



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 16, 2014

6th Sunday after Epiphany

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](#)

The Savior's Sermon: Live A Holy Life

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Throughout this whole season of Epiphany we've seen how Jesus is revealed (which is what the word epiphany means) by things that are out of the ordinary, that are (as we looked at) things that are miracles. Things that are paranormal. Things that go beyond the norm of science. Even his teaching is powerful and different than what people would expect. The portion of the Sermon on the Mount that we read today really shows you how Jesus turns things upside down from what we think about in our daily lives.

I have a feeling that you're like me at times. You really start kind of patting yourself on the back when you don't say and do the things that you are thinking about someone that irritates you. Do you ever find yourself doing that when someone is really annoying you? Maybe it's your spouse? Maybe your kids? Maybe a coworker? You just keep smiling and you don't say the things you're thinking and you think, "Boy God, you're lucky you have someone like me that can control themselves, huh?" Then you have Jesus come along in the Sermon on the Mount and say, "You've heard it said 'don't murder anyone.'" And you're thinking, "Yeah, I've never done that." Then he says, "I tell you, anyone that gets angry or hates someone else is a murderer." Oops. "Don't look at someone with lust or else you've committed adultery with them." Oops. Jesus is telling us the things at times that we would pat ourselves on the back for are still sin before our God.

When he urges us to live a holy life, he's talking about thoughts, words and actions. So he encourages us to do it because of who he is and what he has done for us...how he has taken away our sins through Jesus' life and death, but not to think that just because you've done it once that's enough. You heard that in our Second Lesson today, right? "You do love other people throughout Macedonia" is what he says to the Thessalonians. "You are living a sanctified life and you are serving your Lord, but do it more and more." That's our goal as Christians...to serve the God, who loved us so much, more and more in our daily lives.

As you think about this section of the Sermon on the Mount, now you come to what we are talking about in the First Lesson. It's the story of David and Bathsheba. It's kind of showing you what happens when you take your attention off of (even for a time) living for the Lord and you start just living for yourself. It can lead to a lot of problems for yourself and others. We'll see that as we talk about David and Bathsheba.

David and Bathsheba is kind of a familiar story for probably most of you here. Even if it isn't, it was pretty vivid when we read it, isn't it, the things that are going on and the things that happened? It's striking how God says some of these things in an understated way without commenting on them.

He starts out by saying it's the time in spring when kings go off to war, but David stayed home. He doesn't say he should have went to war, but that is what is implied, right? He should have been doing what he had been called to do. David is the kind of guy...as you read through Scripture, if you've been doing the *Today's Light Bible* readings and you're getting into Samuel now, one of the things you've just went through is the period of Judges, which is dark and bleak and full of horrific things and people doing things that would just make your stomach turn. Then along comes David. He's a bit of a shining light after reading all of that because he's described as a man who has a heart after the Lord's heart, who loved the Lord and served the Lord. In the first part you read about him doing things that...I read it and kind of shake my head at it and think I don't know if I could do that.

When David was focused on the Lord, he did amazing things. God had told him that he was going to be the next king. The guy who was the present king, King Saul, was chasing him and trying to kill him. A couple of different times, the Lord put Saul right into David's hand. David could have killed him and said, "God told me I was going to be the next king. Obviously the Lord has done this." But he said, "No, I can't raise my hand against the Lord's anointed. I'll trust that the Lord will take care of things in his own time and in his own way."

I think that is kind of amazing because you know how we are. We always want the Lord to take care of things on our time and in our way, not in his time and way. To be patient and trust in the Lord are tough things, so when you see David do that, you're kind of amazed.

Even after Saul died, for two years Saul's son Ish-Bosheth ruled over most of the tribes. It says David only ruled over Judah. Even when things fall into place for David, they didn't fall into place for David. Then even after he became king, his own son Absalom rises up in rebellion against him. You see David have a heart after the Lord in his love for his son who rebelled against him. It's just amazing.

But in this account, David had just defeated the Ammonites in the last season of kings going off to war, so he kind of won the Super Bowl. Now he decides "I am just going to take it easy this time around when kings go off to war. I'm staying home. I'm going to put my feet up and relax." That's kind of what we hear all the time, what we are bombarded with today. It's all about you. You deserve a break today. David says, "Yeah, I do. I'm just going to take it easy." Then part of taking it easy is not being off doing what God had called him to do, to be king and lead his people off to war.

