**David: Developing a Heart for God**

This morning we are going to learn some more lessons from the life of King David. And today’s message from the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel is called, “Developing a Heart for God.” You may remember that God himself called David, “a man after my own heart”. Why did God say that about David? ‘A man after my own heart’

Last time we studied David, we saw that he was only a young teenager when he was anointed by Samuel to be King and that it would be some 15 years before he would finally be crowned. And during that time, God shaped and refined David through many struggles. He had to flee into the wilderness from Saul the previous King, but David never took the short cut to the throne. Even though the people want to remove Saul and put David on the throne, he always waited for God to put him there. You see, David let God lead. David knew that God would remove Saul when the time was right. He trusted God in his timing, his power, and his wisdom.

Well, the time finally comes and David becomes the King. And things go really well for David in the beginning. We are told in 2 Samuel chapter 5 that David retakes Jerusalem – their capital city as it were. Then he defeats the Philistines, their number 1 enemy and all is well in Israel, except for one thing and David is going to take care of that next.

You see, the Ark of the Covenant was not in Jerusalem. Remember, Saul’s sons had tried to use it to defeat the Philistines, but they were defeated and it was stolen. Eventually it was returned, but not to Jerusalem. So, David goes with 30,000 men to bring it back.

Now, why is the Ark such a big deal? Inside the Ark were the stone tablets that God gave to Moses and which symbolized the Covenant relationship that God had with Israel. It was over the cover of the ark that the presence of God was said to dwell. The Ark was a sacred reminder that God was with them and David knew that it belonged back in Jerusalem.

So, when they get back to Jerusalem with the Ark; everyone starts to celebrate and worship God. It’s a huge party and David is front and center. **<ENTER>**Turn with me to 2 Samuel chapter 6 verse 14.

“*David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, 15 while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets*. *16 As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart*.”

So, David here is just swept into worship. He’s dancing with all his might to express his thanks and praise to God. This is full body, full contact, no-holds barred worship. He is not holding anything back. Have you ever worshiped like that?

Apparently that was what happened to one group of college students in 2003 as they traveled down Interstate highway 94 in a bus near South Holland, Illinois in the United States. The group was from Hyles-Anderson College which is a small Christian school. As they rode down the highway, they began to sing and then they started to sway. Well, they had good rhythm and everyone started to sway in unison. And as you might guess, the motion of 45 people swaying in unison caused the driver to lose control and bus flipped over on the highway, which closed traffic for several hours. Thankfully, no one was seriously injured. There was no official word as to what song they were singing at the time of the accident, but you can be sure it’s been dropped from their College Travel Songbook.

These students were active in their worship. Have you ever let yourself be active in worship? I remember Kathy and I watched the movie the Passion of the Christ together late one night. And by the end, we were so moved by God’s love that we both felt the need to worship Him. We wanted to do that privately, so I went upstairs and I remember just sinking to my knees and letting the tears of joy that I felt just fall. And I ended up face down on the floor just telling God how much I loved Him. I don’t know why I did that, but it just felt like the right thing to do. Maybe you’ve experienced something like that. And you have to know that God loves that type of worship.

For me, it’s tough to be that open in public. David, just doesn’t have those inhibitions or at least this was a once in a lifetime event that he just had to celebrate and give everything to God. Now, there is something interesting about this passage and you see that Michal, David’s wife despised him when she saw him leaping and dancing. Now, what is that all about? Well, dancing is one thing, but look at what the text says David was wearing: a linen ephod? Why does it give us this information?

Well, en ephod was a sort of sleeveless undergarment that came down to about the hip. Basically, it was his underwear. Now you begin to see why Michal had a problem with it. Her husband, the King, is dancing in front of the whole city in his underwear. It’s totally inappropriate. But she’s looking at this from the wrong viewpoint and she gives David what for when he comes home verse 20. **<ENTER>**

*20 When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!"*

But David tells her, “*I will celebrate before the LORD. 22 I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes."* You think that was bad dear, just wait until I really get going, I won’t just humiliate you, I’ll humiliate myself as well.

