

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 14
Saturday, September 2, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 3, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

“I Have Led a Blameless Life”

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Monday morning, as part of my devotion, I read Psalm 26. Listen to King David’s words from Psalm 26: “Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind. I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O Lord, proclaiming aloud your praise.”

David says that he has led a blameless life. What is he talking about? Remember that incident with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. Call me old-fashioned, but I believe that may fall under the realm of that which deserves “blame.”

But David says, “I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.” Then why did Nathan the prophet have to come to King David and say to him, “Why have you despised the Word of the Lord by doing what is evil in His sight?”

But David says in the Psalm that he “washes his hands in innocence.” And you know what, he is absolutely right. David understands who God is and what He does. It is as the Lord said through the prophet Jeremiah, “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before Me.”

David was absolutely right in the assessment of his guilt and blame. He

was blameless; his hands were washed in innocence; he was vindicated; but not because he hadn't done that which is worthy of blame. But this is what God had done for him. God had restored him so that he could stand before the Lord without guilt or blame.

I asked before, "Doesn't David remember that incident with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite?" He very much remembers it. We remember it. But David understands the fullness of God's forgiveness, and he knows that God does not remember those sins against him.

David was a man who experienced conflict and turmoil throughout his life. His mentor King Saul repeatedly tried to kill him. His son Absalom led a rebellion and tried to kill him. He is described as being "a man of blood." David had fought a lot of battles, killed a lot of people. It was in the precious Word of God that was uttered to him by God's prophets in which he found peace – real peace in the forgiveness of sin.

After about a year of not dealing with the sin against Uriah and Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan greeted David with very harsh words that, upon David realizing the gravity of his sin, caused David to weep and beg God not only for forgiveness, but for his life – for David had rightly pronounced judgment upon himself and said that a man who would do such a thing deserves to die.

Therein lies the complexity of our relationship with God. He is merciful, forgiving, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love – as Scripture repeatedly says. Yet He is unyielding in His demand for us to do what is right and greet one another with the same mercy, forgiveness, and slowness to anger. Did you hear

the words of Paul from our Epistle reading?

“Bless those who persecute you . . . Never be conceited . . . Repay no one evil for evil . . . never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God.” And we repeatedly fail to live up to those standards. And we repeatedly throw ourselves upon the mercy of our Lord.

However, just because God lavishes His grace upon us does not mean that God’s mercy and forgiveness is a license to sin. We can’t say, “Christ’s blood covers me, I will always be forgiven so I can do what I please.” No! Paul says, “Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.” Otherwise, the Gospel will be, as C.F.W. Walther says, “A pillow for your carnal mind.”

And when the Lord instructed Jeremiah on how to win over the people to the side of God, He said, “They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.” The people were to become like Jeremiah. He was forbidden to water down his message and conform to the pattern of the world, as Paul also commanded the church in Rome, as we heard.

God’s Word was not designed to meet people in the middle. He does not proclaim, “Meet Me half-way and I’ll rethink a few things to make My Word a little more palatable. You can choose to follow the parts you like, but don’t worry about the rest.”

I challenge anyone to find that message is Scripture. That is not the way of the Lord. That *is* the way our sinful nature wants Him to be, but that is not who He is. As St. Paul says to Timothy, “All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for our instruction.” And “God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

God does not change. As we heard in last week's epistle reading – also from Romans 12, Paul said, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” In Christ, you will think differently than you did before. You will think about yourself; you will think about the people in your life; you will think about this world in a different way. Because, when we consume that precious Word of God, everything changes.

King David was not allowed to remain comfortable in his sin. He was caused great anguish and heart-ache through the words spoken to him. However, as he proclaims in the Psalm, this was the most wonderful of blessings, because through the Law and the Gospel working in his life, he knew he could stand before the Lord with unwavering faith as a forgiven child of God.

We tend to remember our mistakes of the past, and that is OK. I have learned much more from my failures than I have from my successes. However, living out your days heaping blame upon yourselves as if your sins are too great for Christ's blood to cover – that is a fool's errand. That is completely unnecessary for a repentant child of God.

As God's repentant, baptized children, you are forgiven and your Lord has chosen to remember your sins no more. Be like King David. Stand before the Lord and with confidence know that, even though you deserve to die for your sin, in God's eyes you have led a blameless life; you have trusted in the Lord without wavering. That is how He sees you. And He invites you to be like David and “go about His altar . . . proclaiming aloud your praise.” Amen.