

Sin

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, you know that we are blind to your glory, deaf to your word, and in rebellion against your will. Yet we come before you, ask that you will give us the grace and patience to confront your word as you speak to us, and our whole lives to be shaped by that word.

That our eyes may see, our ears may hear, and our hearts may obey. Christ's name. I have commended to you the saga of 1 and 2 Samuel.

And probably the heart of that saga is the story of David, who, when his men went out to war, stayed at home. The result of his staying at home was that he, by reason of seeing a woman bathing, called her, had intercourse with her, a child was conceived, and David had to cover up what had happened.

And so he commanded the woman's husband to come home, Uriah. And Uriah, because his fellows were in the field of battle, would not go home to the comforts and tenderness of his wife.

And so avoided her, and David finally had to send him back into battle, with orders to the commanding officer, that Uriah was to be sent into the front and heat of the battle, where he would undoubtedly be killed.

[1 : 43] And so in due course, news came that the armies of David had been defeated, and David was downhearted, and then that Uriah had been killed, and David's plan had been fulfilled.

Now David was the king of a great and mighty nation. He was also the one whose word was law in that nation. He was the judge to whom every appeal must be made.

And so the lovely story, which we have this morning, is the story of God's appointed prophet going to David and telling him the story.

Chapter 12 of 2 Samuel, and it's on page 278. And David had been enticed by desire.

Desire conceives and brings forth sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. It was, David had gone on with his life, he had, as far as his world was concerned, he had committed no sin.

[3 : 05] He had added one woman to his rather large harem, which he already had. And the soldier, incidentally, had died on the battlefield. David was a heroic man, but many soldiers had died, and his death was of no particular significance.

And David went on being the ruler of his people. And then Nathan comes to him in chapter 12 and says, There were a certain two men that belonged to a city.

One was rich, and the other was poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, all that he needed. And the poor man had bought one ewe lamb, which he had raised in his household, which he had carried in his bosom, which had drunk from his cup and shared his meal, and was as a daughter to him.

A traveler came to the city and went to the home of the rich man, expecting hospitality, and the rich man thinking to avoid the necessity of killing one of his own.

Lambs went and took the pet lamb from the poor man and killed it, and he fed it to his friend, and so fulfilled the demands of the traveling stranger.

[4 : 33] He had entertained him. It's interesting that Nathan pictures our loss as a traveling stranger drops by and expects hospitality.

Well, David heard the story, and as he heard the story, he responded by saying, There will be justice in this lamb.

The man who has done this deserves to die. He shall restore fourfold the lamb which he took. Then, of course, Nathan turned to David and said, You're the man.

Well, then he sort of rehearsed for David what had happened. How God had taken David as a shepherd boy.

He had delivered him as a persecuted renegade from the outrage of Saul. He had been given Saul's house.

[5 : 51] He had been given Saul's harem. He had been given the house of Judah and the house of Israel. He had had so much given to him by God, and he expressed willingness of the Lord, which had been told him by Nathan before.

The Lord was willing to give him a great deal more, as much again as he had already given him.

Nathan said, You've taken the wife of Uriah.

You've had Uriah slain in battle, and the consequences of what you've done are that the sword won't depart out of your house.

Violence will mark your family's life. And so it did with the death of his son by murder and fratricidal activities when brother killed brother, raped sister.

And this was David's house. And your wives will be taken and shamed publicly.

[7 : 03] And the thing that you've done in secret will be openly disclosed. And so David responds by saying, I have sinned against the Lord.

Well, what I want to tell you about this morning is sin. And it's undoubtedly a popular subject.

But it's terribly, I think, terribly misunderstood. The general understanding is that sin is the basis of the only fun we have in life, and God doesn't want us to have it.

And most people dismiss it on that basis. But sin is something very different. Sin is something that ultimately can't be kept a secret.

What's done in secret will be displayed openly. Yet we spend most of our life trying to keep our sins secret.

