



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 13, 2011

Epiphany 6

Sermon Text: [2 Samuel 11:1-17, 26-27](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [2 Samuel 11:1-17, 26-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 119a](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Thessalonians 4:1-12](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 5:21-37](#)

Warning: Danger Ahead

Sin Distracts

The Spirit Provides Focus

I do a lot of driving from time to time, over long distances, over roads that aren't always the most familiar. I'm a little familiar with them, but not always the most familiar. It seems like every now and then, after five or six hours on the road, you kind of stop paying attention to stuff and you are in that mind-numbing state, like most of you get about five minutes from now, where you are awake but not really aware. Every now and then I kind of miss those nice yellow attention grabbing "Stop Ahead" signs. When you miss one of those and all of a sudden that "Stop" sign pops out of the mist or it's right there all of a sudden, you have to slam on the brakes and stop at this place you weren't really expecting to stop. Of course you're first reaction is, "Where in the dickens was that 'Stop Ahead' sign? Why did someone knock that down? Why wasn't it up? Why weren't the branches trimmed? How did I miss it?" But the reality is, I just missed it. Did you ever have an experience like that...where you want to blame everyone else because you didn't notice what you were supposed to notice?

I suppose Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is the "Stop Ahead" sign for us today. He is showing us how serious God is about sin. He doesn't just say the outward actions. It is even our thoughts, our words, all these things are offenses against our God so we better not get too comfortable in putting our trust in ourselves because there is no way we are going to be holy. His purpose in giving us this warning, the "Stop Ahead" sign, is so that we see just how important God's grace and love and mercy and forgiveness is to us and we don't take it for granted, so we don't start thinking, "We're doing pretty good. God's lucky to have folks like us."

When you look at the case of David, you see just how serious God is about the warning. If we don't see that warning that there's danger ahead and we let our thoughts take control of our actions and our words, our sins are not just against our God...they are still against our God...but sometimes as we keep going down this path when sin gets control of us and entangles us, we start having affects on other people. That's why we are reminded that when we see these warning signs and we see the problems that our sins can get us into and we find ourselves thinking about the things God says not to think about, and we start going on with these other actions, we are reminded also that we need the Spirit to get us out of this tangled mess that we so often weave for ourselves. That's what we see from the life of David today.

David was at the peak of his power you could say, in 2 Samuel 11. He had expanded the borders. They had done so well in battle that he, as the warrior king, the king who couldn't build the temple for God even though he wanted to because his hands were full of blood from all of his battles and all of his wars...he, the warrior king, says, "Things are going so good. I don't need to go into battle this year." He's not locked out. He's not holding out for more money. He is just lazy. God says, "You're the king. You're supposed to go lead the people into war. This is your vocation. This is your calling." And David decides "I'm going to take this one off. I've done good. I've been good. Things have gone well. I deserve a break today." And he didn't have a McDonald's yet, so he just stayed home.

Notice what happened. Did your mom ever say to you that idle hands are the devil's workshop? Don't you kind of see it? He's got nothing to do. "There are no troupes to review, no battle plans to lay out, so I guess I'll take a walk on the roof. It's night. It's cool. It's kind of nice. I'll walk around for a little while. Hey, look at that over there! She's pretty good looking. I don't have anything else to do. Hey you, servant, come here. Go find out who she is."

You don't see many people holding up a "Stop Ahead" sign to David, do you? You don't see many people warning him, "Hey, this isn't a road you want to go down Mr. King." Maybe the servant seems to be, from what's recorded for us, the only one. He comes back and says, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" It's kind of like the servant is holding up that yellow sign that says this isn't a road you should go down.

But David goes down it because he had been enticed. He had looked lustfully in his heart, like Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount. Now he ignores this warning from the servant and he sends for her. He sleeps with her. She could not possibly be pregnant by Uriah. It's obviously going to be David's son. So now David has a problem he has to deal with and he doesn't deal with it the way he writes about in the Psalms in Psalm 32 or Psalm 51 after Nathan confronted him. He chooses his own way of dealing with it, not God's way.

His way of dealing with it was to send for Uriah. Uriah comes home, and Uriah won't go home. He gives the report to David, whatever it might be, and then David sends him home thinking "There, my problem is solved. He'll think it's his son." That's not the case. Uriah wouldn't do it, so then David comes up with another plan. "You know what? I think I'll get him drunk. If I get him drunk, he'll certainly go home. He won't be so noble anymore. I'll get him drunk and he'll run home to his wife." Even though David led Uriah into the sin of getting drunk, it didn't achieve his goals.

So now he gives up. There is nothing else he thinks he can do to cover up his sin except to kill him by the sword of the Ammonites. Now he involves Joab in this plot to cover up his own sin. He doesn't tell Joab why, he just says, "Put him in the front lines, attack, draw back and let him get killed."

