



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

July 8, 2012

Pentecost 6

Sermon Text: [2 Samuel 12:11-25](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [2 Samuel 12:11-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 30](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Timothy 1:8-14](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43](#)

### **Learn Trust in the Face of Death From David**

David acts and God reacts

David reacts and God acts

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the second section of the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote these words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." They are familiar words, right? You probably know those words better than what God had the prophet Nahum write. These are words we are familiar with, words we know very well. There is truth in the words, yet somewhere along the line in our lives, it seems like some of these words have morphed from the unalienable rights and the pursuit of happiness, and now it seems we believe we have an unalienable right to happiness. It seems to be kind of where we are living in our society today. If someone else messes with our happiness or the happiness of our family, then they need to be punished and it's a "them problem" and they are the problem and they need to be taken care of.

We do that a lot, don't we? If I'm not happy, someone else has to be at fault. It can't be my fault. It has to be someone else's fault. It has to be my teacher's fault. It has to be my boss' fault. It has to be my wife's fault. It has to be my husband's fault. It has to be my children's fault. It has to be somebody else's fault. Before you know it, you are kind of wondering if we are going to fall into the ocean because we must be living on a lot of fault lines because we are always talking about how it's someone else's fault and never our own fault. That's what happens when we think happiness is an unalienable right. The pursuit of happiness? Sure, that would be fine.

But I think there is something else in what Jefferson wrote that I think we believe. I'm not sure it's Scriptural. God has given us the unalienable right to life? I'm not so sure. He's given us life, yes, but our times are in his hands as he tells us through the Book of Psalms. So he has not given us the unalienable right that our life is going to be without end in this lifetime. Unless he comes back first, every one of us will face the unalienable right of death. That's a Scriptural truth. It's not one we always like to think about. It's not one that delights us. But it's one that God lays in front of us. There are all kinds of things we can learn from Paul and his outlook on his impending death when he wrote those words to Timothy in his Second Letter to him. When we see in the

Gospel, the One we cling to is the One who has power over death, then as we think about this First Lesson that I read to you from 2 Samuel, we learn about trust in the face of death from David. That's important for us. Death is inevitable. It's what we are going to face. But as Christians, we have a way to face it that goes far beyond anything Thomas Jefferson could have imagined.

Thomas Jefferson put out his own edition of the Bible. Did you know that? He literally took a razor and cut out the parts of the Gospels he thought were the parts that people had to know. He got rid of all the supernatural things, because that didn't make any sense to his mind. If you get rid of everything supernatural in the Gospel, what does that have to by necessity include? It has to include the resurrection of Jesus Christ, right? If our hope is only in this lifetime, then what did Paul say? We are to be pitied more than all men.

Our hope is for something more than this lifetime, as we see in David this morning, because our hope is based on the God who loved us enough to save us, the God who loved us enough to give us his Son who lived in our place, who died in our place, the God who loves us enough to reach out to us even though at times we don't always reach out to him.

David had to learn this trust in the face of death the hard way, didn't he? David acted. When it was time for the kings to go to war, he didn't go to war. He stayed home. Then he notices Bathsheba. It didn't matter that she was married. He sent for her. He's the king. It's good to be king. He sent for her and he slept with her and she became pregnant. He tried to cover it up by having Uriah come home. Uriah wouldn't go and sleep with his wife. He slept at the gate. So he had Uriah killed by the sword of Israel's enemy. For awhile I suppose David thought everything was going to be alright. But then Nathan came and told David that story in 2 Samuel about the guy and the sheep. He took the neighbor's little lamb and all that. David's blood got boiling and he said "How could someone do such a thing?! That's terrible! That man should die! That guy that did this to his neighbor is terrible!" Then Nathan looks David in the eye and says, "You're that man." He wasn't talking about a golf tee shot. "You're the man. You're the guy who sinned in this way." He tells David there are consequences to his sin. He said, "You did it in private. You tried to cover it up so no one would know about it. What you did, someone from your own household is going to do to you in broad daylight for everyone to see." And it happened later with Absalom. He said, "There are going to be some tough consequences coming."

Notice how David reacts to God's actions. God announces his actions through the prophet Nathan. The first words we are told that come out of David's mouth are "I have sinned against the Lord." That's something to learn from there, isn't it? You don't see David making excuses saying "Hey! She was the one taking the bath out where I could see her. It's her fault. If she wouldn't have done that, I wouldn't have done this." He doesn't make excuses. He doesn't point the fault finger at someone else. He simply says, "I have sinned against the Lord." Yeah, he sinned against Uriah. Yeah, he sinned against the commander of the army. Yeah, he sinned against Bathsheba. He

sinned against the servant he sent to go get Bathsheba and all these things. He sinned against a lot of people, but he understands that every one of his sins is truly a sin against the Lord because it is the Lord he is disobeying. It is the Lord he is offending. So he confesses that his sin is against the Lord.