And God loves our worship when it’s from the heart. **<ENTER>**That’s what David was doing. And that’s our first lesson this morning from David concerning worship: get lost in the glory of God. And I’ll admit, it’s hard to do that on a Sunday morning. To concentrate more on the words you’re singing than what the person next to you may be doing or thinking. Of all places, we have to be able to express our passions and emotions here in church. This is where we come together to meet with God. Don’t be embarrassed if you shed a tear here. It’s OK to raise your hands if you want to and it’s OK to keep them by your side. It’s OK to sway to the music, we’re not on a bus.

And maybe those most intimate times of worship are meant when we are alone with God. I’d encourage you to find some extended time alone with Him. Bring some CDs or a movie or just your Bible and be open to be moved and to get lost in the glory of God. The church Retreat is a great opportunity to do this.

If you find yourself being moved by God’s Spirit and you just have to act on it then take the risk. Maybe you’re like me and you need to be alone. It’s OK to get up in the middle of our service and go outside or go to the front office or downstairs and worship. Don’t worry what people might think; just take the opportunity. Worship should be a natural and free outward expression of what the Holy Spirit is doing inside of us.

Now, we have to remember that our freedom in worship has to be tempered by the reality that we worship in community. We are not alone here on a Sunday morning and we have to realize that we are here with other brothers and sisters who also want to worship God. In other words, we might have to limit our freedom if we are a hindrance to others.

For example, if we are attending a church where dancing in the aisle is normal, than I can get up and dance for God and no one will take notice, except for God of course. But if you get up and start dancing here, then you can be fairly confident that most of the people here will no longer be worshipping God, but they will be focusing all their attention on you. In that case, you should limit your freedom for the sake of community and the worship of everyone else. The apostle Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians chapter 8.

The way churches worship are quite diverse and it’s one of the reasons why there are more than one type of church in a community. People like to worship in different ways and that’s OK. And we want to continue to develop and build our worship service so that you can express yourself here at Fishers Creek.

The point is that you should come here expecting to be moved in your spirit to worship God and you should feel comfortable doing that. If this is totally new to you, don’t force it, but perhaps you can just begin by closing your eyes the next time we sing a song that you know and that really expresses your feelings towards God. Then put that emotion into your singing, don’t sing out of duty or because everyone around you is singing. Imagine yourself alone with God and you’re doing a solo just for Him and just because you want to. If you’re like me and you don’t have a great voice, then imagine yourself in a choir. Or imagine yourself dancing and leaping for God because you are so happy. Get lost in the glory of God during your worship.

What about relationships? In chapter 9, we see King David searching for any of Saul’s blood relatives. Now, that was not uncommon in those days because after a new king would take the throne, he would scour the land for any living relatives in order to kill them because they represented a threat to the throne. **<ENTER>** It was a normal form of job security, but that’s not why David goes looking verse 1. “*Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathon’s sake?*” Jonathon you might remember was one of Saul’s sons who was best friends to David, but he had died in battle the same day that Saul was killed.

So David didn’t want to kill anyone, he wanted to show kindness. And the only relative that can be found is a son of Jonathon named Mephibosheth and we are told that he is crippled in both feet. Now, because this is such an important biblical name I want you all to say “Mephibosheth” together with me on the count of three. Ready, 1, 2, 3 . . .

God Bless You. That was way too easy. You trust me too much.

*6 When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "Your servant," he replied.*

*7 "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."*

Imagine what was going on in Mephibosheth’s mind, he knew what other kings do? He’d lived in exile almost his entire life and then he gets called to see the new King. He’s thinking this is the end, but David reassures him and not only does he not kill him, he gives him all the land of his Grandfather, great wealth, and a permanent place of honor at the king’s table. It’s not the end, it’s just the beginning.

