**Bible Tuesday for Pentecost IV**

II Samuel 11:26 – 12:15

**26**When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. **27**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. **2**The rich man had very many flocks and herds; **3**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. **4**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.” **5**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; **6**he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

**7**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; **8**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. **9**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.**10**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. **11**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. **12**For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” **13**David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan said to David, “Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. **14**Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die.”**15**Then Nathan went to his house.

Unfortunately, the pericope only includes the middle one-third of the David and Bathsheba story. While this section of the story was chosen to focus on the theme of confession and absolution, it is hard to fully appreciate David’s contrition without reading the circumstances of David’s multiple sins against God, Uriah, Bathsheba and the nation of Israel.

In this story, David’s sins are many: abdication of leadership, adultery, abuse, deception and murder. The prophet, Nathan, proclaims through his parable that David’s greatest sin, which includes all previously listed, is his spurning of God’s graciousness. Wealthy, ambitious King David would not allow himself satiation in God’s benevolences, but greedily sought more, even stealing the meager fair of others.

When the prophet, Nathan, confronted David through parable, note David’s immediate honesty. No denial! King David is finally humbled by the truth of the matter.

### Psalm 32

**1**Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
    whose sin is covered.  
**2**Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
    and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

**3**While I kept silence, my body wasted away  
    through my groaning all day long.  
**4**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
    my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

**5**Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
    and I did not hide my iniquity;  
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,”  
    and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

**6**Therefore let all who are faithful  
    offer prayer to you;  
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters  
    shall not reach them.  
**7**You are a hiding place for me;  
    you preserve me from trouble;  
    you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

**8**I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
    I will counsel you with my eye upon you.  
**9**Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
    whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
    else it will not stay near you.

**10**Many are the torments of the wicked,  
    but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.  
**11**Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,  
    and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

The relief of confession and absolution is so often precluded by the fear of “fessing up”. Our media is filled with stories of cover-ups. How much better for us if we are forthrightly honest about the wrongs we do.

That is certainly this psalmist’s take! This psalm is attributed to David. Whether he or someone else wrote it, the idea of the relief of confession and absolution is clearly conveyed. “While I kept silence” means “While I refused to admit.” “Your hand was heavy upon me.” is a great description of a guilty conscience!

But then, “I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my iniquity;” and God forgave him! Mere acknowledgement of wrongdoing opens the floodgates of God’s grace!

Galatians 2:15-21

**15**We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; **16**yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. **17**But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!**18**But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. **19**For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ;**20**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 faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **21**I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

In this passage of Paul’s letter to the church in Galatia, Paul emphasizes everyone’s equality under the Law of Moses; equality in that all, Jews and non-Jews, are equally guilty in failing to perfectly keep the law. Being Jewish as over and against being non-Jewish, doesn’t get you any brownie points with God’s messiah either. God’s gift of faith into Jesus saves all, and is accessible to all, equally.

Luke 7:36 – 8:3

**37**And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment.**38** She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. **39**Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.” **40**Jesus spoke up and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” “Teacher,” he replied, “speak.” **41**“A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42**When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?”**43**Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt.” And Jesus said to him, “You have judged rightly.” **44**Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. **45**You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. **46**You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. **47**Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” **48**Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” **49**But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” **50**And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Just a couple months ago in late Lent we heard this story from the gospel of John, where Mary, Lazarus’s sister, anointed Jesus and Judas Iscariot objected to the “waste”. There, in Bethany, so close to Golgotha, both in distance and time, Jesus defends Mary’s actions by saying, “She has anointed me for the burial.” Notice how differently the story is told in Luke!

First, setting: Jesus is not dining with friends, but with a disrespectful Pharisee. It was tradition to show honor to another by kissing the other in greeting (which is why Jesus asks, “Judas, do you betray me with a kiss?”) but this Pharisee gave Jesus none. For cleanliness and comfort, a host also offered bowls of water and towels for guests to wash their feet, sometimes even providing a slave to do the washing. But, again, this Pharisee provided nothing. The Pharisee treated Jesus like a tardy cable man instead of a prophet, or even a colleague.

In order to understand the choreography of this scene, recall that dining at this time was done laying on one’s side propped up on one elbow either on a cushion on the floor or a cot.

Second, the woman: Luke describes the woman as “sinful”, but “sinful” is not defined. This word is different than the word for “prostitute”, so her sins may be thievery, etc. Because Jesus is reclining away from his fellow diners, the woman could easily stand behind Jesus’ feet and weep on them. The jar of perfumed ointment is not described as “costly”, nor preparation “for my burial”.

Contrition vs. Gratitude

Is the woman trying to earn her forgiveness or is she showing gratitude for what has been given? When Jesus applies the parable, he addresses the Pharisee and guests, saying, “Her sins have been forgiven” using the past perfect tense which means the forgiveness has already been granted the woman. She is showing a great amount of gratitude, as opposed to the Pharisee, who seems to only show contempt.