

Time after Pentecost  
The Reverend John H. Brock

Saturday, June 16, 2007  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15; Galatians 2:14-21

Grace to you and peace from God who is who was and who is to come. Amen.

There is a quote that's been around for over a century now, was first said by Lord Acton in Britain. I think we tend to know it slightly differently, the true quote is "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Isn't that what our first lesson tonight is all about? It's about a story of power corrupting. Power corrupting someone who was good looking, who was well liked, a good teacher, he was talented in politics, he was talented in fighting, he was a talented musician, he was a prolific writer of poems. David, son of Jesse, had it all. He was "IT" – whatever "it" might be. He was the second king of Israel, he was the slayer of Goliath, he wrote poems that became psalms, and he was husband to several women. The more powerful you were the more wives you were allowed to take. Anything that David wanted, not only because he was king, but just because of his charismatic personality, anything that David wanted he could pretty much have.

The thing was that one night when he's up in the palace looking out over Jerusalem and he sees on the next rooftop over, a woman bathing, which was the custom, he decided he wanted her. That wasn't a good thing because she was already married. But it didn't matter to David. He was king and he could have anything he wanted and he at that time wanted Bathsheba. She comes over and they are intimate. He sends her home and gets word a little while later that she's pregnant. Now he does try to kind of do the right thing in that he sends for her husband to come home from the army, from out in the fields where he's serving and tries to get her husband Uriah, to go have relations with his wife. But Uriah, Uriah is a good soldier. Uriah comes home and he says you know what if my fellow soldiers can't come home and see their families I'm not going to go see my wife, and he goes and sleeps in the barracks. Three times David tries to get Uriah to go home and be friendly with his wife. Even to the point of getting Uriah drunk one night, and none of it works. Uriah is a stout and upright and maybe we can even say stubborn man. So that when he goes back to the field David sends with him orders, that he doesn't see, but he gives them to his commander and these orders say that when the fighting is the fiercest send Uriah to the front lines and then pull back.

Now we don't know what the commander thought when he got these orders, but he followed them like a good soldier following his commanding officer and Uriah is slain. A period of mourning passes, Bathsheba is now free to marry and so David takes her quickly into his palace before she begins to show any signs of the pregnancy and all comes to pass and she's going along quite fine, coming close to being at term and along comes Nathan. Nathan's a prophet, Nathan's the voice of God and Nathan tells David this parable. The parable as we heard it as Jessie read it to us tonight, the tale of two men, one rich, one poor. One who has a huge flock, one who has one solitary lamb, who loves that lamb, treats it like a child. But when a visitor comes to the rich man it's not any from his own flock that he takes, but he takes the lamb from the poor man. David is enraged because David is a righteous man. We learn that as we read about David throughout the Book of Samuel that David is an upright moral kind of a guy,

almost. But no one else apparently knows his big slip up, or at least no one is saying that they know of this slip up. And David's enraged four fold the rich man should pay for this. I can only imagine what it must have been like in that room when Nathan turns and looks at David. You are the man, and David is stricken by his own consciences. David knows he has messed up. He has messed up major.

Now David is bound by the law, David has been trying to earn God's love by obeying the law and David; David had girl problems in a really big way. He messed up big time. Now I know that there is about a thousand years time span from the time of David to the time that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, but if you remember what you heard read to us <sup>16</sup> . . . we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. I know – David's way too soon to understand the Messiah, to hear the words of Paul, still, from our point of view, Paul in talking to the Galatians that strict adherence to the law will NOT save you. David found that out, didn't he? Because in all that he was doing he was for the most part, with this one very large glaring exception was a fairly law abiding guy. And not the laws of don't go over the speed limit and always pay your taxes, but the laws of do what the Lord commands of you. Give to those in need, make sure you wash, don't eat certain foods, do eat certain foods, and pray at specific times. David tried to be a law-abiding man. Still David discovered that you cannot hide from God. He tried to cover it all up, he tried to hide it, this relationship he had with Bathsheba.

But God knows. God knows the good stuff we do which is wonderful; God also knows the yucky, not so nice things that we do. What is amazing to me is that God loves us anyway. God loved David, that's why God sent Nathan. If God didn't care for David, if God didn't want David to turn around, Nathan wouldn't have come. There would have been no repenting, there would have been no turning and the corruption that started in David's heart would have continued.

And so we are reminded that when we attempt to follow the law without following Christ then we are like the unrepented David. Now we still have the law, the law is there to help us get along with one another, to help us deal in human terms, but we all need some kind of a law. If we didn't have speed limits we'd all keep getting the rear end of our cars bashed into. If we didn't have certain ways of dealing with one another, if we didn't have the civility laws, then we'd struggle in our relationships with one another, and those are good things. But, those laws will not earn us any one's love, just as the Law of Moses will not earn anyone's gods salvation. Paul wrote to the Galatians in v16. We have come to believe in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by . . . not the law, that we might be justified by faith in Christ. Not by doing the works of the law because no one will be justified by the works of the law. The LAW doesn't cut it. The Law won't get us into heaven. Doesn't mean we throw it out the window, but we realize it is a guideline and not the means to the end.

So where does that bring us? As we look at David and then the Galatians, does this mean that because we're forgiven it's okay to go out and have any kind of an affair we want? Because Paul reminds us that we are justified by our faith, does that mean that I can drive like I normally do, not care about other people in their vehicles? Does this whole lack of justification by the law mean I can skip out on, or at least not be as truthful about my yearly taxes? NO. Absolutely not. A person is justified not by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. That

does NOT mean that we are free to do whatever we want because we continue to be called by Christ, bound by the cross, affirmed in our baptism, that we are to live as those who have been crucified with Christ. Paul writes in vs20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. David learned power tends to corrupt. And we, by nature, are people who tend toward power and in so doing we will slip up. We will make mistakes, and we call that “sin.”

Let us give thanks to the LORD God Almighty that when we sin – not IF, but WHEN we sin that we remember that we are forgiven, we are blessed, we are healed.

Amen.