Notice that it doesn't say that just Uriah was killed. It says that they attacked where the defenders were the fiercest and some of Joab's men fell, and Uriah was among them. So David, to cover up his own sin, made some other widows and orphans in the land of Israel. Some other tears were shed in other homes throughout the land of the people that he was supposed to be the shepherd of as the king. He was supposed to be a representative of God to them and now he was killing them to cover up his sin. Sin leads us to excuse a lot of things in ourselves that we would never excuse in someone else, and you see David doing that.

I suppose you could say that Uriah held up a road sign by his noble actions and his doing what was right before God even though he wasn't an Israelite. He was a Hittite. Yet, he does what is right before God because he wanted to serve his Lord. None of it slowed David down. David never slammed on the brakes. He went right through the "Stop" sign, didn't he? Into one sin after another because he got so entangled in it. It was like the Kudzu they have down south, the "foot-a-night vine" they call it, that is supposed to be spreading by 150,000 acres every year. Or when I cross the bridge up north to go home to see my mom, there is a sign that says not to take wood from one place to the other to burn because they don't want something else to be spread. Or every time you go out in your boat and then when you come out you have to clean your boat off so something else doesn't spread to another lake and take over. That's exactly what happened to David's life. It took over. It became pervasive. It became invasive. It entangled him and it tripped him up. When you read [Psalm 32](#) or [Psalm 51](#) and see how he describes himself when he was caught in a sin and not admitting his sin, defending his sin, he talks about it taking a physical affect on his body. The signs were there. David ignored them because David didn't have the power to resist them on his own. When his focus was on his pleasure, Bathsheba's beauty and his good name and not wanting to look bad in front of the people, he did a lot of foolish stuff because his focus was not on God. That's why the Lord warns us, don't think you can be holy by yourself, because you can't. And when you think you are doing pretty good, then watch out because you are probably in for a big fall.

The only thing that untangles us from all this sin, it wasn't David's doing, it was God's doing. God had to send the profit to confront David with a story about a man and David got so upset that someone would be so foolish to do such a thing that Nathan had to say to him, "You're the man. You did it with Bathsheba. You did it to Uriah." Then David said, "I have sinned against the Lord." Then the prophet could say, "Your sins are forgiven." The Lord does not hold a sin against you because the Lord had promised that One would come who would take our sins away. He would live in our place and die in our place. And that's what makes God's grace and God's mercy and God's love in Christ so amazing. We don't deserve it. We haven't earned it. Yet we want to kid ourselves from time to time and think that because we do this or that for the Lord, the Lord must love us more because we are somehow better than someone else. We are all David. If you think you could never get as trapped in your sin as David was, you have a fool wearing your shoes this morning because that's you. That's me. When we get caught up in sin, we need someone to hold up the warning sign to us. And God's plan often is that it's each other. We are to hold each other accountable. We

are to admonish one another. We are to teach one another and we are not supposed to let each other go down a sinful way because "I don't want them upset at me. I don't want to make them upset. I'd rather see them rot in hell than make them upset." We'd never say that, but our actions say it sometimes.

When I'm entangled, I need you, not to start cutting off the branches that are entangling, but to point me to Jesus and say, "Turn away from your sin and turn to him. That's where the answer is." And that's what you need. You need me or you need each other to do that for you. It's only the Spirit that can untangle these sins that we will get trapped in. We are all spiritual fools. We all will excuse and rationalize ourselves and see the sin in the other person. We do it all the time.

It's fascinating to me...when I watch a basketball game that my children aren't involved in, I can see how other parents act like fools at times. But when I watch my kids play, then the referee is an idiot and I'm not acting like a fool. It's just that the referee is terrible. I can see it in others, but it's so hard to see it in myself, isn't it? That's why sometimes we need each other to show us our sins. It isn't fun. It isn't good to hear, but it's what we need.

And when we hear it, then we simply have to trust the unbelievable, the things that reason could never understand. Our God loves and forgives us no matter what our sin has been simply because he is loving and he is gracious. Then, just because our God knows how we are and how we are going to say, "I don't know if that applies to me or not," he says, "Don't forget, I called you by name. I washed you in the blood of Christ at your baptism. And if you don't remember that and can't trust it because it isn't in your head, come to my altar. There's my very body and there's my blood that was given and shed for you. You can touch it. You can taste it. It's tangible. You can smell it. It's there." God says "You are forgiven. Depart in peace. Your sins are forgiven." That's his Word to you. That's the Word we need to share with one another so that we stop before sin hardens our hearts and we lose our faith.

It's not easy to do this for one another, but remember that if someone hadn't done that for us, we would not be walking arm in arm with our Savior. We would be separated from him. And we, out of love for what our God has done for us, want to do the hard thing. We want to proclaim the message that untangles us from our sin so that the Spirit can do the work of untangling. You and I don't do it. We are just the messengers, but the Spirit needs us to speak and wants us to speak. When you and I see the grace and love of our God in taking away our sins, you and I want to speak. And by his grace, we will speak.