



Sermons from
First Presbyterian Church

“Clear Eyes, Full Hearts”

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July 29, 2012

Seventeenth Sunday In Ordinary Time

2 Samuel 11:1-15

James I:12-15

Can you believe this guy? The most celebrated of all Hebrew kings is an adulterer and a murderer! Let us look carefully at this text as we discern in our hearts the truth of the matter and the grace in the text. Let us center ourselves on God, lest our hearts be seized in judgment and blinded to our own wayward ways. Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable and pleasing in your sight, Our Rock and Our Redeemer.

One deliberate mistake builds on another as the snowball of David’s own destruction gathers steam and plows down the mountainside. The narrator doesn’t hold back from pointing out each misstep. First, it is springtime when kings go out to battle. But David, the king, remains back in Jerusalem. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men were out fighting, while “Humpty Dumpty” sat on his wall about to take a great fall. David rises from taking a nap on his rooftop terrace, and begins to wander with feet and eyes around the other houses, until he spies a beautiful woman bathing on the roof. So he does what any of us would do – he gets more information. Her Facebook profile shows a name – Bathsheba – and also her relationship status: Married. He then does what perhaps only a king can do: send messengers (notice – more than one!) – to *fetch* her... most likely, take her by force. While the men besiege the city named Rabbah, the king besieges the woman named Bathsheba.

So David gets what he wants from Bathsheba, and then it’s out of sight, out of mind, back to dozing on the terrace... until he gets words from Bathsheba – the only words we hear from her – “I am pregnant.” Suddenly he can’t get her out of his sight, and his sin will be plain for all to see with the birth of the child while her husband was away.

But David decides he isn't ready for others to see, and he goes into action, sending for her husband Uriah. David does a lot of sending, by the way: the verb appears twelve times in this chapter alone. After Uriah dutifully reports to his king, David tells Uriah to go down to his house and wash his feet – that is, sleep with your wife – so that Uriah can claim to be the father and he, David, can absolve himself of his sin. But Uriah proves to be the man of honor, sleeping at the king's doorstep because he feels connected to his band of brothers, who do not have the luxury of sleeping in their own homes. The next day David tries again to deceive Uriah, drinking with him in a seeming sign of friendship, but really intending to make him drunk... and still Uriah does not do what David wants.

By now David is completely blind to his own sin in the matter, putting the blame squarely on Uriah for not going along with his deceit. David wants to destroy Uriah, whose name means “YHWH is my light.” He wants to snuff out the light and bury him with his sin. So David places in Uriah's hand his own death warrant. Blood will be shed, but no sins will be washed away until David's hardened heart is broken by God's truth.

There is no scapegoating, rationalizing or romanticizing what David did. He came, he saw, he conquered, and then he tried to wash his hands of all of it.

One of my favorite and also famous songs of the 90s is “The Freshmen.” The song is also about a guy who gets a gal pregnant, and how the situation was handled very badly. The singer wails:

*We've tried to wash our hands of all this
We never talk of our lacking relationships
And how we're guilt-stricken sobbing with our heads on the floor
We fell through the ice when we tried not to slip*

*And we say
I can't be held responsible...
And I won't be held responsible...*

*For the life of me I cannot remember
What made us think that we were wise and
We'd never compromise
For the life of me I cannot believe*

*We'd ever die for these sins
We were merely freshmen*

Part of growing up is accepting responsibility for the choices you make - especially the bad ones. I remember back when *I* was about a freshman in high school, my parents planned a sailing trip in the Caribbean in November. That meant I would miss school, so the deal was I had to keep my grades up or I wouldn't be allowed to go. I was a good student, but I decided to act up and do poorly in my American History class. I tried to play the North-South divide, telling my Louisiana parents that their Texan son was standing up to his Yankee Delaware teacher and her warped view of the Civil War. But they knew better. I knew better. And they made true on their promise. I didn't go to the Caribbean that year because of my poor class performance.

And I was guilt-stricken sobbing with my head on the floor. I cried, "I can't and won't be held responsible! For the life of me, I cannot believe I'd ever 'die for my sins.' After all, I'm just a freshman!" And my heart was broken.

Many of us here today have broken hearts, from our own actions or the actions of others. How can our hearts be healed, especially when we ourselves are breaking them?

The television show *Friday Night Lights* is about high school football in Texas. It's about a coach who deals with a lot of teenagers – a lot of freshmen – with broken hearts. In order to help them heal and focus, the coach prays with them before each game and leads a chant: He yells: "Clear Eyes, Full Hearts!" And they respond: "Can't Lose!" Clear Eyes, Full Hearts... Can't Lose. It is a prayer for God to clear our eyes and fill our hearts, restoring our hidden brokenness in the light of God's love.

When I was a freshman in college, I traveled to Nicaragua on a mission trip to learn from and listen to the people there. Their stories of war and poverty broke my heart. And their stories of steadfast love and resilience filled my heart with hope. We shared tears of joy and tears of pain, washing clear my clouded eyes and opening my

heart to be filled with a powerful message: Despite all of the brokenness we have caused to ourselves and others, God fills our broken with love, joy and peace, bringing healing to our lives.

David didn't resist temptation, but he did resist being accountable to anyone, including the Lord. After seeing Bathsheba he may have taken a poll inside his head, but the "eyes" took it. Cloudy eyes with an empty heart led to a can't win situation. He could only experience healing after he confessed he had a broken heart, and then the Lord set about restoring his kingdom, painful though it was.

Our eyes deceive and then our hearts believe. All of us have a different perspective on things. We are each called to make judgments of one kind or another. Inevitably we will make wrong choices. Hearts will be broken. But it's exactly in these moments of helplessness and broken hearts that God is present, healing our hearts and restoring our souls. Our hearts have a deeper perspective than our eyes. All of our hearts are moved by a redemptive story. And all of our hearts are broken by a horrible tragedy. The heart is where the common life of humanity resides. It is our common bond and our common language, with each other and with God.

What leaves our hearts feeling empty inside? What leaves our hearts feeling full and satisfied?

May God grant us clear vision and full hearts, that we might not be left with broken hearts, guilt-stricken sobbing with our heads on the floor.

May the God of redemption deliver us from the evil of our sins and the sins of others.

May we perceive not with our mind's eye but listen to God's heart.

May we have clear eyes and full hearts. Amen.

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