

“Confession—Behold The Man—Absolution”

2 Samuel 12:7-13

Confession & Absolution

The phrase “you da man” is, in our present time, often used as a form of praise. It can be a superlative compliment (“you da man!”) indicating that the person is currently standing out amongst his peers in a particular way. For our purposes this evening we can find it appropriate to say that among the nation of Israel and Israelites, King David was “the man.” He was not only “the man” in the sense that he was in charge and had the official rank and office as King but he was also “the man” in the sense that he received high praise from God and others. God even hailed him as “a man after my own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22). David as a righteous king.

In our reading we also learn that David is the man in another sense. He is a man full of lust and covetousness so much so that he would deceive, steal, and murder to get what he wants and make sure it stays a secret.

David’s sinful actions may have been done in secret and hidden from some, but not from the “eyes of the Lord” (11:27; 12:10). Our God sees all things and he has judged David’s actions to be “evil.” That is, against his Will. Therefore, God sends for Nathan the Prophet to preach repentance to David.

In our Old Testament reading Nathan shows David his Sin by first telling him a story that leads the King to side with the victim and call for punishment upon the offender. Nathan then replies with the words that began our reading this morning, “You are the man!” You are the offender! David as a struggling sinner.

This evening, as we consider the biblical teaching of confession and absolution using Luther’s *Small Catechism*, we are reminded of what God and his word has to say to us. Luther calls us to “consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deed? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm” (*Small Catechism*, “Which are these?” question, LSB 326)? If so, God and his Word has this to say about you and me: “You are the man (or woman)!” You and I, even unintentionally, have hurt the very ones we love with lazy attitudes, hot-tempered, rude, insensitive, and quarrelsome words, and negligent behavior. You and I have offended our God. You and I as struggling sinners.

When the Prophet Nathan confronted David with the truth of his Sin and the reality that his reckless coveting and lusting was like taking a wrecking ball to his family, his kingdom, and his relationship with his God, David responded. He didn’t respond in pride. He didn’t respond in anger. He didn’t respond in

denial. He responded with the truth on his lips. He said with sincerity and sorrow, "I have sinned against the Lord." And in case we doubt David's sincerity in these words, the Lord provided other words of David's confession for us. We call it Psalm 51. David wrote this Psalm in response to Nathan showing the King his Sin and calling him to repentance. It contains David's confession. He writes, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12). David is "the man." He is a man of confession. He is a man who confesses his Sin as wrongdoing to God and even to one another.

So this evening you and I have been exposed by the words of Luther as "the man" or "the woman" who struggles with Sin, disobedience, and wrongdoing. We have been exposed for the struggling sinners that we are. So what are we to do? We could try to deny it. We could downplay the seriousness of our sinful words, thoughts, and actions. We could trivialize our struggles. We could get defensive. We could get angry. We could let our pride lead the way. But we know from personal experience that it only makes things worse. The guilt remains. The hurt remains. The shame remains. We know what is best. We know that it is best to confess it. Luther tells us that before God "we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer" (*Small Catechism*, "What sins should we confess?" question, *LSB* 326). We might say it another way, "Just give it to the man."

According to the Gospel of John, when Jesus was delivered up to be crucified Pontius Pilate took him out before the people and put him on display wearing a crown of thorns and purple robe, saying, "Behold the man" (Jn 19:5)! And then a short while later this holy man of innocence died the death of a great offender of God's Law. He died as a man. He died as a sinner. But being fully God he also died the death that wipes away the eternal consequence and condemnation of Sin for you and me. He purchases eternal forgiveness and then graciously, freely, willingly dishes it out.

In the Old Testament God used prophets to dish out his forgiveness. And so Nathan the Prophet says, "The Lord has also put away your sin; you shall not die." In the New Testament times he used Apostles as we learned in our Gospel reading, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven . . ." (Jn 20:22). Today, he sent me as your Pastor. He used you, the Church, to Call me so that I could be here for such a time as this to dish out God's forgiveness in Christ to you so that you can receive and believe, not doubt, that the forgiveness I dish out is the very forgiveness of Christ himself and that by these words your sins are forgiven before God in heaven. "As a Called and ordained servant of Christ and by his authority I therefore forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Your Sin is forgiven. It is buried at the bottom of the ocean floor (Micah 7:19). It is separated as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12). David's Lord yet also David's greater Son has done it (Ps 110:1). Amen.

