

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

July 25, 2021 by Rev. Mark Brechin

## **Commentary on John 6:1-15** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Unlike the other Gospels, John does not have a "Last Supper". There is the washing of the feet followed by a very lengthy sermon. It is in this section of John, that the meaning of the bread is explained. Like the "Last Supper", it also takes place on a Passover except this Passover was in Galilee. Jesus will take the bread, give thanks, and give it to the people. The leftover bread was enough to fill twelve baskets which is symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel. The symbolism was not lost on the crowd who wanted to make Jesus a king. The story foreshadows a conversation Jesus will have with Pilate on a very different Passover.

John 6:12 "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."

How does John differ from Luke 9:10-17, Mark 6:35-44, and Matthew 14:15-31?

Why is John near Passover and how is that symbolically related to the Last Supper?

If it is related, than what is significant about saying "nothing may be lost"?

Where you at one time lost, scattered?

When did you ever feel gathered, "re-membered", at Communion?

Who are the ones asked to gather and what does that say about following Jesus?

## **Commentary on Ephesians 3:14-21** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The setting for this letter is Paul writing to the Ephesians while he is in prison. His captivity is the result of his refusal to modify the Good News. Paul's preaching challenged the social roles in society, the status of slaves, the commercial ventures surrounding idol worship, and the source of truth and authority other than the local governments. Paul makes it clear that, while he is in prison for the Good News he is giving to the Gentiles, it is ultimately because of his obedience to the Father's will. He prays for three things: hope in the midst of suffering, hearts full of faith, and a full experience of the love of Christ. We have hope because we are part of the family of God and God will never forsake us. We have faith because of the Spirit that dwells in us. We have love that is greater and deeper than all that we can imagine.

Ephesians 3:20 "by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine"

When have you witnessed a 'miracle', something beyond your imagination?

Have you ever seen the wonder in a child's eyes?

Do you ever wish you could once again see those 'miracles'?

Do we miss miracles because there are none or have we grown blind and callous?

Is our faith limited by our lack of imagination?

What if every day we expected to see the wonders of God?

## **Commentary on 2 Samuel 11:1-15** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

This is one of the most familiar stories from the Old Testament. The focus is usually on David's adultery with Bathsheba but this is not the first time for David. After Samuel died at the beginning of 1 Samuel 23, the rest of the chapter is about how David slept with Abigail, Nabal's wife, and latter married her after Nabal's death. At the end of that chapter, David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. Later when David captured Jerusalem, "David took more concubines and wives; and more sons and daughters were born to David." (2 Samuel 5:13) Toward the end of David's reign, when he was fighting his son Absalom, he fled Jerusalem with everyone "except ten concubines whom he left behind

to look after the house." (2 Samuel 15:16) This story has less to do with David's moral virtue and more to do with David's role as king. The passage begins, "the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab". Instead of leading as a king and shepherd of Israel, David was laying on "his couch". David's taking of Bathsheba was the result of his failure to act like a king. When his indulgence led to a pregnancy, David tried to tempt Uriah into the same indulgence. Uriah responded, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?" Uriah was acting more like a king than David and this more than the unplanned pregnancy led to David ordering Uriah's death. David had once again let the title of king distract him from his calling to be a shepherd of God's people.

2 Samuel 11:11 "shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?"

When was the last time you felt ashamed?

How did you react? Defensive or humbled?

How did David feel when Uriah refused to do what David was doing?

Was David feeling guilty because of Bathsheba or because he was not being a good king?

How do you respond when someone unknowingly points out your faults?

Do you want to 'kill the messenger' or do you see them as a means of grace calling you to repent?

### Sermon **"Beyond Imagination"** (*[Sermon Video](#)*)

What sin did David commit? This at first seems like an obvious question. There is adultery, lying, murder, and Nathan later implies stealing. But is this the primary sin? Jesus says that sin begins first in the heart, with our intentions. These other sins are outward manifestation of a deeper sin. This deeper sin goes all the way back to Adam and plagues each of us today. The sin of choosing our way and not God's way. Following our will instead of God's will.

The reading begins by stating that when all kings go to war, David sent Joab and stayed at home. God made David king but, instead of "being king", David shirked his duties. If David had been where he was meant to be, all the other sins would have never taken place. Even then, what David intended as deception, the LORD used as an opportunity for grace. When David called for Uriah in order to cover his adultery, Uriah reminded David that a faithful soldier and king should not be at home enjoying the pleasures of home when the ark and the people are at war. This was an opportunity for David to repent and take up his duties as a king. Instead, David tries to cover his guilt with murder. One simple choice to not follow God's will led to one bad choice after another. Those choices would haunt David his entire life.

When we choose our will rather than God's will, we end up taking paths that lead us far from where our true fulfillment and happiness reside. We become scattered by the winds of sin and find ourselves lost in a sea of bad decisions. Only when we look back upon our choices do we realize that there was a better way if we had simply followed God's lead. The extra work and struggle it takes to get back to where we should have been often causes us to be stressed and hungry for God's comforting grace.

On that Passover in Galilee, Jesus saw the hungry people scattered by the winds of sin and looking for healing and wholeness. When he asked Phillip how could these people be fed, he wasn't talking about physical nourishment but a deeper spiritual nourishment. Only the Son of Man on the cross, broken in love, could meet the deep hunger of humanity. That bread would multiply by grace as much as needed to fill all who ask. The scattered fragments would be gathered from the ends of the earth so that none would be lost in Christ. No matter how far we have strayed and no matter how bad our choices may have been, all can be brought back to the will and love of God.

This is the message of love in Jesus Christ that surpasses all our understanding. This love is stronger than any force on earth. It is only when we have faith, in that love, can we begin to experience

the unimaginable wonders of God. The more we experience God's wonder, the more we begin to glimpse the depth, height, and width of God's love in Jesus Christ. That love is only limited by our weak imagination. When we fail to seek God's forgiveness like David or we think the problem is too big like Phillip, we place our limits on a God who does the impossible. By grace, may we open ourselves to follow God's path and experience the many wonders of God.