

YOU ARE THE MAN

2 Samuel 11. 26-12. 10, 13-15

Galatians 2. 15-21

Luke 7. 36-8. 3

I speak to you in the name † of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

‘Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?’

When the Queen spoke those words in the tale of *Snow White*, I don’t think she was really asking a question. Did she really want to know the truth, or did she want the mirror to tell her what she wanted to hear?

Mirrors are interesting things. They serve one purpose. They reflect. It seems that they simply tell us the unfiltered truth. However, when we look into a mirror a strange process takes place.

The image that we see before us is both *accurate* and *distorted*.

It is *accurate* because the mirror shows us what we actually look like. The image does not have any Photoshop filters to take away imperfections, to make us look slimmer or to give us the appearance of a top model. It is absolutely accurate.

Yet, it is also *distorted* because the image is backwards. When we look at ourselves in a mirror, it is not the image that others see when they look at us. Have you ever noticed that when you look at a photograph of yourself, it seems odd? You might think, ‘Wait a minute, my hair doesn’t part that way!’ That’s because every time we look into the mirror to brush our teeth or fix our hair, we see a ‘backward’ image.

This is a good illustration, because it helps us to realise that there are two ways in which we can see ourselves, both personally and spiritually. The first way is to see ourselves as we really are; and the second way is to believe a distorted image.

I have mirrors on my mind, because our passage from 2 Samuel 11 relates how King David had a painful 'mirror experience'. Before he had this mirror experience, he was in Jerusalem. He had not gone to war with his army in the springtime, as he should have done. And one evening, when he gets up from his bed in his palace, he goes to the roof and sees a beautiful woman taking a bath. Her name is Bathsheba, and she is the wife of Uriah, one of David's soldiers. David sends for Bathsheba, lays with her and she becomes pregnant.

David attempts a cover-up. First, he has Bathsheba's husband brought back from the field, hoping that he may sleep with his wife and that people will think that the child is his. But Bathsheba's husband thinks that it is not right for him to come into the city and spend time with his wife when the rest of the soldiers are away fighting. Disgusted, David sends Bathsheba's husband back to the front, with a note ordering that he be placed in a position of battle where he will surely die. Indeed, Uriah dies in battle; and now that he is out of the way, David brings Bathsheba to the palace, marries her, and a son is born to them.

Our text tells us 'the thing that David had done displeased the Lord'. And God sends Nathan the prophet to tell David a parable. Nathan relates the story of a poor man who had nothing but a little lamb that he dearly loved. It was like a daughter to him. But a rich man takes the poor man's lamb away. The rich man did not want 'to take one of his own flock' to feed to a guest. David's anger was greatly kindled against the rich man. He says to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'

Now David had blinders on. He did not see the evil that he himself had done, and Nathan the prophet then held up a mirror and showed David his own sin, saying, ‘*You are the man!*’ ... Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?’

At that moment, David was faced with an important decision. Which reflection would he see in the mirror?

Would he see himself as the entitled King, deflect this accusation, kill Nathan to suppress the truth, and continue to believe his distorted image of himself? Or would he accept the truth, confess his wrongs, and accept whatever consequences would come from his actions?

In the scriptures, David is called a ‘man after God’s own heart.’ Do you know why? It wasn’t because he was perfect. It is because he chose the second option that was presented to him. He owned up to his mistakes. To his great credit, David responds to God and repents. He does not try to make excuses. He does not try to explain himself. He does not try to wiggle out or downplay the sin he has committed. Instead he confesses, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’

Nathan responds to David’s confession by saying that the Lord has taken away his sin. God forgave David for what he had done. God did not take away the results of this sin; he did not take away its consequences; but he did forgive.

We all have certain blinders that we wear, don’t we? They are like special glasses that help us to think that all we do is fine. These blinders allow us to come down hard on others, to point out the wrongs of the world around us, and to ignore what we should change within our own selves and hearts.

On one hand, David was lucky. He had a prophet who came to him and held up a mirror, as it were, so that he could see his wrongdoing for himself. At times, you and I need the same thing. We need to see our failings for what they are. We need to have our blinders taken off, as we realise what it is that is keeping us from a proper relationship with God. And we need, time and time again, to receive the forgiveness that our God offers.

In the epistle of St James (1. 22-25), we read that the scriptures are like a *mirror* that shows us the truth about ourselves. In chapter one of that letter, we read that ‘those who look into the law of liberty...and persevere...will be blessed in their doing.’

Today, may we resolve to look squarely in the mirror that God gives us. May we allow him to show us those things in us that need to be changed. May we acknowledge our failings before him, receive his forgiveness and allow him to make us whole. A forgiven life is a healthy life. A forgiven life is one lived without guilt. A forgiven life fills us with strength and love.

Amen.