

“More than Those Watchmen” 2 Sam 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; John 6:35, 41-51; 8/9/09; AUMC

We just heard our Old Testament lesson from the book of 2nd Samuel; 2 Samuel is a book about King David who was, of course, one of the most important figures in the history of Israel.

We know how David appears in the story in the Bible; David was a brave man and a warrior as we remember from his fight with Goliath; the Bible also says he was a fine-looking man and spoke well. And that God was with him.

Many of the Psalms we have in the Bible carry David’s name; some of the psalms may have been written by him while many others were just dedicated to him;

I suspect that psalm 130 we have on the bulletin today may be one of those written by David.

But David had a taunting life before and after he became the King.

First of all, being a good warrior, King Saul makes him a commander over his armies and offers him his daughter in marriage. Wow! What a treat!

But as he becomes successful in many battles, David faces many challenges: people would say, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." David’s popularity awakes King Saul's fears — "What more can he have but the kingdom?" — and by various plots the jealous king seeks David's death.

But David survives and becomes the king at the age of 30.

But that didn’t mean all the challenges were over.

David commits adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his commanders. After committing adultery, David even has her husband, Uriah, killed in battle so that he could marry Bathsheba.

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And today’s particular story is about one of the most painful episodes in David's life.

David faces a rebellion from his own son, Absalom. Even though he is the King of the nation, David is on the run.

When the time is right, David has an opportunity to attack the enemy, the rebels, I mean, his Son’s army.

But here is what David had to say to his generals:

"Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, Absalom."

“Deal gently?” What do you mean? Aren’t you in a war with rebels? And when you are in a war you will be killed if you don’t kill them. What do you mean, “Deal gently for my sake”!

Absalom is the enemy. He is the traitor. He is the reason that this battle is necessary, at all. And the king commands his soldiers to deal gently with the traitor?

What is this?

Here I see the dilemma of a father, David; of course, he is the king, the commander-in-chief; but before he is the king of the nation, he is also the father of a son and he has this son who happened to be on the wrong side.

Other people wouldn’t understand it; but he knew he loved this young man as much he did other sons and daughters.

Eventually, Absalom is killed and the news of the victory is brought to David but he is shaken with grief: "O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O my son.... If only I had died..."

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I find here some sort of human predicament or dilemma.

I know David made some mistakes just like we all do; we know he had the dark days of his lust and adultery; but most of the time he did his best to be a man of God, to be a good servant of the King. He tried to be right and tried to do things right. In the Bible, he is even called a “righteous” man. But what is this? He ended up having his own son killed and cries over his death.

For some reason, from this story, I find myself asking what human life is; we work hard, do our own things, and try to support the family in whatever possible ways.

And then, one day, you say: “O God, things are really messed up; what should I do NOW? Where should I go from here?”

Or, things do not have to be messed up; sometimes we may just face those existential moments in which we find ourselves asking, “O God, what am I doing here?”

I’m this and that. So what? What is the point? You will remember those moments in which you ask a deep existential question...

Last week, someone came to see me in my office at the seminary; she said: “I just came here because I did not know who else to talk to.”

She said, “My children are all grown and gone; I have worked hard as a real estate agent; but now I do not want to work because money doesn’t mean anything to me. I have this deep hole in my heart and I want to know what I should do. One thing I can tell you is this: I have always wanted to study religion and art. Do you think I can do it; do you think I am too old?”

Well, it was a kind of surprise visit; I did not even know the person; so we talked some more... and I gave her a book to read.

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The point I am trying to make is this: people are hungry and thirsty. We all have this spiritual emptiness that the world cannot really satisfy.

We need higher ground; we need someone who is bigger than we; Theologian Paul Tillich says that is the ultimate reality called God who could fill this hole in our hearts.

The reason we have this longing, the unquenchable thirst, is because we are detached from God.

We are distanced from God.

We are far away from the creator.

Our connection is off; we are broken off from this connection.

So no matter what we do to fill the hole, it wouldn't work.

There is only one thing that can solve the problem; that is Christ; that is the Word-Became-Flesh; that is Jesus of Nazareth we have.

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever.

The writer of Psalm 130 says,

“My soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.”

I know the anticipation those watchmen have for the morning.

When I was doing my military duty in Korea, being a watchman was the hardest thing as a soldier; one night, I was working my night shift as a guard and got in a big trouble because I fell asleep.

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That is one of those memories you do not want to recall. Especially, during those long cold winter nights, it was very hard to have that job. I felt like the morning would never come.

I am sure the Psalmist knew the pain of waiting; and he says his soul is just like that now waiting for the Lord.

Life can be meaningless and boring if what we seek are things in the world; it does not matter what we do and how much we accomplish.

But life can be really meaningful and rewarding if our souls are full of hope that we have from our Lord.

Jesus says, "I am the bread of life."

"Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" –

Jesus satisfies our most fundamental needs.

"Whoever comes to me will never be hungry," he boldly promised, "and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Jesus' identity as the bread of life is more than a metaphor. God knows the profound hungers of the human heart, and we know how those appetites affect us and drive us.

We struggle to feed them, to satisfy them, but the ache remains. And then one day we discover that the key to our satisfaction goes back to the beginning: We cry out, and God in Jesus provides just what we need.

Praise God; Jesus is the bread of life.

Amen.