

## **“EATING FROM THE BREAD OF HEAVEN”**

Proper 13B August 2, 2009

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a; Psalm 51:1-13; John 6:24-35

### **Introduction:**

Last week I discussed with you the paradox we see over and over again in Scripture. We sin yet God continues to bless us in unexpected ways.

I illustrated this point through the story of David and Bathsheba. David sinned in his lust for Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. God did not let those sins go unpunished; yet, God blessed the union of David and Bathsheba through the person of their son – Solomon, the greatest king in Israel’s history and the wisest man in the world.

Today, we take another look at this paradox through the continuing story of David and the prophet Nathan. We also realize, through the words of our Gospel lesson, that God’s very greatest blessing is Jesus Himself, the Bread of Heaven.

First, I want to state something, that for me is an obvious fact, but not everyone agrees with. It is this:

### **We Know Our Sin, We Don’t Need To Be Emotionally Beat-up to Feel Guilty:**

From our Psalm lesson, verse 3, we read: *“I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”* That’s my reality. We know when we’ve done something,

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or thought something, or said something, that is really wrong; wrong in the sense that it hurts our relationship with God, or with someone else, or it damages our own soul. We have consciences, and the Holy Spirit speaks quite clearly to us in order to convict us in our sinful actions, so that we might repent and turn to the Lord for help.

I say, we don't need emotionally to be beat-up to feel guilty, but God does arrange for us to be confronted in our sinfulness in order to give us a chance to repent. The reason God wants us to repent is because God created us and knows that

### **We Want To Be Forgiven, Restored To Right Relationship With God, With Others We've Hurt, and Within Ourselves.**

We truly, deeply want to be right with God, others, and within ourselves, because that is the way God made us to be and to live.

After David was confronted by the prophet Nathan concerning his sin with Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah, he wrote these words from today's Psalm: *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses (:1). Wash me through and through from my wickedness*

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*and cleanse me from my sin (:2). Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; wash me, and I shall be clean indeed (:8). Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities (:10). Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me (:11). Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me (:12).*

We want to have a clean heart, a right spirit within us. We want to be clean, purged from our sins, but how do we get this way?

### **God Has Provided A Way To Work Ourselves Out Of Our Guilt.**

When I say, “work ourselves out of our guilt”, I am not talking about works righteousness – that is the theory we can work ourselves into a state of acceptance by God through doing enough good deeds. But, I am talking about these words of Jesus from our Gospel lesson: *“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul wrote in Chapter 10: <sup>13</sup>*as the Scripture says, “Anyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.”* <sup>14</sup>*But before people can ask the Lord for help, they must believe in him; and before they*

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*can believe in him, they must hear about him; and for them to hear about the Lord, someone must tell them; “*

So, to do the work of God, we need to believe in Jesus. But to be able to believe in him someone needs to tell us how God came to Earth in the person of Jesus Christ, who died on a Cross for our sins. And, for that person to be able to tell us about Jesus, God must send him or her to us.

So now, not only does God provide a way for us to overcome our guilt, God also sends us the people we need who will tell us how to do God's will.

The people God sends are part of the body of Christ, the Church. They are gifted by God to do the work God calls them to do, and they are gifts to the people to whom they share God's love.

As our Epistle lesson states it in verses 11-13:  
*<sup>11</sup>And Christ gave gifts to people—he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of caring for and teaching God's people. <sup>12</sup>Christ gave those gifts to prepare God's holy people for the work of serving, to make the body of Christ stronger. <sup>13</sup>This work must continue until we are all joined together in the same faith*

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*and in the same knowledge of the Son of God. We must become like a mature person, growing until we become like Christ and have his perfection.*

Equipping the saints for the work of ministry: that is what our “Way Of The Cross” Stewardship program is all about. It is designed to help you find that place of service for which God has equipped you and set you aside to function within. Working together, we share in the eternal glory of helping people find eternal peace through the Son of God

### **Jesus, Who Offers Himself To Us.**

In our Gospel lesson, we read that after feeding the 5,000 with fish and bread, Jesus compared Himself with the manna from Heaven God gave to Israel during the Exodus.

*<sup>32</sup>Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven; it is my Father who is giving you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>God’s bread is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup>The people said, “Sir, give us this bread always.” <sup>35</sup>Then Jesus said, “I am the bread that gives life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

## **EATING FROM THE BREAD OF HEAVEN**

This morning, Jesus is offering anyone here who is hungry or thirsty in your soul, or who needs to have his or her conscience cleared of guilt, an opportunity to do such.

Tell Jesus you love him and that you “thank him” for giving himself as the price paid for your sin. Then take advantage of his offer to feast on the Bread of life he alone offers through his own flesh.

When you come to share in Holy Communion, when you receive the consecrated bread, do so believing that you are receiving Christ Himself. Give all you know of yourself to all you know of Jesus. It will be enough to begin the relationship. Then repeat that same commitment every day for the rest of your life; and, you will be doing the work of God.