

“You’re the Man”



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St. Michael’s Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God, Amen.

- “Grace for me. Judgment for you.”
 - Amen.
- We could set the record right now for shortest sermon ever.
 - Or I could keep going just a little bit.
 - Show of hands?
- OK maybe I’ll split the difference.
 - Every creature with eyes also has a blind spot.
 - In the movie How to Train Your Dragon, this becomes an important strategy.
 - In combat with a dragon, one of the trainees says “Look for its blind spot! Every dragon has one!”
 - In this case, the spot in question is right in front of his nose.
- Humans actually have a pretty good field of vision, due to the placement of our eyes.
 - But there are certain things we can’t see without a mirror

- And other things we have trouble seeing even with a mirror, like our own backs. Which makes it the perfect placement for a “kick me” sign.
- That’s if we’re talking about optical blind spots
 - But our readings this morning give us an opportunity to look at our spiritual blind spots.
 - The story of David picks up after he’s just committed these awful sins, of adultery and murder
 - But *before* he comes around to realizing what he’s done.
 - The prophet Nathan knows you can’t just call a king out directly.
 - He knows David has a moral compass in there somewhere,
 - But it’s only working on other people, not on himself.
 - In other words, he knows David has a spiritual blind spot.
- Which is why Nathan makes up a story to bring it into the light.
 - He pretends like David’s sin is actually someone else’s
 - And gets him to react to it.
 - Once the King’s moral compass has been activated, that’s the moment Nathan delivers his mic drop:

- “You’re the man!” It’s not someone else who’s guilty, it’s you!
- Turns our spiritual blind spot, like a dragon’s optical spot, tends to be right in front of our nose.
 - Something that should be painfully obvious to us, but for some reason it’s not.
 - Like the proverbial “plank in the eye” that Jesus warns us about.
 - We’re better at seeing minor sins in others (like in the prophet Nathan’s parable) than major sins in ourselves.
- I think we recognize this innately
 - When you hear a politician, or preacher, or some other leader, railing on and on about a particular sin...
 - Like the party leader who can’t shut up about corruption, or the pastor who can’t shut up about sexual immorality
 - Where do our minds go when we hear this? Yeah... that politician is definitely corrupt. And that pastor is definitely involved in all the sexual behaviors he’s preaching against.

- It's only reasonable. If we hate some aspect of other people, it's probably a projection of that thing we hate most about ourselves.
- And we're right on the cusp of doing it again. Judging others and ignoring ourselves.
- Grace for me, Judgment for you!
- Paul says it, in Romans 2:1 - "Therefore you have no excuse when you judge others ... because you, the judge, are doing the very same things."
 - I recommend that we all work to develop a catch in ourselves, whenever we start to complain about someone else's behavior.
 - Learn to automatically turn around and ask yourself, "Why does that bother me so much? Is it perhaps because I do the same thing?"
- Now I could end the sermon there, and it would still be pretty short. But it would also be kind of a downer.
 - So let me tack on some hope, here.

- How does David respond to Nathan? Does he have him run through?
- He probably could have.
- And Nathan took this chance. But he put his faith in David's core character, and it paid off.
- David's eyes were opened to his own crimes, and he repented bitterly.
- We may not see it in the passage from 2 Samuel. But we definitely see it in Psalm 51 which followed.
- What can we take away from this dark moment in David's life?
 - I think it's this: David seemed assured of God's forgiveness. And yet...
 - He didn't skip ahead.
 - When he realized what he'd done, he went to that dark place. He allowed himself to weep, and grieve, and to stay in that place for as long as it took.
 - It was actually several months before David realized that the time for refusing food and sitting in ashes was over. And when it was, he got up, washed his face, and ate his dinner.

- He came to the moment where he truly felt forgiven. The consequences were still real, and would never end. But he didn't have to stagger forward through life, wondering where he stood with God. He was loved.
- The hope I get from this is that God never left him.
 - He begs God to “create in him a clean heart”
 - And not to cast him away from God's presence.
 - He knows that God is still with him.
- And that is the simplest little notion, but perhaps the hardest for us to accept.
 - Say it “God is with me.” Easy, right?
 - But we don't live that way. We assume that God likes hanging out with us when we're good, and steers clear when we misbehave.
 - And this attitude affects how we interpret Jesus' words
 - He says “very truly you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”
 - We're all tempted to read judgment into that statement.

- Like if you were dating a person for a few months and then realized they only liked you because you paid for dinner.
- We think Jesus is judging them for getting hungry.
- But remind me: who is it that made all those loaves and fish? Who is it that turned all that water into wine?
 - That was Jesus too! He healed people because he cared about the illnesses that were distressing them. And he provided food because he cared about the hunger that was blinding them to everything else in life.
- Jesus was with them in their hurting and their hunger.
 - He didn't judge them for feeling sick or famished.
 - He provided for them in love.
 - He walks with you through every phase, dark or light
 - Which is why he's able to be there as soon as we're ready to move forward.
 - As soon as we've awakened to our blind spots, as soon as our pain and hunger and guilt are relieved.
 - Jesus is there, ready to carry us into something higher.
 - Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Sunday closest to August 3



Proper 13
Year B
RCL

<i>Track 1</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>Track 2</i>
2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a		Exodus 16:2-4,9-15
Psalm 51:1-13		Psalm 78:23-29
Ephesians 4:1-16		Ephesians 4:1-16
John 6:24-35		John 6:24-35

The Collect

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but 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." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. 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, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

The Psalm

Psalm 51:1-13

Miserere mei, Deus

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.
- 5 And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.
- 6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

The Epistle

Ephesians 4:1-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people."

(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

The Gospel

John 6:24-35

The next day, when the people who remained after the feeding of the five thousand saw that **neither Jesus nor his disciples were there**, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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