2 Samuel 12:1-13 Rev. Jonathan E. Scharf

Ash Wednesday 3/1/2017

**You Are the Man!**

God had given him everything. He took him as the youngest, least accomplished son of a nothing family. He gave him glory in the most talked about military victory – probably of all time. He gave him skill and talent and strength and success. God protected him when the powers that be wanted him dead. God gave him the throne over the most advantaged nation in the history of the world. He gave him money, and food, and luxury. The women all wanted him and the guys all wanted to be him – even though he had been a nothing. He had been given it all. God made David king and just asked that he thank him by showing his people what a godly life looked like, by caring for his people, “shepherding” them he called it. You know, show them what it looks like to keep the 10 commandments, “Walk before me and be blameless” he said.

 And David enjoyed it. Everything he asked for he got, except the job he asked to take on – building a temple. He had asked if he could do that work, but God said “Don’t worry about that, I’ll handle that. You don’t have to do that.” In fact, God went farther. He said, “I want to do more for you. I don’t need you to build a house for me. I want to build a house for you. I want to make your name great and your throne eternal. I want to promise you more than you could have ever thought to ask.” God had given him everything.

 But then, you probably know the story: David found one thing he didn’t have ...Someone else’s wife. In fact, it was the wife of one of his most trusted and famous warriors, one of the group known as “the Thirty” - his personal bodyguard. The guy’s name was Uriah. He had been with David through it all. Uriah wanted nothing but to serve David and in so doing, serve his Lord. He trusted him. He put his life on the line for him, day in and day out. In fact that’s what he was doing as all this happened. The only thing Uriah didn’t share with David or willingly sacrifice for David was his wife. So David took her. And then he killed him. He set up and abandoned this faithful servant, this valiant soldier and friend, because he wanted his wife. And once Uriah was dead, David married her. Think about that.

 What does that story do for you when you think about it? What should happen to David? According to the law of his land, he should die several times over – for adultery, for murder. But it’s more than that – he had been given everything. He really had no excuse. **As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!”** Right? That’s what David said.

 Friends, **You are the man!** You are the one who has been given everything. You think David was blessed? He never had air conditioning or 4 wheel drive. He thought 2-horsepower was good for his vehicle. He never had a pizza, never got to play candy crush, never even watched a March Madness game. You have more freedom, more money, more comfort, more luxury, more more than any group of people that has ever lived really. And all of that is from God – from your ability to breathe to the ability to work, to the ability to worship and speak and play and live in freedom. God gave you that. And he asked the same thing of you. Let your light shine. “Walk before me and be blameless.” That’s all.

 You were given everything, and yet you wanted more. Now, I’ll let each of you fill in the blank for what your personal Bathsheba is – but you know it’s true. **You are the man. You are the woman**. You sinned. The spouse God gave you wasn’t enough. You lusted after someone else with a different body shape. The standard of living God gave you wasn’t enough. You spent more than you could afford to have your wants and cut out doing what God wanted you to do with your money. The greed, the anger, the hate, the fear, the things God says you have nothing to do with – you did. You do. **You are the man.**

 Ask yourself: How could I fall in love with the things of this world when God has given me treasures in heaven? How could I speak such terrible words to the faithful spouse God has given me? Or think such unfaithful thoughts? How can I lose my temper with others when God has been so patient with me? How can you fail to show up on Sunday morning to give thanks for all he gives Sunday through Saturday? How could you schedule over your devotion time when he sacrificed it all for you when the time had fully come? How could you do such a wicked thing and sin against God? You are the man!

 That’s what Nathan told David. You see our text starts with some of the best news David could ever have hoped to hear. It starts so simply. **The LORD sent Nathan to David.** He sent him because David was heading the wrong way. Later, David would write about this time. Let me read some of his words. This is Psalm 32 (v. 3) “**When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night *your* hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.**” Do you know that feeling? I wonder if psychologists today would call it “depression”? Sounds like it. But that’s what happens. When we let things get in the way of our clean relationship with God – that’s what results – depression – “sapped, hand heavy on me,” “why me?” “why is this happening?” But look at what David says “**Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”**

 And that happened because the LORD sent Nathan to David. And this same LORD, who had established his covenant with David, has done the same with us in Holy Baptism. The one who sent Nathan sends us his Word, pastors, Christian friends to call David, to call us to repentance and to return to him, to show us how stupid what we are doing is.

