

Repent and Be Forgiven by God - 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:10, 13-15

The Word of God through which the Holy Spirit guides our hearts and minds today is recorded in the First reading of today - 2 Samuel 11 and 12, which was read before.

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together”. Amen

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Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

I think you have heard about the famous golfer Tiger Woods. “He won the U.S. Masters at Augusta in 1997 with a record score at age 21, making him the youngest man and the first African American to earn the title. Woods won another 13 majors and was named the PGA Player of the Year 10 times over the next 12 years, but he struggled to regain his top form after personal problems surfaced in 2009. The media reports that he had many mistresses. On December 2, 2009, Woods offered an apology to his fans and family, expressing regret for unnamed "transgressions."

But as the mistress count rose to more than a dozen women, with phone evidence to back many claims, Woods was unable to suppress media inquiries into his life. So the life and career of the world’s greatest golfer fell apart with the swing of a club — and it was not even his swing.”

The issue of infidelity is not new. There have been other reports about infidelities by important people. To name a few, there is the former President of the United States Bill Clinton. Of course, Clinton is not the first president to have the reputation of a womanizer. John F. Kennedy has been the subject of much debate over just how blatant his romantic extra-marital liaisons were during his term of office. Or we read about Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowes. But we can also look farther back, in the days of King David of Israel and see the same scenario being played out for us.

If anything, the story that lies behind our text today is even more dramatic. It involves a king who lusts for another man’s wife, seduces her while her husband is off serving in the army, gets her pregnant, and then tries a massive cover-up in which the husband is called home to give a report to the king. But when the husband does not go to his wife, the king goes so far as to plot to have the man killed in a suicide raid. But then again, in our day and age this whole story would not be all that big a deal.

If you take away the murder, most people would not be all that troubled about the affair. For the most part, people are not really all that concerned about his improprieties. What they do

in their free time is their own business. That is also the same attitude that we tend to have towards all sinful actions in general. Today we all tend to operate under a form of situational ethics: if we find ourselves doing something we should not do, we find a way of excusing it or rationalizing it in that situation. We somehow manage to convince ourselves that we are right, at least in our situation. But our text makes it clear that God has strong feelings about sin. Not only that, it makes it clear that God will not take lightly nor ignore the sins that we commit against Him. But while He will not ignore sin, He will forgive it when we turn to Him with trusting, repentant hearts.

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he knew that he had done something wrong. But he worked very hard to cover up his indiscretion. His efforts in bringing her husband, Uriah, home from the wars was to make it seem that the child born to Bathsheba was legitimate. After that failed, David had Uriah killed, and was then able to take Bathsheba as his own wife. He married her quickly, and again, in order to make it seem that the child was legitimate. And David must have thought he did a fine job of covering his tracks.

But our text makes it very clear that David could not hide the ugliness or the reality of his sin from God. ***But the thing David had done displeased the LORD***, we are told. Maybe David did not think that what he had done was all that bad—with the possible exception of the murder. But it was bad, so bad in fact that David is in danger of losing his eternal salvation. If he had died during that time of a year to two years before Nathan came to him to remind him of his sin, David would have been in hell, lost because his impenitence, his unbelief, and his self-righteousness.

But the gracious Lord of all does not let that happen. And He sends the prophet Nathan to his way-ward child. Nathan comes and tells David the story of two men - one rich, the other poor. The rich man has everything he could ever want; the poor man's only possession was a little lamb that was more a part of the family than a pet or piece of livestock. But when the rich man has company visit, he comes and takes the lamb of the poor man and uses it to feed his guests.

Well, David is infuriated that someone would do such a terrible thing to another person, and he is ready to punish this rich man for his crimes—until Nathan brings out the punch line: ***“You are the man! Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.*** David may have tried to ignore his own sinfulness. He tried to sweep it under the carpet and forgot about it. But he could not hide it from God. And He is going to have to answer to God for the things he had done.

We need to remember the same thing in our lives. We have often talked about the fact that the whole concept of sin seems to mean so little to people today. We excuse our actions,

because they are not really sinful, at least according to our way of thinking. Or we put our efforts into rationalizing or justifying our actions, no matter how wrong they have been rather than simply coming before God and acknowledging the truth, as David finally did: ***“I have sinned against the LORD.”***

But no matter how much we try to lessen or ignore our sin, God does not ignore it, and sooner or later, the time comes when he says, “Enough is enough. What you are doing is wrong in my sight, and you are going to have to face the consequences of that.” Those consequences are tough: sin brings forth death and hell, and that is something that we all deserve and something we would all have to face if something is not done about our sin. But most sins also bring with them some very painful earthly consequences.

For David, it meant that the child born to him was going to die. Every pain and sorrow and trouble we feel, especially those that we can trace back to our sinful actions are truly God’s way of pointing out to us that He does not ignore sin, nor take it lightly in any way, shape or form.

Friends, God does not ignore sin—but He will forgive it. When we see Jesus being anointed by the woman in our gospel lesson today, the people around Him think that Jesus just does not know what kind of woman she is. But Jesus knows her sin. He knows better than any of the people there all the things that she has done that are wrong in her life. Jesus does not ignore the reality of her sinfulness. But He does forgive her, much to the surprise of Simon and all the other guests at the dinner. And He will do the same thing for us. God’s mercy is available for us.

To understand God’s mercy we must first understand how deep our sin is. How deep it is. And confess not only that you have made some mistakes in your life, for we all make mistakes, after all. That’s too easy. The truth is: we have not just made mistakes, we have rebelled. We have not merely tripped up, we have committed treason. For we have not just sinned against others, we have sinned against God.

Enthroning ourselves and our wants and our desires and our thoughts of what should and should not be, and dethroning God in our hearts. And not just once, but over and over again. Like David, one sin leading to another sin, and how often we too, instead of repenting, try to cover it up and get away with it. But Jesus Christ died on the cross for us.

That is what the cross is all about. The cross says that God does not ignore sin. Sin is something terrible, and the price of sin is high. But God pays that price for us in the death of His Son. All those sins that you and I try to ignore, or try to excuse are the very sins that cause the suffering and pain of the Saviour on the cross. But He willingly suffers and dies on that cross so that He can also forgive our sins. And His resurrection is God’s promise, God’s assurance to us

that all sins, including our sins have been forgiven. But before that sin can be forgiven, we have to take it seriously, too. Nathan speaks to David of His sin, and David confesses: ***"I have sinned against the LORD."*** He is no longer hiding His sin or ignoring it. He is ready to turn to the Lord and let Him take it away.

We use David's words of confession and assurance in the liturgy when we quote from one of his psalms: ***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.*** When we, too, stop ignoring our sins or taking them for granted, then we can turn to the Lord with honest hearts, admit that we have fallen short of His holiness, and throw ourselves upon His mercy.

The Lord is not going to ignore our sin—but He will forgive it. He will wash and restore us, for sin has already been dealt with at the cross. And in the assurance of Christ's death and resurrection for us, in the assurance that in our baptism we died to sin and rise to newness of life in Him, we can let that sin go—not ignored, but forgiven by our gracious God. Amen.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord,
and Savior. Amen