

A most personal offense. A sermon preached at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder, February 28, 2016.

Lessons: II SAMUEL 12:1-13
MATTHEW 26:14-26

David – an Old Testament King – some say the best king Israel ever had

His story is the most extensively narrated single story in Scripture.

We know about David more than any other person in scripture

His is a story that is simultaneously earthy and godly.

His is a story where we see an awareness of God and responsiveness to God

Every event in his life is a confrontation with God.

Judas – one of the inner circle of Jesus' followers

A man who spent 2-3 years walking, talking, eating, laughing and learning with Jesus

A man handpicked to be one of Jesus' closest friends.

A man who could ask Jesus anything he wanted whenever he wanted.

Though centuries apart in both time and space, David and Judas share a common event – betrayal, broken trust in the Lord.

Both do it.

Both pay a heavy personal price for such betrayal.

It is such a horrible thing to experience – betrayal!

No words convey the full depth and range of emotions and physical pain caused by betrayals in this life

How many marriages – the most intimate of human relationships never are again quite the same after betrayal or broken trust?

Or how about relationships between siblings where one feels betrayed by another.

Or in a job environment,

Classroom

Any group – betrayal or broken trust in that group can forever shatter harmony and co-operation

As we continue our Lenten series “Restored in Christ” – I want us this morning to reflect on David’s story – specifically the prophet Nathan’s confrontation with David a year after the tawdry account involving David, Uriah and Bathsheba.

That story I invite you to read for yourself in II Samuel 11 – especially if you think the Bible

is exclusively stories about nice people doing things to and with each other!!!

And I want us to reflect on Judas' story – leading up to and including the Passover meal.

Neither is a happy story
 Neither is a light story,
 But then in the matter of betrayal and broken trust, there is nothing happy, light nor nice
 If writer and psychiatrist Scott Peck is correct in saying 'Life is difficult'
 Then incidents of betrayal and broken trust contribute to life's difficulties in spades!!

What then do the experiences of these two Biblical characters – David and Judas – say to us about betrayal and broken trust.

One thing that is crystal clear when you reflect and take time to ponder and think about the lives of these two men in scripture is that their experience reminds us *no one is immune or removed from succumbing to the temptation to betray or to break trust with God.*

To let God recede into the background and the individual to become front and centre is very real and very close for all of us.

In David's case, the story reads more David, less God
 The less David is paying attention to God, the more he is acting as if he were God.

David's actions toward Uriah presuppose that David no longer feels answerable for his actions – to anyone, including God.

Same is the case with David's actions toward Bathsheba – adoration of God had receded, and obsession with self had moved in

For one who displayed so many times a nearness and dependence upon God, here David let his glands trump his devotion to God – which is always the case by the way in terms of succumbing to sexual temptation!

I wonder whether at any point David thought of the consequences of his action as gazed too long at Bathsheba and determined to bed her

In Judas' case, you have betrayal by one of the inner circle of Jesus followers.

I wonder why Judas did what he did

I wonder was he just greedy – **what will you give me if I betray him to you?** –he says to the chief priests about selling out Jesus.

Greedy people do not usually settled for small sums of money.

30 pieces of silver is not an insignificant amount of money, but it is not a great amount either.

I wonder, did Judas see his action as way to nudge Jesus a little, force Jesus' hand so that then he would have to act against the Roman oppressors.

For Judas, like so many others was looking to Jesus to be the kind of savior who would lead an open rebellion against the Romans.

Touch point for us – no one is beyond succumbing to the temptation to break trust with or betray the Lord.

It matters not how long or how deep your faith in the risen Lord of the church, succumbing to the temptation to make self all important over anything or anyone else, including God, is very strong and strident.

And that will happen unless we are consistently vigilant and surround ourselves with brothers and sisters in Christ who are not afraid to call us to account.

For the world and its voices have never favoured those who are prepared to try to live in God's strength, a life dependent on God at the centre of all things – not just the holy and sacred things.

To reflect and ponder on the lives of David and Judas is also to be reminded that *betrayal or breaking trust in God can take many forms.*

For David, betrayal in this instance took the forms of adultery, murder and denial that anything was really wrong.

