



*David: A Man After God's Own Heart  
Acts 13:16-25*

*Fourth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, July 7th, 2019  
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois  
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*Text: I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my own heart... (v. 22)*

As I sat in the evening worship service on the last night of our recent Senior High mission trip I was taken by surprise when the worship leader based her message on today's text; I have found David... to be a man after my own heart. The line is part of the apostle Peter's sermon in Antioch. The worship leader then went on to tell a PG version of the story of David and Bathsheba.

"In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle," the story goes, "David sent Joab (his most trusted officer and "fixer") in his place ...." In other words, David stayed behind. It is said that "Idle hands are the devil's workshop". And so it was with David.

Late one afternoon he went on a walk in his rooftop garden and saw a woman bathing. She was a very beautiful woman, Scripture tells us. David asked who she was. "Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite" he was told. The king couldn't get her out of his mind. That evening he sent for her. They passed the night in his bedroom.

A few weeks passed when word reached David that Bathsheba was "with child" as the euphemism goes. I imagined that David's color drained from his face as he realized what this meant. Being as resourceful as any politician, modern or ancient, David sent a message to Joab, his "fixer". "Send Uriah home from the battlefield for a little R and R". Joab was not a stupid man. He knew David too well, I believe. He knew something was up, but he couldn't be quite sure what. He sent Uriah to Jerusalem. When Uriah appeared before David, the king asked how things were going on the front. "Very well," Uriah reported. "You have been a good and loyal soldier," David duplicitously. You have earned a little time to be at home with your wife. Go spend a night or two. You've earned it."

Being a good and loyal soldier Uriah went home as the king commanded, but he did not go into his bedroom. How could he, in good conscience, spend time with his wife when his fellow soldiers were sleeping under the hardships of the battle front?!

Foiled, David sent for Uriah again. This time he invited him to dine with the king and plied him with food and drink. When Uriah got a little drunk, David had Uriah carried home to spend the night with his wife. Again, though, Uriah did not enter the "domestic comfort" of his home.

Feeling increasingly desperate David had one more trick up his sleeve. He sent Uriah back to the front with sealed orders to be handed personally to Joab, David's fixer. When Joab opened the envelope and read what the king ordered--a full frontal attack on the most heavily fortified encampment of the enemy with Uriah in the lead, Joab was puzzled. Then he read the next sentence, the forces of the king were to be pulled back so that Uriah would be "accidentally" killed in battle. Unbeknownst to him, Uriah had carried his own signed and sealed death warrant to his executioner. And, as I said, Joab was no fool. He may not have known the details of what was up, but he knew how to eliminate a "problem".

A few days later Joab sent word back to David that the maneuver had been executed with great loss of life, including the death of the honorable and loyal Hittite Uriah. When the time of mourning was over, David took Bathsheba as his wife.

Just when he breathed a sigh of relief and thought that he was in the clear, who should show up but a pesky prophet named Nathan. Now prophets had a special place in the life of ancient Israel. They spoke for God. They were wise and insightful. They were willing to speak truth to power. Nathan wanted a few minutes of David's time to tell him of a situation that had occurred in the kingdom that the king needed to know about.

"It seems that there were two men in a certain city; one was rich and the other was poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing except for one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.

"Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him."

David's anger grew greatly. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity".

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul, I gave you your master's house, ... I would have given you much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight. You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your own, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house."

And so it was. From that day forth David and his kingdom did not have a moment of peace. His sons rose up against him in civil war. His son Absalom was killed by Joab "his fixer" against David's specific order. For the rest of his life David saw constant rebellion and intrigue. Yes, David died an old man but even unto the end he was embroiled in conflict.

Now, tradition tells us that he wrote the 51st Psalm, upon which today's prayer of confession was based, in response to Nathan's words. The story of David reminds us that there are consequences to our sin. We worship a loving and forgiving God, but sin unleashes a Pandora's box consequences, not all of which can be taken back.

But to go back to today's text, how can an adulterous murderer be said to be "a man after God's own heart"? David is not someone that you would want your children or grandchildren to emulate? He is not exactly the ideal role model, is he? Well, as the Letter to the Romans reminds us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

When it comes to sin, no one is without it. There are no gradations to sin, either, despite what we may think or want to believe. We can never be good enough. That is why God decided to become one of us --one with us--in Jesus Christ. In Christ we see that God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. In Christ the Almighty reconciles us to God. In Christ God reaches out to us before we even lift a hand. In Christ God grabs us by the collar and plucks us from a sea of sin. No we are not perfect, but we are loved with a love that is relentless, constantly searching, constantly seeking, constantly calling our name; your name, my name.

Yet that does not answer the question; how can David be a man after God's own heart. Well, the answer was given to me on a Thursday night in makeshift basement chapel at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minnesota. The worship leader that night said that David pursued God with everything he had. He was passionate for God above everything else. David knew that God was God and that he, David, wasn't. God was and is the Boss. It was God who chose him to be king after Saul. It was God who enabled him to slay Goliath. It was God who helped him avoid Saul's wrath. It was all God, not David. David was truly humble, in the best sense of the word, because he placed God first in his life.

Before the wandering Israelites entered the Promised Land, that land flowing with milk and honey, Joshua charged them saying, "Choose this day whom you shall serve; the God who made heaven and earth or the gods of the culture around you." (Joshua 24:15)

In what we call The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his listeners then and now that one cannot serve two masters for they will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.

So, we have a decision to make. Who will we place first in life? Are you willing to take God seriously? Jesus seriously? Am I?

May it be said of us--each one of us--that we are individuals after God's own heart. Amen.