

**Proper 6, Year C (RCL) –  
2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, (11-14), 15-21a; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-8:3;  
Psalm 5:1-8  
The Rev. Skip Bushee**

Since today is Fathers' Day, I was hoping that our lessons would contain stories of fine, upstanding, God-fearing men to use as examples for all of us fathers here today. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Our Old Testament lesson is the last part of the story of King David's lust for Bathsheba and his arranging of the murder of her husband Uriah to cover up his adultery. The Gospel reading tells of Simon the Pharisee and his "holier than thou" attitude toward the woman who was the repentant sinner. Both of these were the worst kind of sinners: ones who because of status or position had deluded themselves into not recognizing their sin. They convinced themselves that because of their high position and good works, they were somehow better than others and not subject to the law.

King David was the Bill Clinton of his time. Because of his position of national leadership, he felt that he could indulge his sexual proclivities without suffering the consequences. As Mel Brooks said in *History of the World, Part I*, "It's good to be da king."

Of course David got himself into even greater trouble when he tried to cover up his sin. He recalled Uriah from the front hoping that he would sleep with his own wife and thus be required to claim the child of her adulterous liaison with David as his own. But Uriah refused to comply. Even at this point, David could have admitted his guilt and accepted the consequences but instead, he chose to once again exercise the prerogatives of his immense power and arrange to have his loyal general killed on the battlefield.

If you are thinking that this story doesn't relate to you, think again. One doesn't require the immense power of being a national leader to commit this type of sin. Have you ever told a little white lie only to find yourself having to compound the lie as people question you or repeat your statement to others who also question you? Have you ever been caught because you forgot to keep your story straight?

We all think we can get away with it; that no one will ever know. But God knows and isn't that all that really matters?

There is a story about Sir Robert Watson Watt, the inventor of radar, which helped save Britain in the early part of World War II and was a key factor in the allies' winning the war. It seems that while driving in Canada some years later, Sir Watson Watt was arrested for speeding – he was caught in a radar trap. He wrote this poem about his experience:

Pity Sir Robert Watson Watt  
Strange target of his radar plot.  
And thus, with others I could mention,

A victim of his own invention.

Like King David and Bill Clinton, he created something that would later come back to haunt him.

They all thought they would get away with it but none of them did. Watson Watt got caught by his own radar, Bill Clinton was caught by relentless investigative reporters and David was caught by the public media of his day – the relentless prophet Nathan.

Knowing that David would deny any direct allegations of his guilt, Nathan used the cunning tactic of telling a parable and asking the king to judge the hypothetical character in the parable. Of course, in so doing, David judged his own crime and effectively prescribed death as punishment. God spared David but caused the death of the child of the adulterous relationship. In addition, much of the rest of David's life was marred by family strife and sadness: the rape of his daughter Tamar, the murder of his son Amnon, and the bloody revolt of his son Absalom leading to the latter's death.

Few of us will ever commit sins as profound as David's but we are all sinners nonetheless. Our Gospel lesson comes a bit closer to home for most of us. Simon the Pharisee believed himself to be a righteous man. He probably tithed to the temple, spent much time studying the law and gave alms to the poor. Like a good Episcopalian, he felt himself open to new ideas and so invited this fellow Jesus, whom he saw as a purveyor of a radical new theology, to his home for supper.

But like many of us, he committed the sin of being judgmental, seeing many others as inferior to him. In this case, he not only saw the woman who was a sinner as unworthy of him but also judged Jesus himself as inferior because of his apparent inability to see the woman for who she was.

I'll bet that if we are honest with ourselves, most of are guilty of this type of judgmentalism. We all make snap judgments of people based upon certain stereotypes we have grown up with, especially in times of stress. I like to think that I have overcome most of the prejudices I developed as a youth but I still find that when some other driver cuts me off or otherwise abuses me, my first reaction is to look for the gender or race or ethnicity of that person and to think, "well of course this person can't drive, they are such and such."

As with the story of David and Bathsheba, Simon is led to judge himself by hearing a parable that parallels his own story. In this case, the parable of the two debtors is used to show Simon that the woman, whom Simon judged to be so inferior, is actually far more righteous in God's eyes because her love is so much stronger.

Perhaps the next time we find ourselves being judgmental toward others, we might consider that the person we are judging might actually be, for some reason of which we are unaware, more righteous than we ourselves. If we can practice seeing others in this

light, we might find ourselves learning to be a bit more humble and accepting of others we see as different from ourselves.

I began by lamenting the fact that on this Fathers' Day, our lessons lack stories of men we can all look up to, with the exception, of course, of Jesus himself. Perhaps the message is that there are no perfect people we can use as examples for only Jesus was without sin. As Paul said in Romans, "All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God." So if we are all sinners, even though we may have suppressed our sin or may not even be aware of our sin, as with the men in our lessons today, what are we to do?

The Good news in all of this comes from our reading in Galatians. Paul says that our faith in Jesus Christ is all we need for redemption. We can do good works until we are blue in the face but these alone will not save us, just as they failed to save King David and Simon the Pharisee. Good works that come out of our abiding faith in Christ are important as signs of our faith but it is our faith alone that will save us.