[8 : 21] Even when they are finally engraved on our countenance, we think people still don't know. Sin is the proud castle of our hearts from which we challenge the very existence of God.

Sin will never acknowledge itself to be sin. It hires countless lawyers to justify it. It pays them enormous sums of money.

Sin, what's more, is a universal disease. If you want to know what the universal religion of the world is, the basis of the universal relationship to God, in every culture, and in every race, and in every age, the thing which is the kind of basis of man's relationship to God, that every man knows about, it's sin.

It's sin which affects the king, and it's sin which affects the lowliest person in society. Sin is a state of living death, and we can't escape from it.

Sin has to be accommodated by man because he can't heal it. He can do nothing about it. So he temporizes with it and tries to keep it respectable.

[10 : 03] But he can't heal it. Only God can deal with sin. God has made sin his problem.

And sin is the thing that vitiates our relationship to God. See, you can say that the anti-nuclear movement is important, and it is.

And you can say that the Save the Animals campaign is important, and it is. And you can say ending acid rain is important, and it is.

And all those causes to which men in this century have given their loyalty and devotion are all in their place terribly important causes. But man cannot deal with the problem of sin, and so he avoids it.

And it's very hard to bring people to the place where they acknowledge that they can't do it.

Because most of us live happily as though we have dealt with it by a series of temporizings and compromisings so that we think we have it under control, and we don't know how totally it dominates us, and how certainly the consequences of it are, the consequence of it is death.

[11 : 37] And so, what do we do? How does God deal with it in our kind of world? Because we cannot admit it. We cannot confess it.

We cannot acknowledge it. David was king. David was judge. David had a harem. David was one on whom many people depended.

And he couldn't recognize the reality of sin in his own life. Not only could he not, but neither would he recognize it. And so you and I are in much the same position where we don't recognize the sin in our own life.

In spite of the amount of damage that it does, we still won't recognize it. We will trivialize it. We will make fun of it.

But we don't realize how the cold and strong hand of death takes hold upon us and will not let go until the problem of sin has been dealt with.

[12 : 44] And how are you going to do it? The difference between Ahab and David was that Ahab found in Elijah an enemy and David found in Nathan a friend.

And what needs to happen for you and for me is we need a Nathan. We need somebody who has our confidence that they can get close enough to us to make known to us the reality of sin in our lives.

All of us are willing to be Nathans to somebody else and tell them where the sin is in their life. But it's an entirely different thing to have Nathan approach you and be used of God to show you the reality of sin in your life.

And even when Nathan came to David he came armed with a parable. And I suppose that's why Jesus comes to us armed with a parable to tell us a story.

And the consequence of the story that Jesus tells us is to produce in our heart the reality of what of the way that David responded to the story to the parable that Nathan told him.

[14 : 26] David in response to the parable that was told him said I have sinned. And I don't suppose there is any more significant landmark in your life or mine than when by the unimaginable grace and mercy of God we are given the Nathan who can bring us to the place where we can say I have sinned.

We justify ourselves all day long. We deny the reality of sin all the time. The freedom of being able to say I have sinned is denied me.

Because only God can show you your sin. The reason that I have a kind of addiction to all of us being involved in regular personal small group Bible study is because you need a nation in your life. You need a witness who can tell you a story. You need somebody who can point to that reality in your life which you need most to know about.

sin and that's the reality of sin and the fact that sin separates us from God and that sin is a living death which we are enduring in our lives because we have no machinery to cope with.

[16 : 15] well when God has been gracious enough to allow you to say I have sinned and to acknowledge the consequences of sin and David had to acknowledge them because the child that was born to Bathsheba died before his eyes.

There was strife among his children there was rape and gross immorality that afflicted his family and these were the consequences of sin.

Remember they were the consequences of sin and it was the sin that had to be dealt with. But once you have seen the consequences of sin in our world perhaps that's enough to say well we can't deal with it therefore we must pretend that it doesn't exist and we build huge structures to pretend that it doesn't exist huge personal deceits to hide from us the reality of the underlying problem which we know and acknowledge we can't deal with.

