

## Imperfect Examples: David

July 15, 2018

1 Samuel 16:6-7, Psalm 51:10-12

Bill and I had a wonderful vacation. We checked off our bucket list a trip the Grand Canyon. We also experienced Bryce and Zion Canyons. Here is a picture that I just had to show. These rock formations are called the altar and the pulpit. I was here on Sunday June 24<sup>th</sup>. Now THAT's a pulpit! And when you have the perspective of just how small I am in comparison, you can see just how awesome and grand these formations are. I feel like David verses Goliath! And that brings us to our Imperfect Example today, David.

We continue with our series on Imperfect Examples. Thus far we have learned from:

Peter – who denied Jesus 3 times, was impetuous and strong willed, and he became the Rock upon which the church was built

Moses – who murdered an Egyptian soldier, was not a public speaker, and yet became God's messenger leading the people out of slavery

Paul – who was a Pharisee persecuting Christians and stoning them to death, and he became one of the greatest authors of the New Testament

Jonah – who ran away from God’s will but eventually gave the message to Ninevah and saved the people

Today, we will talk about one of the great heroes of the Bible...David. Now, when you think of David, I would imagine most of us would think of the story of how a young man was able to slay a Philistine giant. (Bible Short) Prior to this heroic event God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint the new King God has selected from Jesse’s family. That is what we see in our first reading from 1 Samuel today. Samuel was certain that it would be the biggest, older brother whom God would anoint to be King. But God says *that man looks at the outward appearance while God looks at the heart.* (1 Samuel 16:7) Samuel went through each one of David’s older brothers and each time God told him no. God knew David’s heart. God knew that he was mighty in faith and character, and this is who He anointed to be the next king. In the very next chapter of 1 Samuel, we are in the midst of the battle with the Philistines. David’s brothers were all much bigger and stronger. They were part of the King’s army. David was just sent there on a supply run. So this young man takes 5 stones and a sling and fells the big, bad giant. This was just one of David’s heroic feats. When King Saul found out David was anointed to be king, he tried several times to kill David, but when David had the chance to kill Saul, he spared his life. David wins many battles and becomes a great King. The prophets foretold that the Messiah would come from the line of David. The New Testament

genealogy shows that Jesus comes from the line of David. For all of this and more David is a true hero of the Bible.

We have some wonderful heroes right here in our church. I give thanks to God for our Soldiers For Christ. They were certainly heroes to the people of Immokolee. And they are going to continue their work in Belize this week. It takes great courage and faith to follow God on these mission trips. What a blessing you are to this church and to the communities that you serve.

I have also been overwhelmed by the heroes in Thailand. The rescue efforts to save the 12 boys and coach were truly amazing. It is incredible to think that just last week we were praying for their rescue and by Tuesday all 13 people had been rescued! The rescue teams and the boys and coach are true heroes.

And we love our heroes. The summer movies proves that – we had *Avengers Infinity War*, *Han Solo*, *The Incredibles 2* and *Antman and Wasp*! But one thing we know about heroes is that they are imperfect. Watching them struggle with their imperfections is part of their appeal. They inspire us and encourage us to overcome our own imperfections and fears.

A recent article in Forbes magazine talks about imperfect heroes and the absence of them in today's society. The article talks about the importance of heroes because they embody courage and determination, but real life heroes are becoming an

endangered species. Why? “We now demand perfection from our heroes. And when they then fail, as surely they must if perfection is the standard, we reject them with disdain. When we see that they have feet of clay, we not only push them off their pedestals, we fail to heed the lessons that can be learned from flaws and mistakes. Failure is not incompatible with heroism. Reconciling failure is difficult but it is also vital to growth and essential to achievement for heroes and for all of us.”

And that is what this series is about. Learning from the failures of our Biblical Imperfect Examples. For you see, it is in the imperfections that God’s power is revealed.

One of my television heroes is Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs. One of Gibbs many rules is #6 “Never say you’re sorry. It’s a sign of weakness.” Now this is one place that I disagree with Gibbs. In our society, weakness is an undesirable trait and character flaw. In fact, in our attempts not to show weakness, we often cause more harm to ourselves and others. It is in our weakness that God’s power is revealed. “His power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is through those flaws that God’s strength is revealed. God shapes them, transforms them, and heals them.

David is a Biblical hero, and as great a hero as he is, he had his weakness. He stole another man's wife and then sent him to the front lines of a battle where he was sure to be killed. This is not the act of a hero. But it is the act of a flawed human being. An imperfect example.

So what can we learn from David?