For Judas, betrayal took the form of literally selling out Jesus.

These are high powered and very graphic examples of betray or breaking trust in the Lord. Though adultery still takes its toll among believers, I believe betrayal and breaking trust with the Lord more often than not takes more subtle but in the end, just as destructive to a living faith in the Lord life.

I think gossip – those who practice it and those who allow it to continue are clearly flipping the bird to God – betraying him in that they are not practicing the foundational commandment of Jesus – *Love God, love other people*.

I think those who refuse to control their worry and anxiety are breaking trust with God.

For they are refusing to stand on the clear promise and invitation by God.

Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt 11:28-30)

These are not just pretty words.

They are promises by God, who eagerly desires to help us daily!

This may need lots of prayer, determined self-discipline and medications

I think we also break trust with the Lord when we refuse to believe that God really will provide for all of needs and often provides for a considerable number of our wants.

When we refuse believe this and live as if this is just some churchy promise then confusion about needs and wants reigns supreme.

Often when that confusion happens we become beguiled by the consumer culture---and there is literally a price paid when that happens and not just price in terms of dollars and cents!!!

To reflect and ponder on the lives of David and Juda is to be *reminded that betrayal, breaking trust has real consequences.*

David suffers dreadfully from real guilt and remorse,

While I kept silence, my body wasted away

Through my groaning all day long.

**For day and night your hand was heavy upon
me;**

**My strength was dried up as by the heat of the
summer. (Psalm 32:3-4)**

Until such is lanced by confession to Nathan "I have sinned against the Lord (II Samuel 12:13) But the consequences go beyond personal guilt and remorse.

David has set his own punishment has he not after the hearing of Nathan's parable?

...he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity (II Sam. 12:6)

Confession gives David a second chance,
But 4 of David's children die, including the baby born to he and Bathsheba.

Not nice!

No, it isn't nice – but then betrayal and breaking trust is not nice

It is an offense *that is always personal and always hurts deeply.*

As for Judas, scripture tells us what happens to him after betraying Jesus –Juda goes out and hangs himself.

Again, never pleasant to hear or reflect upon.

Betrayal, breaking trust with God *always has consequences*

Betrayal, breaking trust with another always has consequences – some of which are really nasty and ugly.

To reflect and ponder on the lives of David and Judas *is also to be reminded that God's mercy, God's forgiveness, God's love is always the last word.*

David is able to face up to his actions,
To admit his wrong doing, his sin before God.

David therefore is a person still willing to cast himself on God's mercy

David realizes his position – a sinner – before God.

David is a person in trouble

He is a person who needs help

He is a person who knows he needs God.

I believe the real tragedy of Judas is not that he sold out Jesus – though this was a horrible thing to do to one with whom he had been so close.

No I think the real tragedy lies in the fact that Judas believed himself to be cast off by God,

Not capable of being forgiven

Whether owing to pride or fear or already a low sense of self-worth, Judas cut himself off from God and all others.

The result being he could not experience the forgiveness and mercy of God – there was no hope, nothing for which to live.

There are consequences to betrayal and breaking trust – someone has to pay

But the David story,

Our story reminds us that our lives before God are not a constant drumbeat of unworthy, condemnation, inadequacy, faithlessness before Almighty God

No, the David story, our story is about recognizing in our sinfulness and feeling of

inadequacy and poor self-worth before God – it is there that God’s love, forgiveness, mercy and grace becomes the clearest

It is saying in honesty and humility--,
 “LORD I HAVE SINNED. PLEASE FORGIVE ME
 HELP ME FORGIVE THOSE I HAVE
 OFFENDED AND BEEN OFFENDED BY
 HELP ME TO FORGIVE MYSELF --

That we know and learn and feel the depth and breadth of God’s grace – that *unmerited and unconditional love, God through Jesus so willingly extends to each of us – no matter who we are Or what we have done.*

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
 That saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 Was blind, but now I see.*

*‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
 And grace my fears relieved,
 How precious did that grace appear,
 The hour I first believed.*

How profoundly accurate, the words written by 18th century converted slave trader to priest John Newton.

The question is – are each of us prepared to not just acknowledge the accuracy of the words, but To live daily a life that reflects their truth. AMEN