

Pastor T.C. Arnold
9th Sunday after Trinity
2 Samuel 22:31-34
August 5th, 2012

All of us can understand the role of the underdog. We love to root for them – we understand them. We have played that role.

There have been many underdogs in the Bible. Perhaps Joseph, the son of Jacob (even Jacob was an underdog) comes to mind. The second to the youngest of Israel's sons is used by the Lord to protect his own family in Egypt. And then there is David – the ultimate underdog. The Lord chose him long before anyone knew it. The prophet Samuel was sent to Jesse's house to anoint one of his sons who would eventually become the next King (God rejected King Saul). Samuel sees the oldest son of Jesse, Eliab, – how big and strong he was – and thought, "Surely this is the man God desires for me to anoint." But God said to Samuel, "*Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*" David was not the front-runner in anyone's eyes to be God's anointed. He most definitely was the underdog.

The point is God sees things differently than we do. He sees more. For example, if we consider the life of a man like David, a clear underdog to begin life, I don't believe any of us would want it for ourselves. At first we might think David's life must have been glorious. He was popular and successful. He was a king. But if you look closer, I really do believe you would give that a second thought.

Don't forget, King Saul wanted David dead, and he chased him around trying to accomplish it. At a different time, he ran for his life from his own son, Absalom who wanted him dead as well. His personal life was wrought with scandal. You know the story of Bathsheba and the orders he gave to have her husband Uriah murdered while David took her for himself. Living with that couldn't have been easy. And besides all this, David was about the business of wars against people where his life was for sure on the line each time he took up battle. A life like David's, when you get down to the details, isn't so glorious after all.

But in the midst of it all, David sang songs of praise and thanksgiving to a God that provided all kinds of stability in times of great discontent and discouragement. God provided victory for David in the way that God would provide it – to someone who doesn't deserve it – to the underdog. So David responds to God's deliverance by saying, "*As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God. It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; He enables me to stand on the heights.*"

Shouts of victory in the Lord from the underdog King – the King that had everything – and yet had nothing – the King that was rich – and yet was poor – the King that was loved – and yet was hated – the King that was powerful – and yet, when he is running for his life with no one there to defend him, he was weak.

Perhaps we forget that a life like King David's is indicative of the life of even the most powerful and famous in our world today. We see the glimmer and the glitz of the rich and famous and often fail to see the struggles they have – perhaps even worse struggles than us. We covet their lives – but we only covet the good part. Just like God can see the heart of men... like He could see into the heart of David and choose the right man to anoint... God can see all of us... He knows all of us... He knows the victories and He knows the defeats... He knows our dreams of success and He knows our failures... He knows all the good parts and He knows all our struggles. He knows us completely, and while that may frighten us because there are things

about us that we want no one to know, I want you to know, It's a good thing God can see all of us.

I know you, because you are a lot like me. You want to hide and run away from that which is less than flattering about yourself. These are our weakest parts. Our failures are embarrassing and we want no one to see them. We think that if we let people see where we mess up, they will think less of us. We don't want that. We want people to see only the good part – the flattering part of us, the part we are proud of. Any of us would understand how this goes.

Unfortunately, this often carries forth in our relationship with God. Many of us are afraid to face God in our failures and then turn away from Him because we fear what God might think, we fear His wrath, and we don't feel worthy to be in His presence. Many have chosen to step away from this place in fear or embarrassment. Many believe that they need to straighten up life, get things in order, and work to calm things down before returning to the Lord's House or receiving His precious gifts of life in Word and Sacrament. Beloved, this is not the place to be after you finally get life straightened out and your life on track. Rather, this is the place to be before, during and after life's absolute chaos, failures, and complete and utter embarrassments. This is the place to be each day – no matter if you are comfortable or not with how you appear before the Lord. This is the place to be along with your failures, with your bad choices, with your mistakes, with your sins. There is NO OTHER place to be than right here.

Are you embarrassed to appear before the Lord's Altar? Don't be. No sinner is greater than the one sitting next to you, or even preaching this Word to you, or who places the Lord's body and blood in your mouth (or baptizing our babies). We are all chief of sinners and that is why, the greatest embarrassment, the greatest humiliation happened for you 2000 years ago on Calvary. God almighty, humiliated and embarrassed, naked, whipped, bleeding, dying next to thieves, took all those sins that embarrass you, that would kill you if God didn't have His way with them, and died with them. Utter humiliation. Christ Jesus, the Lord of all was, so that you never will be.

In our sins we feel like the underdog each day. We feel worse than all others, torn down and drug through. But the greatest of all Kings, greater than David, became the ultimate underdog when He submitted all of Himself under the authority of the law to fulfill what we could never do.

And so today, God uses humble means – common and ordinary – to give His blessings to all people... no matter the size or the age. At Baptism the Lord is providing what we need for life eternal. The Lord is providing forgiveness of sins and something we can always have and live in. And because all of us have this gift, we are made free and alive to approach the Holy throne of God, as dirty with sins as we may be. We are free to stand before God, because His cross stood before each of us.

King David says, *“As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is flawless He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him.* The underdog needs the Lord. The sinner needs the Lord. And we have Him. He is our place of refuge. This is our place of refuge. Come to this place. God sees our heart. He knows us inside and out. This is the place He gives us – all of us – what we need for eternal life. This is your place to be. This is His place to be for you. Sing praises to the Lord most high. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.