Does that remind you of anyone? Isn’t that what God does for you and me? He invites us in. Though we are strangers, exiles to God, he invites us in to be a part of his family, to share in his wealth, and to sit at his table. What an incredible image of God we have in David. **<ENTER>**And that brings us to our second lesson from David concerning relationships. There are people in our lives that need our mercy and we need to give it in order to help them. Maybe they don’t deserve it. Maybe they hurt you and they don’t know how to restore the relationship. Why not take the first step and show them mercy? Forgive them and show them kindness. Isn’t it only fair since that is what God did for us.

Perhaps you’re saying to yourself that kind of love just isn’t inside me. That’s OK because it’s not inside me either, but you can ask for it. Just ask God to fill you up with the kind of love that Jesus had for those who persecuted him. It’s not natural for us, but it is for God. Again, David shows us the heart of God.

And up to this point everything is going great. The kingdom is expanding. He’s known as one of the greatest kings ever. But in 2 Samuel 11, things start to change. This is where we begin to see the downfall of King David—this man after God’s own heart, God’s chosen one to lead Israel, but he is also susceptible to temptation.

Things start to change in his heart. David, the king of Israel, the most powerful man in all the region, the one whose been blessed with everything he’d ever wanted. Despite all he’d been given, he wants more. He wants what is not his, what he should never have – another man’s wife. Maybe you know the story. David notices Bathsheba, a beautiful woman, bathing a couple of rooftops over. And so, he sends his servants over to grab her and bring her over. David is clearly told this is the wife of Uriah the Hittitte. He was one of David’s most faithful warriers. He is named in 1 Chronicles as one of the legendary 30 men. He had been with David for many years and had served him faithfully. And everyone including Uriah was off fighting, except for David.

Knowing all this, David still brings her to the palace and sleeps with her. Now we see David acting like a normal human king. And it’s incredibly unromantic. He treats her like a food item on a menu and sort of orders her up, “I want her. Bring her to me.” Then in one moment of temptation and weakness, David changes the course of his life. He has sexual relations with Bathsheba and then sends her home. He dishonors God, shames Bathsheeba, and breaks relationship with Uriah, a faithful friend.

And then we find out that she is pregnant, and David has to be the father because Uriah is away fighting in David’s war. So, David concocts a plan to cover his tracks. He tries to convince Uriah to come home and sleep with his wife. But because of Uriah’s noble character, he won’t do it. Although he comes back to Jerusalem at David’s request, he will not go home and enjoy his wife because he is too loyal to his men that are still in battle. He will not enjoy a pleasure that they cannot. What painful irony! Uriah has too much integrity to sleep with his wife, but not David.

When his plan backfires, David sends word to the commander to put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest, then withdraw from him so that he will be killed. Basically, it’s a death sentence, but it’s secret.

And so ultimately, David had Uriah killed to cover up his sin, to cover up his wrongful desires. It went from one sinful act to several and ultimately murder. And finally, he takes Bathsheba as his own wife.

**<ENTER>**This quote from an unknown author summarizes the effects of sin.

*Sin will always take you farther than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay, and keep you longer than you want to stay.*

When you are tempted, and we all will be tempted, what do you do? Do you give in to it? Do you give in to the same sin over and over? Are you expending large amounts of energy trying to cover your tracks and hide your sin? What other sins come along for the ride? Deceit, revenge, hate. David’s surrender to temptation began a landslide of other sins. It’s a powerful reminder to us to resist the enticement to sin and to cling to God’s plan for our lives. **<ENTER>**And that brings us to our third lesson: Giving in to temptation results in more sin in our lives.

Now for someone who is stuck in this cycle of temptation and sin, this doesn’t give you much hope. But the new testament speaks often about temptation and God’s power for us to resist them. **<ENTER>**Here’s a few verse you may want to jot down and memorize.

