

LFLC August 1, 2021 - 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a; Psalm 51:1-12; John 6: 24-35
(Glenn Inglis)

2 Samuel 11 begins with the words: “In the spring of the year, the time when Kings go out to battle . . .” I guess you look at the lawn that needs cutting and all the silly meetings one needs to attend, and, well, there must be someone out there who needs a good thrashing. Sad commentary on the ways of our species.

But David took a break from these messy activities and was lounging about the Palace when he went out on the rooftop and spied below a beautiful woman having a bath. Her name was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of David’s top generals. What’s a King to do? He has Bathsheba brought to his quarters for some personal time together.

But things get complicated. Bathsheba becomes pregnant while her husband is off fighting one of David’s wars. The final solution was to give orders to his other general, Joab, to put Uriah in a place where he would be killed. And so it happened. Now David was free to marry Bathsheba.

A few weeks ago, I spoke about David and the ways of the powerful who often tend to do what they desire and leave the wounded in their wake: collateral damage. Add Bathsheba to the list. By modern standards, she was kidnapped and raped; forced to silence and shame.

But she also came to be mother of Solomon; through her the dynasty of David would continue. Yet she remained nameless – always referred to as the wife of Uriah. Even meticulous Matthew, writing in his prologue the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham, refers to David, “*the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.*”

Well, God is never left without a witness, and so Nathan the prophet is called to address David’s sin. How do you tell one of the most powerful men in the world that he has sinned? Well, Nathan uses a parable – artfully constructed – makes you weep. David too! “Kill him!”, shouts David as he hears of what the rich man did.

Nathan to the King: “You’re the man!”

David will not die, he will be forgiven. But the sword that David used to gain power and privilege, will now hang over the heads of all the leaders of Israel. A sword that will not be sheathed until the Babylonians one day conquer the Throne of David.

In the presence of God, there are always consequences.

(There is a saying that Ministers should never apologize for a sermon before they preach as there will no doubt be listeners who will demand an apology after the fact! But, I am going to jump to the John passage as it is extremely important for us to hear this day. And, I shall try to make a link.)

Last Sunday, Heidi preached on the Feeding of the 5000 and the meaning of that miracle. One consequence was that Jesus became a Super Star – people began chasing him to make him King, others followed him to Capernaum where they pestered him with questions.

Jesus said, “Look, you aren’t interested in the significance of what I did, you just want more bread. Don’t work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life which the Son of Man will give you.”

So . . . what does that mean?

Jesus: Believe in the one whom God has sent.

Yeah, OK, but how about a sign? – another miracle- you know, like Moses and the Manna.

Jesus: Moses did not give the bread, but God – my Abba, gave the bread. And God continues to give that bread which brings true life to the world.

Crowd: Great, then give us this bread!!!

Jesus: I am the bread of life. (Take a breath!)

The question arises: Did they, **do we**, believe these words?

You are well aware of the importance of faith in the Lutheran and, generally, all Protestant traditions. You are also aware that while Paul is the great proponent of justification by faith, the Epistle of James says, “Yeah, right . . . but how can you say you have faith without works? **Show me** your faith!

The Gospel writer John has a different tact. John never uses the word faith as a noun – it is always verbal in form – faith is an action. And John prefers the word ‘Believe’ – **believe in Jesus**.

The Temptation of David, and the powerful in general, is **to believe that they live above and beyond the common morality of lesser beings**. The flights of Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson into the threshold of space is a perfect metaphor to prove that the gravity that holds us to the ground does not apply to them.

But those for whom Jesus’ heart aches, the collateral damage of unjust societies, **often believe they are cursed, condemned, that no one, especially God, cares a hoot for them**. They feel so marginalized that they can only dream of a life that gives value, peace and joy - or try to gain it through illegal means.

Jesus did not come to overthrow the powers of the Jewish faith or the Roman Empire. He accepted the judgement of both, however wrong and cruel it was. He came to reveal the Reign of God that is like no other.

There is no way to discover or uncover this Reign without believing in Jesus.

That is the Stumbling Block we all must deal with. This is the Scandal of Christianity. For rich and poor, for proud and shamed, all are equal as we consider this astounding statement of Jesus.

And even those of us who do believe, we can get distracted. Why doesn't God reverse climate change? Cure my illness? Feed the poor? Free the oppressed? Fill our Churches?

Jesus also once had a question: *Abba, why do you not take this cup of suffering from me?*

It was Jesus' faith, his constant belief in the will of Yahweh, that allowed him to accept the Cross.

There is mystery within mystery, yet Jesus shows us what believing really means.

Jesus is the bread of life.

That which feeds the body also feeds the Spirit.

In the 60's onward the common term for money was, of course, "bread"! Money has been much of the world's bread of life for the past 5 decades or more – and some are determined to keep it that way. But the truth is there to see – money keeps us distracted; it cannot fill the deep spiritual hunger all of us face. And our desire for financial bread has created inequalities, pollution of mind and body, the destruction of the environment.

We listen again to Jesus: **I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never be hungry; and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.**

These words were uttered in a society where many people were hungry; where famine was common.

These words are spoken to us where food is plentiful – for most of us – but are we any happier?

As we prepare to come to the Table this morning, we might think for a moment and ask ourselves: For what am I hungry? For what do I thirst?

Ask Jesus for the grace to meet you in your need.

It is not I who invite you to the Table – it is Jesus – who meets us with a smile and says, "Take and eat, I am the bread of life. Believe . . . believe!"