 Why? Because he loves us. Think about it. The person sinking in quicksand, mired and sinking into the muck of sin, will surely die. The person drowning, splashing around in the water, needs help and rescue. Years ago, I found myself walking past a hotel pool and noticed a three or four-year old in the deep end flailing for help. I looked for who was watching her. The mom seemed panicked by the side and frozen in fear, not sure how her kid got in the water, and certainly not sure what to do. I don’t know if she didn’t know how to swim either? But then the girl started going under. Her flailing wasn’t enough to keep her head up. What would you have done right then? Of course you jump in. Who cares if your clothes will get wet? Who cares if it might be uncomfortable? You don’t want the kid to die. You jump in and save her.

So God jumped in to save us. He sees us in our sin and is not willing that any of us should perish but that all should come to repentance. So the LORD sent Nathan. Even though David had been hiding from God and from reality for a year, drowning his couch with tears, in that cycle of guilt and rebellion and guilt and shame and feeling lousy and guilt and depression. The LORD sent Nathan to make David realize his sin, and he does the same to you.

He sends you things like this sermon every week, twice a week in Lent. *That’s God calling you to repentance*. He sends you the Christian friend whose example or whose words remind you what you are failing at. *That’s God calling you to repentance*. He sends the Word when you open it at home, in your email devotions, in your teaching it to your kids. *That’s God calling you to repentance.* He sends pain to knock you off your proud feet from time to time. *That’s God calling you to repentance.* He sends the stubbed toe, the crime you see on TV, the crime you experience. He sends the guilty conscience. *That’s God calling you to repentance*. All of those things are Nathan telling you “**You are the Man**.”

You are the man that God loves enough to call to repentance. And you are the man that God has so freely forgiven. When Nathan helped David see what sin is and does, David repented. When he realized what he was doing to God, he didn’t make excuses, didn’t make some fake apology that he was sorry that somehow God got offended by what he did. He didn’t claim some right or point to his good works. He repented. Verse 13: “**I have sinned against the LORD.”** Or as he said in our Psalm of the Day – “**Against, you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.”** Repentance is stopping to try to find some reason or explanation and simply begging for mercy like the man at the back of the temple in the Gospel Lesson. **“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”**

 And he does. Nathan answered David. **“The LORD has taken away your sin.”** He doesn’t wait for David to babble like the prodigal son, “I’ll make it up to you.” No. The conversation is simple. I’ve sinned. You are forgiven.

 Friends you are that man too. The blood of Jesus, God’s Son purifies you from every sin. The scapegoat was sent to the cross in your place. The sins have been drowned in the depths of the sea. So Nathan can say to you, “**The LORD has taken away your sin.”**

 He told you that in our Absolution this evening. He tells it to you in His Word every time you open it up. He will tell it to you again in the Lord’s Supper in a few minutes. **The LORD has taken away your sin.** Nathan goes on. **You are not going to die.**

 Notice there is no *life* word there. Life is proclaimed instead by the negation of death. So tonight too, ashes on the forehead with the deadly refrain, “Dust you are and to dust you will return” – no word of life, but these ashes were put on you traced in the shape of the cross. That cross silently speaks life. “Dust you are…” you hear, but in the shape of the cross you see, “You are not going to die.” Behold, Easter fast approaches! That’s what this season of Lent is preparing you for.

 In a few minutes we’ll confess, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. These are not just a list of things tacked onto the end of the creed. *Oh yeah, and I believe this stuff too.* No, these go together. Because of the forgiveness of sins, we have resurrection to life. You are that man – freely forgiven and given life. **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** In Christ, Amen.