

### 3 PENTECOST (LECTIONARY 11) JUNE 13, 2010 CYCLE "C"

#### TITLE: MAKE A EWE TURN

**READINGS: 2Sam. 1:26-12:10, 13-15, Ps. 32., Gal. 2:15-21, Luke 7:36-8:3.**

A young couple invited their elderly pastor (no inferences please) to dinner. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, the minister was asking their son what they were having. "Goat" the little boy replied. "Goat?" asked the startled pastor, "Are you sure about that?" "Yep" said the youngster. "I heard dad say to mom, 'Today is just as good as any to have the old goat for dinner.'" So how does this relate to your sermon, pastor? You ask. Well, I'm going to talk about the reading from the Old Testament and during those times they did eat a lot of goat. I can't say I've had much goat, but I have had to eat crow a few times.

This section from 2 Samuel is one of my favorites. It's all about being human, about being a sinner. It's all about enlightenment, repentance, sorrow for sin, conversion and forgiveness all rolled up together in the story of an innocent lamb. Nathan was a faithful servant of David and a faithful disciple of God. He knew that David had murdered his lieutenant Uriah so he could have his soldier's wife Bathsheba for his own base lustful desires. Often he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and she was already pregnant with his child. His righteous servant Nathan, however, was a spokesman for truth. His name in Hebrew means "God has given." God had given Nathan many gifts. He had already helped David arrange musical worship in the sanctuary (2Chronicles 29:25) He had boldly told David that because of his bloody hands he would not build the Temple.

Now it was time to face his master and king again with the truth. He had a difficult task. He must lead his king into the realization of his terrible sin with Bathsheba and his need for repentance. Nathan uses one of the greatest parables uttered in the Bible. It is the poignant, powerful and pertinent parable of the little innocent ewe lamb unjustly taken and slaughtered to satisfy the desires of a rich and powerful man.

Pet lambs were popular in ancient Israel. Nathan knew the story about this pet would be appealing to David who was once a humble shepherd. This poor man had one pet lamb purchased with his hard-earned, meager funds. He loved her so much that she ate at the family table, was snuggled in his bosom just like one of his children, and slept in the family sleeping chamber. There was also a rich man who had great lands and more sheep than he could count. One day he was visited by a guest. Hospitality in those days, of course, was extremely important. But evidently this guest wasn't high class enough to waste one of the sheep from

his own countless flock. So he decided to rob the poor neighbor and slaughter his special pet lamb for his wayfarer guest.

David understood well. He was filled with anger and revulsion at the utter wickedness displayed by the rich man in the parable. David condemned the rich man to be put to death for his terrible injustice and inconsiderate selfish actions. "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." 2 Sam.11:5-6.

Now comes the blow which shakes David to his very core. It is one of the great accusations in all literature. Nathan like a mighty clap of thunder cries out "You are the man!" How utterly heart-piercing that must have been when the realization of those cutting words crashed into mighty King David's head! Pastor James Merritt recounted the day he attended the Masters Golf tournament. He was following the young Tiger Woods along with a large crowd. "I was behind him on the seventeenth tee when he ripped one of his majestic drives," he said, "In the split second that he hit the ball, one man in the crowd yelled at the top of his lungs, 'You Da Man!'" It is a mystery how that phrase got its origin, but the first time that phrase is recorded in human history, it came from the lips of a prophet to a King. But rather than being complimentary and pleasing to his ear, it was a very sour note that struck his most sensitive nerve, and pierced him to his very heart.

Uriah had a little ewe lamb whose name was Bathsheba. King David was not satisfied with his great harem of wives at his Royal Palace. He wanted Bathsheba. To possess her he didn't stop at adultery, he even embraced murder. And what has our society learned from the great King David? Is it any different in countless households across America? Is it any different in our own city of Longview, or around the world? You certainly don't have to be royalty to act as immorally, as ruthlessly, with such utter disregard for life. The terrible sin today is to make David's lust-filled, heinous act seem normal. But is not David everyman? Here we are standing on our possessions, drooling for more. Looking for self-satisfaction in every area of our lives. We live in a consumer society which says more is better, to be rich is to be happy, buy now and pay later, you must have the latest communication device, the media tells us. We have much but the Jones' next door have a brand new car. We trust Master Card instead of trusting the Master.

But King David made a "ewe turn." He learned the hard way that God is a Lord of loving forgiveness. He learned, too, that even when we are forgiven, we often must live with the consequences of our sins. Despite his sorrow, his confession and forgiveness Uriah was still dead. His adultery with Bathsheba could not be erased. And the child from their union was destined to die. But he was truly changed. David never had a problem with adultery again. For the rest of his life, he was a faithful husband. Bathsheba never had to worry. David had learned his lesson. The words that he had heard from Nathan brought peace and

joy and forgiveness to his heart. "The Lord also has taken away your sin. You shall not die." 2 Sam. 12:13.

If we haven't, then it is high time that we make our own "ewe turn" to God. Like the woman in today's Gospel pericope we need to kneel at the Master's feet and bathe them with our own tears of repentance and humbly ask forgiveness. We, like David, when he heard Nathan's words promising God's forgiveness, can take great assurance from Jesus' words, "Therefore, I tell you her (his) sins, which were many, have been forgiven...then he said to the woman, your sins are forgiven...your faith has saved you; go in peace." Lk.7:47,48,50. **Amen.**

**Pastor Barney**