Notice how God reacts. God does not have Nathan tell David “Okay, here’s 13 hoops for you to jump through and then you can have the peace of forgiveness.” That’s not how God acts. We are told that Nathan said, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.” His sin was forgiven. His sin was taken away, yet these consequences to his sin remained so that God could teach a lesson to the Israelites and to the king that you might think it’s good to be king, but it’s better to be faithful to your Lord. It’s better to be close to your Lord. It’s better to walk hand in hand with him instead of walking your own path and thinking that you know better simply because you are king. He tells him the child will still die so that David learns this lesson.

What a painful lesson that had to be. How heart wrenching those seven days had to be. Seven days, not eight, seven days. What happens on the eighth day? Isn’t that the rite of circumcision? So before the child could be circumcised, before that rite was done, the child dies. In those seven days...can’t you just see this from what we read? You can see the elders of David’s house are standing there beside him. Each of them have an arm and they are trying to lift the king up off the floor, and he’ll have none of it. He understood that when he went his own way, it just screwed everything up for everybody. So now he is calling on God in his grace and his mercy. He’s fasting. He’s doing all these things so that perhaps the Lord might change his course of actions that he had announced. He does it time and time again, day after day after day, so much so that his servants are afraid when the child dies. They don’t want to go tell him. Maybe they are off in the corner doing rock, paper, scissors to see who is going to have to go tell David when he notices that they are whispering to one another. He says, “Is the child dead?” Yes, God, who is hands on at times acted and took that child out of this world. Imagine how apprehensive you would be if you were one of those servants. Who knows what David might do now.

That’s what makes it so amazing. He gets up. He cleans himself up because for seven days he hadn’t. Then the next thing we are told he did is that he went to the house of the Lord and he worshiped. He didn’t have the hymns that we’ve sung so far today, but that has to be the essence of his worship, right? Those hymns that we have sung that talked about how we don’t always understand the ways of God but we trust in God...that had to be the essence of David’s worship. David reacted. He reacted by saying the Lord had taken his child away, and it had to hurt him, there is no doubt this had to hurt, yet he responds with trust in God that God still loved him, that God would still be with him, that God would still sustain him through everything he had to face. That was his reaction.

Did you notice how God acted again? David and Bathsheba had another son and named him Solomon. God said “No, I have a better name for you. Give him the name Jedidiah.” That’s not a name we use very often anymore. Maybe we should. It’s really

a cool name. Do you know what it means? It said in there twice what the name Jedidiah means. The name Jedidiah means “loved by the Lord.” So every time David would say instead of “Solomon come here,” every time he said “Jedidiah come here, Jedidiah get over here,” he would be reminding himself and his family that the Lord loved them in spite of their sinfulness. That’s God’s action. He acts to try to keep his love for David and David’s family, and all people, in front of David every day of his life because in essence that’s what sustains us through all the difficulty we face in this world...the truth that God loves us.

At times we have to step outside of ourselves. We have to step outside of our feelings. We have to step outside of what we can see and just focus on what God has said to be true. When we lose a loved one or when a loved one is facing death, it hurts. It still hurts. It always will hurt. We might want to say “God, where is your love? You raised Jairus’ daughter. Why don’t you heal my loved one?” We tend to remember that he raised Jairus’ daughter, but we forget about David’s son, right? That is also equally a valid action from our God.

Our times are in his hands and if he acts to say “It’s time for this person’s time to end,” who are we to say “No God. You shouldn’t. I know better.” But we want to, don’t we? That’s because the loss of a loved one is painful and we don’t want to experience it.

Learn trust in the face of death. David said, “I can’t bring him back. It’s not time for fasting now. I’ll go to him. I’ll go to the grave, but he won’t come to me.” We know from the rest of Scripture that those who die in the Lord are with the Lord. They are better off by far. We find our comfort and our peace and our trust in that. We say the God who loved us enough to forgive us for the times when we think we know better, the God who loved us enough to forgive us for the times when we have been upset with him is the same God we trust to sustain us as we go through these things.

Then we have to focus on “loved by the Lord.” Our Jedidiah, our “loved by the Lord” is Word and Sacrament. We hear it in his Word. We’ve seen it the last four weeks in worship and with baptisms and affirmations that God acts to assure us of his love. This morning we have his very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. God acts to assure us that he loves us.

When our feelings tell us he doesn’t, focus on what is certain and true that is outside of our feelings - that is the love of Christ that lived and died in our place to take away our sins. That doesn’t mean he is going to take away all the difficulty. It doesn’t even mean he is going to take away all the pain. But it does mean that he’ll be there and help us through it. He’ll be there and sustain us. That’s what David learned the hard way.

Here’s the good news. God has enabled you and me not to have to learn it the hard way because we can learn it from David. Trust God in the face of death. Amen.