

St Peter's Anglican Church, Bundoora

10th Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday 28/07/2024

Reading 2 Samuel 11:1-15 / Ps 14 / Ephesians 3:14-21 / John 6:1-21

(Readings are from New Revised Standard Version)

Sermon Theme: *Power, Authority, Leadership*

By Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur

2 Samuel 11.1-15

¹ In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. ² It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. ³ David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' ⁴ So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. ⁵ The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.' ⁶ So David sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰ When they told David, 'Uriah did not go down to his house', David said to Uriah, 'You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?' ¹¹ Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.' ¹² Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, ¹³ David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. ¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'

Psalms 14

¹ Fools have said in their hearts 'There is no God':
they have all become vile and abominable in their doings,
there is not one that does good.

² The Lord looked down from heaven
upon the children of Adam:
to see if there were any who would act wisely
and seek after God.

³ But they have all turned out of the way,
they have all alike become corrupt:
there is none that does good, no not one.

⁴ Are all the evildoers devoid of understanding:
who eat up my people as they eat bread,

and do not pray to the Lord?

⁵ They shall be struck with terror:

for God is with the company of the righteous.

⁶ Though they frustrate the poor in their hopes:

surely the Lord is their refuge.

⁷ O that deliverance for Israel might come forth

from Zion:

when the Lord turns again the fortunes of his people,

then shall Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

Ephesians 3.14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

John 6.1-21

¹ After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ² A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³ Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵ When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' ¹⁰ Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' ¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' ¹⁵ When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. ¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus' walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰ But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' ²¹ Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

SERMON.

Jesus through his own teaching and exposition of Old Testament scriptures makes it very clear that relationship with God is both desired by God and required by humanity and the as with any relationship trust in and commitment to the other is required. This is important to understand because Jesus also stresses that all who follow him have a great obligation to all others in need. Christians, Us, we are called not simply to love and follow Jesus but to become leaders in the world, displaying what that love looks like, its impact on relationships and service to others.

I want to focus on three words which I believe today's passages shine a light on and which history shows if misunderstood or abused can lead to nothing good, but are words that if associated with a context of love, generosity, empathy and compassion can result in celebration for all: Leadership, authority and power.

We heard the story several weeks ago about how God after witnessing such determined commitment to faith, took David, a young shepherd and gave him power to rule over the nations and the promise that from his house the Messiah would come. With these events the people made David their King, and so he also had authority to use his power. In this sense David was a true leader. As Myles Munroe, an awarded and respected Christian faith leader¹ once said "true leadership is the authority given by the trust of followers to use power for the benefit of all."

With this power and authority David is called to serve as leader both practically and spiritually continuing making God known. Yet, he fails. David succumbs to temptations of lust and desire and abusing his power, coerces Bathsheba into sleeping with him. I stress David abused his power for he certainly had no authority to act as he did either culturally or according to the Law of Moses.

These actions of David lead to grave consequences, including murder with the death of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, and eventually even the death of Bathsheba's son born from David's adultery (cf. 2 Samuel 12:15b-23).

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians uses the authority given by the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel and is given power by the choice of others to freely listen and adhere to Paul's message.

Jesus too teaches with authority. And we know that this authority is recognised by ever growing numbers of people, both Jew and Gentile. Their desire to hear more from Jesus to experience his presence and healing gives the man Jesus power over them. But notice how each uses their associated power differently and with differing result. David leads to pain, Paul leads to growth and understanding of community and relationship, while Jesus demonstrates services and humility by sharing the little available, trusting God and feeding the hungry and give rest to the tired.

¹ [Myles Munroe - Wikipedia](#)

Most of us proceed through our lives often unaware of the impacts we have on others. A parent and child, teacher and student, superiors and subordinates in the workplace, even here in the church. Who decides what or how something is done, what is the right or wrong way.

We may scoff at the suggestion we are a leader, or have authority let alone power, but every single one of us has all of these. Just as our gifts are unique so leadership, authority and power will appear different depending on the time and context.

There is danger when we hang on to power, when we differences as a threat to our real or perceived status. Leadership is taking the power we have and sharing that with others. This is the basis of succession planning. None of us should be indispensable rather we should be discerning how we might empower others that they may grow into the authority needed to carry whatever role we play in Christ mission forward. This is how healthy sustainable growth takes place.

Giving in to fear of tomorrow and the desire to hang on to the past are also lues to us that we need to reflect seriously on our adoption of the obligation we as Christians have. Simply by choosing to intentionally include Jesus as part of your daily life, part of your decision making and routine, refusing to submit to temptations, especially when hurt for another is the foreseeable outcome.

As we live our lives, we will find ourselves in situations where we are tempted, but as evident in 2 Samuel 11:1-15, through introspection of our daily lives, empathy, and making ethical choices there are strategies available that can strengthen our resilience.

1. **Accountability and Transparency:**

- **Leadership:** If you're in a position of authority, be transparent and accountable. Acknowledge mistakes and learn from them.
- **Personal Life:** Be accountable to yourself. Reflect on your actions, admit when you're wrong, and seek growth.

2. **Guarding Against Temptations:**

- **Self-Control:** Identify areas of vulnerability (e.g., social media, unhealthy habits) and practice self-discipline.
- **Healthy Boundaries:** Set boundaries to avoid situations that lead to temptation.

3. **Understanding Consequences:**

- **Think Ahead:** Consider the impact of your decisions on others. Avoid impulsive actions.
- **Repair Relationships:** If you hurt someone, seek reconciliation and make amends.

4. **Embracing Dissent and Constructive Criticism:**

- **Listen Actively:** Value dissenting opinions. They provide fresh perspectives.
- **Learn from Feedback:** Instead of defensiveness, appreciate feedback as an opportunity to improve.

5. Balancing Justice and Mercy:

- **Fairness:** Advocate for justice, but also show compassion.
- **Forgiveness:** Extend mercy to others and yourself. Let go of grudges.

Remember, these lessons aren't just historical—they guide our choices today.

Homework

So, what does it mean to you when you say 'I follow Jesus', how are you a living example of that claim?