He sees Bathsheba when she is bathing and he gets intrigued. He sends his servant. "Go find out who that woman over there is that is bathing." Isn't that a weird job for a

servant? How would you like to go knock on doors to find out... "Excuse me. Were you bathing upstairs?" That's kind of odd. Yet the servant comes back with what sounds a little bit like a warning, doesn't it? "This is Bathsheba. Isn't that the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" If you read in Samuel and you read about David's personal guard, it's kind of interesting. Those two names are listed as members of David's personal guard, Eliam and Uriah. I don't know if these are exactly the same two guys, but it's kind of an interesting coincidence I think. It could well be.

So in essence, David is being rebuked by his servant saying, "You probably shouldn't be focused over there David." But David was the king and as Mel Brooks said, evidently he thought it's good to be the king, and he sent for Bathsheba, slept with her, and she became pregnant.

If you're reading through *Today's Light Bible* with us, that means you've read Leviticus. Do you remember what God said at Mount Sinai was the penalty for adultery? Do you remember what the Levites were supposed to do? Anybody? Mrs. K's room often does a play called *Stone Soup*. Some of you here probably did that, but it wasn't stone soup. It was stoning. It was death. Death was the penalty for adultery. David, as the king, was supposed to have the book of the Law, the books of Moses with him, and he was supposed to read through it so that he ruled God's people according to the Lord's will. David knew this. That's why he goes into cover-up mode, right?

He sends for Uriah the Hittite. When he comes back from war, he'll go sleep with his wife. David says, "Go home and wash your feet." That means go home, take it easy and put your feet up. He sends along a care package. He sends a gift. Maybe roses, a nice meal, chocolates...I don't know what he sent, but it's something from the king's table probably to go take home to his wife and have a nice celebration. David thinks that will cover it up because everyone will think the child is Uriah's. But Uriah sleeps at the gate with the servants.

The next day David says, "What are you, loopy? Why didn't you go home to your wife?" Uriah says, "The ark is in the field. The Lord's army is in the field. Joab, the commander of the Lord's army, is in the field. How can I do such a thing...go home and sleep with my wife? I won't do it."

So here is David now being rebuked by Uriah the Hittite, not Uriah the Israelite, Uriah the Hittite (not one of God's people), who is seeking to serve and honor the Lord more faithfully than David was. It had to be a little bit of a sting to David I would think. David is not going to give up that easily though.

That night he has a party and gets Uriah drunk. He figures now he'll go home. A lot of guys get drunk and say one thing the day before and do the exact opposite when they are drunk, right? That has to be David's thinking. Drunk people don't get brighter, so that's what he is thinking. But Uriah still doesn't go. So now David has involved Uriah in the sin of drunkenness before the Lord. I have to think it wasn't just the two of them sitting at the table. There are probably other people involved in this sin.

Now he sends him back to war and involves Joab in his sin. "I have to cover this up because I don't want people to know that the child is mine. I'll have Uriah killed by the sword of my enemy. Then I'll take Bathsheba to be my wife. Maybe it will be close enough that people will think this is my child after we are married." Now he has Joab involved in his sin by having Joab put Uriah in the spot where he is most likely to be hurt or killed, and they attack and withdraw, and it says that Uriah the Hittite died. But did you notice that it also said that other Israelite soldiers fell? I don't think we are talking about tripping over stones. Other widows were created in Israel. Other children lost their father all because David was trying to cover up his sin.

Notice how this covering up of sin snowballs into more and more and more and affects more and more people and hurts and harms more and more lives? It just started out with him saying "Hey, look at that thing taking a bath!"

We think some things aren't that big of a deal, but of course to our God, he tells us even our thoughts are a big deal. We see here why they are a big deal, because it leads to more and more sin. I don't know if you're a Dave Ramsey fan, but I guarantee you that the sin snowball goes a lot quicker than your debt snowball. That's just a matter of fact in our lives as sinners. It snowballs into more and more things. Instead of just saying "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. I have sinned," we make excuses. It's the other person's fault.

