

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART

Based on Psalm 51:1-12

What do you do with a man with his hand in the cookie jar? What do you do with a man with his hand in someone else's cookie jar? What do you do with a man caught with his hand in someone else's cookie jar? You create in him, a clean heart. (v10)

Today's lesson from the Psalms is rather unique. While the subtext of most other Psalms will say something like 'a song of ascents', or 'a song of praise' or 'a lament,' a glance at the sub-text of Psalm 51, will find: A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

This Psalm was written for King David, after one particularly juicy story from 2 Samuel. David and Bathsheba. David at the time of this Psalm, was a far different man from the timid shepherd boy who challenged Goliath on the battlefield years before.. He had risen in the ranks of the army and found to be a sound leader. He was courageous and well liked by his men. When the political situation changed, David found himself King. He unified the people, created a capital city we now know as Jerusalem, was victorious in battle, and remained in God's favour, that is, until Bathsheba arrived to the king's court. Palace life brought with it, a variety of temptations, intrigue and freedoms.

David's eyes settled on the beautiful Bathsheba. The only problem was, she was married to his best army commander. But he wanted Bathsheba. And when negotiation was not successful, Bathsheba's husband found himself on the front line of the next battle, where surprise, surprise, he was killed. So David reaped the spoils of war, so to speak, while gossip in the palace and discontent in the army ranks ran wild. It was Nathan the prophet, who was the only one brave enough to approach the king. "David," Nathan said, "You have been a bad boy. And you have lost favour with YHWH. Repent now."

I can only imagine David's response. Contrite? Angry? Threatening? Denial? Ashamed? At this point, I think I counted three of the Ten Commandments broken, just in this one incident alone! Things weren't stacking up well for David. Maybe it was Nathan's harsh words that brought him back to reality. Maybe it was his own guilt at sending a man to his death.

MARCH 18, 2018 MINISTER'S MESSAGE

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART, O GOD AND PUT A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME. ~Psalm 51:10

Maybe it was keeping YHWH onside, knowing that without God's favour, victory in battle was not a sure thing. Maybe it was the self-realization that what David the king had become was not the person, David the man wanted to be. Something jolted David back to the accountability of his action. "Oh my God," David said to himself. "What have I done?"

With great shame and regret that filled every corner of his soul, he cried out to YHWH: Have mercy on me...(v1) Wash me thoroughly...(v2) Purge me with hyssop...(v7) Do not cast me away...(v11) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me... Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. (v10,12)

This would not be the only bleak moment in King David's spiritual journey. But I think this was the first great fall for a very great man. But even in the midst of such a fall from grace, it is David's lineage to which we of the Christian faith align our heritage. Generations later writer of the Gospel of Luke would pen, So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (Luke 2:4,4)

This Psalm was written about David and Bathsheba. It is a Psalm drawn to our attention as we rapidly approach Holy Week. The anguish of David's cries reminds of us of the anguish of Christ on the cross of Calvary. While none of us has had to endure the cross in the same what that Christ did, I would suspect that each of us has had at least one moment in life where we have said, "Oh my God, what have I done? In that moment, feelings of guilt or shame, or regret or remorse or anger have flooded your heart. Each of us has cried out to God, aloud, or urgently within, "Have mercy on me, God. I have sinned. Do not push me away. Let me hold you tightly. I beg you to see that deep within me, my heart is willing to hear you. Create something new and holy from what has happened."

Here is the good news in the midst of this difficult Psalm. For all that you struggle with, moments of bad behaviour, times you acted inappropriately or spoke out of turn, events unfolded in such a way that you inadvertently hurt another, know this. Our God did not turn His back on David (even after breaking three commandments, I might add). Our Bible testifies to that truth. And if God did not turn away from David, then He will not turn His back from you. Know that those difficult memories you carry with have already been forgiven. Perhaps it is time you forgive yourself. Know that it is possible to create a clean heart, to start again, to be restored: to God and to others.

What is required by you? Well the Psalmist tells us that as well. A willing spirit. (v10, 12). So are you willing? Are you willing to reconcile or release some of those "What have I done moments?" Are you ready for a heart, wiped clean and ready for new wisdom? Are you standing in the way of that spring cleaning, or do you have your Swiffer in hand? Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. (v10)

~Today's scripture quotes are taken from the New Revised Standard Version