Ascension – December 3, 2017

**David – Proof that God Forgives “Real Bad Sins” Too**

Text: 2 Samuel 12:1-24

The Evangelist Matthew begins his gospel, his biography of Jesus, with the words: *A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David* (Mt.1:1). The angel Gabriel comes to the virgin Mary, *a descendant of David,* the Evangelist Luke tells us, obviously regarding that as an important point. Gabriel speaks to Mary: *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus…. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign… forever; his kingdom will never end* (Lk 1:31-33). Later the angel came to Joseph; significantly he begins: *Joseph, son of David.*

We put the emphasis on Jesus’ divine Father. We stress that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit; God is his real father. That means Jesus is full, true, REAL God. But as we’ve seen, Jesus’ human ancestry is critical also. Without the right family-tree, he could not have been the Messiah and establish the everlasting Kingdom of God. For God had committed himself – made a promise – 1,000 years before Jesus’ birth. God had promised to Israel’s greatest king, King David, that the Messiah, the world’s Savior, would be THE SON OF DAVID, a direct descendant of David. In doing that God was tying the Messiah to an adulterer, murderer, and wife-stealer. There’s a gospel message in God’s tying Jesus to his ancestor David. It’s the message: **God forgives real bad sins too.** We will learn from King David today – a lesson taught in three parts: **Forgiveness Needed, Forgiveness Received,** and **Forgiveness Enjoyed.**

FORGIVENESS NEEDED

Back before the birth of Jesus into this world, the angel said to Joseph: *You are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.*

*He will save his people from their sins –*is that possible? Is it possible to be one of God’s people and still be a sinner who sins “real” sins – real, serious sins? I’m sure everyone would agree that also Christians sin little sins –like skipping a church service now and then, or having a beer or two too many at a party, or chuckling at an off-color joke or making some inappropriate comment to a coworker. But is it possible to be one of God’s people and be guilty of **real bad sins –** like abandoning wife and children for a younger woman or becoming an alcoholic who harms himself and those around him or murdering a child through abortion or being addicted to pornography? It sure is possible!

David was the greatest of Israel’s kings – the author of about 75 of the Bible’s psalms including the all-time favorite 23rd Psalm: *The Lord is my shepherd. I shall lack nothing.”* David was the most significant of all the ancestors of Jesus. *A man after God’s own heart* is the way the Bible describes him (1 Sam 13:14). David was also an adulterer who had an affair with another man’s wife, got her pregnant, and then murdered her husband so he could take her into his harem.

God had chosen David from a humble shepherd’s family and made him the most powerful man in the world at that time. Under King David, Israel extended its influence over the entire Middle East region. To this day when the Jewish nation speaks of “the good ol’ days,” they’re talking about the Kingdom of David. David was a man after God’s own heart – that is, a devout, religious man. Yet he fell into the most grievous of sins.

*Whatever was written aforetime was written for our learning,* the Bible says. And there certainly are things we can learn from David’s fall.

For one thing it came at a time of idleness for David. While his army was off doing battle, David, the warrior-king, the commander-in-chief, had stayed home at ease in his palace. They say “Idleness is the Devil’s workshop.” It’s a timeworn cliché, but so often it’s true. God gives us time to use in worthwhile, God-pleasing activities and pursuits. When we can’t find useful ways to spend that time, we challenge the Devil to come up with some ideas for us. A question for us today might be: Does our idle time spent before the soap operas, sit coms and talk shows on TV erode our moral fiber and tempt us to try the godless values promoted there? Or does selfish pursuit of recreation and leisure cause us to neglect our responsibilities toward God or family or neighbor? Failure to do good is damnable sin also – as is failure to use wisely God’s gift of time.

We can also learn from this sorry incident in David’s life how one sin begets another. Not only do we find ourselves led into new sins to cover up for the old, but even worse repeated sin tends to make us grow callous to sin – and fall farther and farther away from our God.

Also notice that King David’s grievous fall came later in life. They speak of youth as a dangerous time of temptation – and it is – but some of the Bible’s most wicked sins came in middle age or older. This is not spoken to let off youth but rather to warn all ages. The Bible does just that: *Let him who thinks he is standing, be careful lest he fall. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

FORGIVENESS RECEIVED!

David tried to hide his sin. He tried to cover it up by tricking Uriah into thinking Bathsheba’s pregnancy was his doing. When that didn’t work, David ordered Uriah killed in a way that no one would suspect who the real murderer was. David tried to hide his sin from God, too—he refused to acknowledge and confess it to God.

But it couldn’t be hid. God knew. While David kept going through all the outward motions of piety and worship, David’s conscience would allow him no peace. God saw to that. David describes his inner turmoil during this time in Psalm 32: *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.* ***4****For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer* (3-4). In Psalm 51 David admitted: *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.* ***4****Against you, you only, [O God] have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight* (3-4). Notice that David recognized that his real problem lie in the fact that his sin – all sin – is a sin against God and deserves God’s punishment.