The first thing we need to remember is that God knows David's heart. And David loved God. That's why He chose him. David worshipped God which is evidenced in the Psalms. These words of prayer and praise show us David's heart and show us how to love God.

We learn from David that it is not a weakness to say you're sorry. We learn repentance.

David had this friend, Nathan. David did not realize or admit his sin at first. So Nathan told him a story.

"There were two men in the same city – one rich and the other poor. The rich man had huge flocks of sheep, herds of cattle. The poor man had nothing but one little female lamb, which he had bought and raised. It grew up with him and his children as a member of the family. It ate off his plate and drank from his cup and slept on his bed. It was like a daughter to him. One day a traveler dropped in on the rich man. He was too stingy to take an animal from his own herds or flocks to make a

meal for his visitor, so he took the poor man's lamb and prepared a meal to set before his guest." (2 Samuel 12: 1-4, Message Bible) David became outraged and said the man should die. Then Nathan told him that man was David. David had many wives and yet he took another man's! We see David's response to this in our second reading this morning, Psalm 51.

*<sup>10</sup> Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*<sup>11</sup> Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

David, in his imperfection, cries out to God. He is pleading for God to not abandon him. God has not nor will he abandon David. But that is the human authentic fear David has. We have it too. When we mess up and fall short, we fear that God will not love us; that God will take away his grace and love.

Our human senses teach us that if we do something wrong, we are bad, and we must be punished. Only then can we receive anything good from God. Franciscan Priest Richard Rohr talks about this as retributive justice.

Sin→punishment→repentance→transformation. To be sure there are consequences

to our actions. But it doesn't prevent God from loving us. You see, it is because of God's love that we are able to change. Rohr calls this restorative justice:

Sin→unconditional love→transformation→repentance. We don't have to change in order to receive God's love and grace. "God does not love us **if** we change. God loves us **so that we will** change." He loves us just the way we are. He knows our heart.

Last week, Jeremy left us with the question at the end of Jonah. "Should I not have compassion on Ninevah?" Jeremy challenged us to think about who we hold in the position of Ninevah in our hearts. Who is it that we don't think God should be compassionate toward? What if we are our Ninevah? What if the one that we don't think God should be compassionate on is us? We believe that we are not good enough to receive God's grace. And the truth is, we're not. But he gives it freely anyway. He knows our hearts.

Just like He knew David's.

David in his imperfection gave us some of the most powerful words in Scripture.

In them, we can see how desperate he was for God. His heart was always seeking God. As we continue in Psalm 51, David reminds us that there is nothing we can do to redeem ourselves before God.

*Open my lips, Lord,*

*and my mouth will declare your praise.*

*<sup>16</sup> You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;*

*you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*

*<sup>17</sup> My sacrifice, O God, is<sup>[b]</sup> a broken spirit;*

*a broken and contrite heart*

*you, God, will not despise.*

No sacrifice can we make, no offering. It is only by humbling ourselves before God. Surrendering our hearts to him completely. A contrite heart is one that is remorseful, repentant – no excuses, no defense.

As I watched the news yesterday I heard a reporter ask the doctor in charge of the care of the rescued boys and coach in Thailand how they were doing. The doctor said they were going to be fine. The next question was about their mental health. The doctor expressed concern that there may be questions in their minds about “what have I done wrong.” The report continued to emphasize they were concerned about the bearing of guilt and blame, especially for the coach.

We do that to ourselves, don’t we? God doesn’t want us to carry guilt and shame. Our guilt brings us to the place of repentance. Then we confess to God and it is his grace through Jesus Christ frees us; restores us; redeems us.



That is why a prayer like Psalm 51 this is important in our lives. Sometimes we don't even see what the problem is. We might need God to show us our imperfections or send a Nathan into our lives to show us. David writes in Psalm 139:

*Search me, God, and know my heart;*

*test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

<sup>24</sup> *See if there is any offensive way in me,*

*and lead me in the way everlasting.*

God knows our heart. He wants to bring us healing and restore us. And he is just waiting for an invitation. Richard Rohr says that "God is humble and never comes if not first invited, but God will find some clever way to get invited." God never gives up on us.

So today, let us today raise our White Flag. (Let us Come to the Altar) and lay down our hearts. Admit that you are imperfect, just as our Bible examples are imperfect, and seek God's grace. It is only then that God's power will be revealed. I invite you to the altar this morning or just spend time praying at your seat. We will spend some time in silence reflecting on these two verses from Psalms 51 and 139:

*"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*

*“Search me, God, and know my heart.”*

We will continue in a time of prayer and praise as the praise team leads us in our closing song.