

Ash Wednesday 2021
2 Samuel 11: 1-5,14-17, 26-27

At first glance, King David appears to be an awful man. Like so many other famous and powerful politicians, his sins became very well known. He clearly violated two of God's Ten Commandments-#6 thou shalt not murder and #7 thou shalt not commit adultery. He also may have violated # 9 thou shalt not bear false witness and # 10- thou shalt not covet. All of the sordid details are found in 2nd Samuel, along with these words of God spoken through the prophet Nathan. **Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?**

Those words cut like a knife through his heart. Upon hearing them, the once proud and mighty King David became a different person. Although his sins were great, his brokenness and humility were greater. His blunt confession is found in 2nd Samuel verse 12:13: "I have sinned against the Lord".

The big difference between King David and many other high-profile sinners is that he didn't make excuses or blame someone else for his mistakes. When he was confronted with his sins, he didn't say it wasn't true or wasn't a sin. He recognized his transgressions, admitted he was in the wrong, and then begged God for forgiveness. And then he wrote everything down so others could learn from his mistakes and see that God is a God of grace and mercy!

That prayer of confession is Psalm 51, and in a few minutes, we will use it as our own prayer of confession. Pay close attention to his words, as they transcend time and place. Verse 3 I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Verse 4- against you, You only, I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. Verse 5- I was brought forth in iniquity, in sin my mother conceived me. He not only recognized his sins but also recognized his sinful nature. Verse 14 deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation. He recognized that there are much worse things to suffer than time in prison.

He also recognized that mercy, forgiveness and restoration are available by the grace of God. Verse 1-have mercy upon me O God, according to your loving kindness. Blot out my transgressions, wash me from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin. Verse 10 create in me a clean heart, O God and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

Comparatively speaking, our own sins likely seem trivial when compared to those of David. In human terms, that may be true. The problem is that God looks at sin differently than we do. God doesn't compare one sinner's list of sins against another sinner's list of sins to determine which is the most or least grievous. God looks for something much different. It is found in verse 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. God looks for a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart that says wash me from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Have mercy on me.... Instead of looking at our list of sins, God looks for repentance.

The truth is that all of us have much more in common with King David than what we might want to admit. We are all so very imperfect in so many ways it is easy to forget that we are also very much the same in one way. We are all fallen people in need of a Savior and a Redeemer. We are all in need of a God who is more willing to forgive than we are to ask for forgiveness. My prayer is that we would strive to be like King David in one most important way-recognize our sin and plead with God for mercy and forgiveness. The Good News is that God has already heard our pleas and sent us one who will save us from our sins if we ask. His name is Jesus.

Lent is a season for repentance, a time to recognize our sin and sinful nature and recognize our need for a Savior. It is a journey to the cross and to the side of our risen Savior- Jesus Christ. Each day will present a new opportunity to either move closer or further away from His sword pierced side. We will get there when we do what He did-set our face towards Jerusalem and rely upon the Holy Spirit to guide us. Let us pray for grace to arrive there together! Amen