" I suppose was David's thought. He gets him drunk and he still says, "I am not going to go home and sleep with my wife when the Ark of the Covenant is in the battlefield and the Lord's army is there." He sleeps at the gate.

So now David comes up with another plan that is as cold hearted as a human heart can be. He writes a message to Joab, the commander of the army, and sends it back in Uriah's own hand to give to his commander that says, "Put Uriah in the front. Attack a place you shouldn't attack and then, when he is dead, pull back. Don't worry. I won't get mad at you for the losses." So he is going to cover up his sin by killing Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, so that people won't see his sin. He had tried different ways. He had tried different things. It led to one sin after another.

It's kind of interesting, isn't it? We try to fix things and we think we have a good plan and it just screws things up and it makes things worse. Think about how we are. We are a lot like David in the fact that when we are not doing what we are supposed to be doing, when we are idle we can get ourselves into a lot more trouble. Especially today when it comes to sexual sins—there is such rampant temptation in movies, in television, and on the internet that if we are idle, we aren't doing what the Lord has called us to do or if we are just sitting around, we can find ourselves being led down a path that we know we shouldn't go and yet we go there. Then one sin leads to another.

It's interesting how as humans we try to cover up for it by saying, "Well, if it's two consenting adults, what's the difference?" Or "If it's just in my own mind, what's the difference? Who does it hurt if I lust after someone?" The story of David shows us. And in any case, God has said anyone who looks at someone with lust has committed adultery in their heart and God says, "You have offended me. You have nailed me to the tree of the cross. You have killed me by this sin. I don't care if it involves anyone else or not. It offends me." The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

Now who of us here this morning can say that we haven't done things when it comes to God's gift of sex and marriage that displeased the Lord? We sin. We might say, "My sin is not as bad as your sin or that person's sin. They went and did this, this and this and I stopped before that, so God must love me more." No. God says "sin is sin." When we try to cover up sin, when we try to excuse sin, when we try to rationalize sin, we only make things worse because we don't get to the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is that you are a sinner, I am a sinner. We have offended God. We have killed the Messiah. You can dress it up all you want, but at the end of the day, if all you are doing is putting lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig. That's you and me.

We are sinners. So enough of the excuses, enough of "but it's the 21st century," enough with "but times have changed," enough with all of that stuff—it's time for you and me to just say to God, "God, I have sinned against the Lord." That is where God got Nathan. You notice God's fix took Nathan to David, and Nathan led David to "I have sinned against the Lord."

Think about it. How would you have liked to have been Nathan? Do you really want to go tell the King, "You were wrong in killing someone to cover up your sin"? Are you a little worried he might just decide that he did it once and he might as well do it again?—"You know about the sin; you're dead." But Nathan served the Lord—it might have been with fear and trepidation in his heart just like at times you and I serve the Lord maybe by talking to someone else about their sin with fear and trepidation in our hearts, but just think about how valuable it is. Think of how David described himself when he tried to cover up his guilt when he took Bathsheba to be his wife and acted as though nothing had happened. We heard him describe what effect the guilt had on him.

In fact, in the world today, if you talk to counselors or psychologists or psychiatrists—people that do counseling—they say the vast majority of things that people are struggling with come because of guilt, some guilt that they are feeling. So they try to cover it up. They try to blame it on someone else. They try to point to their upbringing. They try to point to this or that, but you and I, like David, have fellow Christians and the Word of God that lead us to say, "I have sinned against the Lord." When the Lord works that in our hearts, "I have sinned against the Lord," whether he uses a story about a lamb and sheep and cattle like Nathan did or whether it's just another friend sitting across the kitchen table saying, "I'm really concerned about what you are doing. I think it is separating you from God." However he brings us to that point, his Spirit leads us to say, "I have sinned against the Lord" and then the Lord looks us in the eye and says, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."

God's solution doesn't center in excuses, denials, rationalizations. God's answer to sin centers in one person, the God Man, the one who is true God from all eternity and who became man, who lived perfectly in our place, who was attacked by Satan day after day after day with temptation after temptation which would have included temptations in this area, the Sixth Commandment. Jesus faced them all perfectly, never sinning, because God demands of you and me to be perfect as he is perfect. Then God took all of our sins against this Commandment and every other Commandment and poured them all on Jesus' back and Jesus took them to the cross and endured the wrath of God so that

you and I don't have to. So that you and I can know for certainty that we will not die. We might die physically, but we will never die spiritually. We will never go to hell because Jesus has removed our sins. He has removed them completely and absolutely. He tells us that through his Word. He baptized us into that perfection through that water and the Word and as we come to the Lord's altar, he gives us the wafer and the wine together with his body and his blood and he tells us, "This is what took away your sins and this is what forgives you right here, right now. You are my own. Your sin is gone. I don't even remember it anymore." That is what our God says to us.

As we rejoice in that truth, as we thrill to the tip of our toes that our sin is gone, my God loves me, my God is with me, his Spirit empowers us to want to do what is right before him, to struggle and fight against temptation, to confess when we fall and to be lifted up again to work with God's grace to serve him more faithfully in the future.

That is why we do what we do. We live for God because he died for us. The Lord takes away sin. You and I are always going to fall short in this homemade remedy. Thank God we don't have to find one. He provided it for us.