David couldn’t forget his sin. He couldn’t shake his sense of guilt. His conscience kept him awake at night. Eventually he would have been driven to total despair. But God intervened. God sent Nathan the prophet to call David back.

First of all, Nathan applied the Law. The Law shows what a perfect God demands of his creatures. The purpose of that Law is to make us realize that we are sinners and doomed before God on the basis of our own record. Nathan applied the Law to David in a tactful and yet cutting way. Nathan knew good and well that it’s easy for people to recognize sins and shortcomings in others. So he approached David with the story of the rich man who stole his neighbor’s pet lamb. David’s righteous wrath and indignation were aroused. *As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die,* he yells out. And then Nathan said to David: *You are the man!*

As Nathan applied God’s Law, it had its desired effect. *I have sinned against the Lord,* David confessed. Those are profound words – and a correct understanding of the Law. Essentially David’s adultery and murder were sins against God – a direct slap in the face of God, an act of defiance and rebellion against the Lord of all.

Our sins are too. Every unkind word, every hateful thought, every nasty look, every selfish act, every good we should have done but turned away, every one of those sins is an act of rebellion against God – and deserves God’s punishment – the fires of Hell for eternity.

The Law cut to David’s heart –he confessed his sin, and with those words he threw himself entirely on the mercy of God. And Nathan immediately replied with the Gospel. The Gospel is the Good News – the Good News that there is full forgiveness and pardon because Jesus has paid the price of sin by laying down his life for us.

Nathan replied: *The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die* (13b).

David himself tells us about that encounter with Nathan and what it meant to him. David writes:

*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…. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them* (Ps 32).

God wants a clear and powerful message delivered to each penitent sinner – a message we can illustrate this way: When a messenger comes to a prisoner and says: “I announce unto you that the governor will pardon you,” the prisoner would have reason to say, “Thank you for the announcement. When will the governor’s pardon arrive? And what are the conditions?” But when the messenger says: “In the name of the governor and by his command, I set you free; you can go right now,” that leaves no room for the prisoner to doubt. In the same way the Bible’s message is not an uncertain forgiveness, in words such as “God will forgive if you….” No, ours is a message in the clearest possible terms: *As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sins from us!”* (Ps 103:12). The Gospel message God wants all of us to hear is this: *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him[Jesus]the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). He was delivered over to death for our*

*sins and was raised to life for our justification* (Rom 4:25).

FORGIVENESS ENJOYED

God permitted David and Bathsheba to taste the peace of forgiveness. He restored to them the certainty of their salvation. But God’s blessing to David was even more. God now helped David to change his sinful ways. You see, true repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for one’s sins, faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness, AND A SINCERE DESIRE TO CHANGE that sinfulness in one’s life. Herein lies the real distinction between the people of God and the wicked of this earth. Both sin. When the ungodly falls into sin, he continues in it and delights in it. But the child of God, when he falls into sin, cries to God for pardon and help, and then with God’s help, battles again sin in his life. And, with God’s help, the God-fearing man does produce results. Jesus calls those results, *fruit fitting for repentance*.

The Bible says: *We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* (Romans 6:4).

Forgiveness, however, does not mean that the Christian is set free from all consequences of his sin. To the contrary, as David learned, the forgiven sinner often will have to endure bitter consequences. Imagine giving your child a costly gift – perhaps a fragile doll or a high-flying drone – and warning him or her to treat it very carefully or else it will break. Now imagine that child disregards your warning, and the toy is hopelessly broken. What will you as a parent do? If the child comes teary-eyed, says he’s sorry and asks your forgiveness, you’ll forgive him and try to comfort him. But you won’t run out and buy another one for him right away. You’ll let that child bear the consequences of his carelessness and go without. It’s not that your forgiveness was insincere. Rather because you love that child, you want to teach him or her a lesson about carelessness – a lesson that will stick. God often deals with his people in such a way.

Although 100% forgiven, David and Bathsheba were left to endure the consequences of their sinfulness. Their first child – that child of adultery – died. Moreover, the Lord said, *the sword will never depart from your house* (v. 10) – turmoil and heartache would plague David’s household the rest of his days. And yet David and Bathsheba were also blessed. Their second son, Solomon, lived and went on to be the next king, write three books in the Bible, build the Temple, and be included in the family-line of the Savior. Moreover, later the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to tell David to rename Solomon JEDIDIAH, which means *Loved by the LORD.* The marriage of David and Bathsheba was founded on adultery and murder, but David was brought back to his God and forgiven, his marriage was blessed, and its offspring known as *the man loved by God.* So is the mercy of God!

The comforting message of the Gospel is for us also. *The Lord’s unfailing love surrounds*

*those who trust in him* (Ps 32:10) – David wrote those words from personal experience. Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of sinful David, the son of forgiven and restored David, is our Savior who came to rescue us – sinful though we are – also with real sins.. Because of Jesus, each of us can also be named JEDIDIAH, *loved by the Lord.*