1Corinthians 10:13

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

**<ENTER>** James 4:7

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*

**<ENTER>** Hebrews 4:15

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.*

Habitual sins are not easy to stop, but it is possible. The success of 12 step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous are well known because they recognize that we aren’t capable of resisting in our own strength. But when we recognize our sin and the pain it causes and turn to God for help, then He will provide a way to resist. And when we begin to break the cycle of sin in our lives, the evil one will begin to find easier prey. And the great thing is that we have a God who understands what it is like to be human, to be tempted just like us, so we can be honest with him and ask for his help. He knows it’s hard to resist, but when we do, He’s going to be there with help.

Well, back to David. He seemingly gets away with murder, not to mention adultery. And a few weeks later, the man after God’s own heart had another man’s wife move in with him and begins to convince himself that nothing had happened, that everything was fine. Do you do that sometimes? Convince yourself that this sin is not a big deal; everyone does it; it didn’t hurt anyone.

But it’s not fine and God is outraged by David’s sin. So God sends Nathan in chapter 12 to confront David, but Nathan is wise and he knows it will not be easy to confront the king, so he begins by telling David a story about 2 men. One was rich and the other poor. The rich man had lots of sheep, but the poor man only had one and he loved it dearly and it even slept in his arms. Now the rich man had a special guest come to visit, but instead of giving up one of his sheep for the meal, he took the poor man’s sheep and killed it and served it to the guest.

Now by this time, David’s sense of righteousness kicked in and he said surely the rich man who did this deserves to die! Then Nathan delivers the knock-out punch. Look at verse 7. **<ENTER>**

*7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.'*

Notice the verse 8 where God is says to David, I’ve given you so much and if this wasn’t enough, I would have given you even more. If you weren’t satisfied, then all you had to do was ask. That’s how much God loves us. We can ask for more. Do you want a better relationship with your spouse or co-worker, just ask? God is saying ask for help, ask for something better, just don’t sin. It’s so destructive and it will cause you and the people around you so much pain if you do that. And it builds a wall between me and you.

So, how does David respond? He could have said one word and had Nathan put to death and his spiral of sin would have continued. But he didn’t, verse 13, “*Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord*.’ ” David confessed to what he had done and repented. If you read Psalm 51, you will see David’s heart after being confronted by Nathan and confessing his sin to God.

You know, I think many times we are afraid to confess our sins because we believe that it will destroy us if we let it out into the open. But it’s exactly the opposite. When we don’t confess, when we don’t seek forgiveness, it just eats away at our soul and never goes away. It’s always there and people try all sorts of things to dull the pain they feel inside because of this. Usually it’s alcohol, or drugs, or entertainment, or success. Anything to help us to forget, but we never can. We’ve all experienced the relief of revealing a hidden sin to someone because it was eating us up and being so relieved when we were forgiven.

And if you think your sin is too bad to be forgiven, David has committed adultery and murder. **<ENTER>**No sin is too great if we approach God with a humble and repentant heart. And that’s our last lesson from David. Don’t ever be afraid to confess your sins to God, you will find forgiveness. Aren’t you tired of living with that guilt?

You know, we need more Nathans in the church; people who know how to bring us to a higher standard. Who aren’t afraid to take the hard discussions, but they don’t like to do it. Take note: If you enjoy confronting people, if you enjoy revealing other people’s sins to them, then you’re not a Nathan, you’re a hypocrite. And usually the Nathan’s in our lives is someone who knows us quite well, like a spouse, a parent, a child, or a best friend. And it’s hardest to be corrected from someone like that because we all know that they’ve done something far worse, right! Well, the next time a Nathan comes to you, put down your weapon and just listen. And maybe you aren’t there the first time talk to you and you just can’t see it, but ask God to show you if you are wrong, if you need to confess sin. And God will honor that request.

As we close this morning in Communion, I’d like to give you a few minutes to reflect on these words from Psalm 139. **<ENTER>** .

*23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Just ask God to reveal any sins to you that you aren’t aware of. Perhaps you’ve had a Nathan tell you something, but you didn’t listen. Ask God to open your heart and mind to help you take the next step of repentance and confession.