Sometimes you and I carry bitterness and anger at other people for a long time. In our Second Lesson, God said to love your brothers and sisters. Love means to love as God loves us. It means to forgive as God forgave us. But it's hard for us, isn't it? We hang onto that bitterness at times. Like I said earlier, we might pat ourselves on the back if we don't lash out at people when we are holding that bitterness, but don't we? Maybe we don't lash out at the person we're bitter at, but have you ever noticed in yourself and maybe those close to you that when we're harboring something like this inside ourselves, we still lash out at people? Quite often it's our family, those that we assume are going to love us no matter what. When we're holding that grudge against a coworker, or we're mad at a spouse or a child or something like that, sometimes we lash out because we're so bitter about it at family members. Then they have to suffer because we haven't learned to forgive as God forgave us. You say that's no big deal. People do it all the time. Yes, they do, but that's not God's plan for you or me, is it?

It's not God's plan for me to make my wife's life miserable because I can hang onto bitterness, is it? It's not a good thing. Just think how happy you all can be that I'm not king because if I'm hanging onto that bitterness, whose to say I'm not going to be like David and all of a sudden use my power to kill people? It isn't that far of a leap you know. We say we wouldn't do it, but we do all kinds of stuff, don't we?

I would hope right now that if I would just say "Amen," you won't stand up, because you're waiting to hear something more than just what I've told you so far.

We had a Bible class on preaching last year, on Sunday nights. I think it was last year. As we studied what should go on in preaching, one of the things it said is that the Gospel should always predominate, be more prevalent, than the Law. But look at that reading I just read to you and that we've been talking about from the life of David in 2 Samuel. Can you find any Gospel in there? It's just a sad story.

It's a sad story that even those that we think are great Christians are still going to sin against their God. When we aren't focused on our God, we're all going to sin against our God. There's nothing in there that tells us about how God took away that sin. That comes later. But do you know the rest of that story...how God sent Nathan, and Nathan confronted David, and then David repented? If you want to know what was going on in David's head as all this stuff was going on, as he was covering up his sin and all that, then you read some of his Psalms.

One of his Psalms has the heading *after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba* ([Psalm 51](#)). In there it says "When I kept quiet, when I kept silent, my bones groaned within me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." He's describing what guilt does to us. "It was miserable. It was awful. It was loathsome to me and to the people around me. Then it all changed. I said 'I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin." He did that through Nathan coming to him and showing him his sin. Then David stopped trying to cover up his sin. He stopped trying to excuse his sin or shove it off into that dark corner of his mind where he didn't want to think about it anymore. He simply said, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Because of God's promise of the Savior to come, who would live perfectly in our place and then who would die in our place, God forgave David's sin. No more hoops to jump through, none of these things, but forgiveness full and free through a God who promises forgiveness.

It's the same for you and me. We might say we haven't killed someone by the sword of the Ammonites. That might be good and true and that's wonderful. But we certainly have sinned against other people. And we certainly have done it in our thoughts. We've done it in our words. We've done it in our actions. You and I don't need to stand here and say "Yeah, but they did this and they did that. Yeah, but other people do worse things" and things like that. You and I need simply to say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Jesus lived and died in our place. He takes away the guilt of our sin. Instead of living with this bitterness, we now can live with the joy of sins forgiven. We can now live with the joy of knowing that although I am doing the exact things at times that God has told me not to do, and I'm not living the holy life he has called me to live, he still loves me and forgives me for the sake of Jesus Christ. If that doesn't thrill you, you don't understand the seriousness of sin yet! This is what your God has done for you. He forgives you fully and freely.

When you recognize that, when you realize that and you start seeking to live with your eyes focused on his love for you, you're going to want to live a holy life, not because

you have to, not because you have to earn his love, not because you have to earn his favor, because he's already poured it out on you fully and freely in Jesus. That's why we want to live this holy life. That's why we want to love one another more and more. That's why we want to honor God in our daily activities more and more.

This is the glory that you and I have as Christians. Our God looks at us, sees us for what we are, and says, "I love you anyhow and I've taken away all those sins in Jesus." If that doesn't thrill you, I don't know what will.

Yes, we got up this morning and we got more snow than we were supposed to get. You get in your car and you drive and there's more to knock off than you thought there should have been to get here. As you drive, maybe you're driving on roads that aren't the best, or driveways or roads that haven't been plowed completely and you're going, "Man, why am I going through all this just to hear some preacher talk?"

But here's what makes it worth it...you're Lord has looked you in the eyes and said "I love you. I've taken away your sins." I don't care what the weather is, and I hate the winter. Just stick around for five minutes and you'll hear that. I hate it. But what a great day to know that I am a Christian and I am forgiven. What a great day to share that truth with someone else. Amen.