But then the real question is can God deal with it? Can God continue to be just? Can God forgive the sinner?

And the answer from our hearts must be no that he cannot forgive the sinner. The consequences of sin are inevitable and we must suffer and it's a kind of bravery for us to say that.

[18 : 00] It's a kind of bravery for us to dismiss from our minds the reality of sin because we can't deal with them and God must because otherwise he would tarnish his character.

The discovery we have to come to is that God has done what we reckon it to be impossible for him to do and that is he has dealt with sin.

He has dealt with sin cosmically. He's dealt with sin at the heart of history. He's dealt with sin in terms of the ultimate morality of his own nature.

He has dealt with sin by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. That's where sin has been dealt with and that's where that's the only source from which the healing of sin can come.

That's the only place from which the forgiveness of sin can be that we can come to terms with.

[19 : 16] Well, that's what sin is. That's what Nathan came to do. And David's confession, I have sinned against the Lord, becomes the turning point in his life.

life. And though there are a million issues which each of us needs to deal with in our lives, a million relationships that probably, and I'm exaggerating perhaps, but relationships that need to be healed, restored, right among us, right here, we don't have to go anywhere to find the need for that.

Though all those things obtained, only God ultimately can deal with sin. And he can only deal with it when we come to the place that David was at, when he said, I have sinned against the Lord. You see, it's not your sin against one another, because on balance you will probably be sinned as much against as you will sin in relationship to other people, but in relationship to God himself, there is the terrible reality of sin that only God can deal with.

He can only deal with it when, from our hearts, we, like David, acknowledge it. I have sinned against the Lord. He underlines that in Psalm 51 when he says, against thee only have I sinned and done that which is evil in thy sight.

[21 : 02] This is, if you want a kind of proof for the existence of God, is the reality of sin.

A problem that no resource of man can deal with. A problem that only God himself can deal with. And a problem which lies right at the heart of our being, and which it is God's concern to deal with in each of our lives, to bring us to the place where we can say, I have sinned against the Lord.

To accept the consequences of that forgiveness on the one hand, and accept the forgiveness which God offers us on the other, both of those things.

And that, not because of any deserving of our own, but because of God's love and grace towards us. sin, because God's purpose is not to be finally and absolutely made known to us within the confines of history, but that God's purpose is eternal.

And the beginning of that eternal purpose of God is when our temporal world is turned upside down by the announcement that God alone can forgive sin, and that God in Jesus Christ has forgiven sin.

[22 : 43] Amen. Now we stand and sing together our offertory hymn number 383.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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God of grace, accept all we offer you this day as we look toward the glory you have promised.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Shall we pray together?

This morning our prayer in thanksgiving begins on page 14 of the prayer book. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[28 : 09] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. for the good estate of the Catholic Church, that it may be so guided and governed by your good spirit that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

We particularly remember this morning the province of the Indian Ocean, and the five dioceses contained there. Give to your church, O God, the grace to follow in the steps of Jesus, who came along as one who serves.

May it be ready in all the world to spend and be spent in the service of the poor and the hungry and the sick and the ignorant.

May it work with strength and suffer with courage for the liberation of the oppressed and the restoration to all men of the dignity and the freedom of those created in your image.

[29 : 34] Grant this, our Father, for the sake of the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Finally, we commend to your fatherly goodness all of those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, in body, or a state, especially the Kaplan family of our city and the Hennessy family of this parish.

Lord of life, conqueror of death, who drive the tears of the widow at name, look with compassion on those who grieve for the loss of one dear to them.

Make them to know that you are with them, even in the darkest hours. And in your presence, may they find courage, comfort, and peace for your love's sake.

Also, Father, look with mercy on those whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace.

Give them understanding helpers and the willingness to accept help. Thank you.