

Rebecca Newlands St Philip's Anglican Church O'Connor

Pentecost 9B

2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:13a, Psalm 51:1-12, Ephesians 4:1-16, John 6:24-35

Our moments of truth are moments of challenge, enlightenment, repentance and hope.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

I don't know about you but I really enjoyed Chris Cheah's sermon last week. I was so taken with his grand narrative perspective that I wanted to keep looking at the story of David this week. It really is a great story – all those critical elements for a ripping yarn. Kings, armies, maidens, power, sex and murder plus prophets and God himself. The section from that story we heard today is one full of drama and tension. Chris named last week's instalment David's Bathsheba moment. The mid-life turning point where his desire for Bathsheba, his adultery with her and the murder of her husband Uriah changed forever the nature of his kingdom.

If last week was his Bathsheba moment, then this week it is his Moment of Truth. It is where reality strikes, the penny drops and the rubber hits the road. Up until the point where Nathan says, "you are that man" David has been blind to his crime. It is as if his power and authority have clouded his judgement and his sense of right and wrong. Just before this conversation between the prophet Nathan and King David, we have David talking to Joab. If you remember Joab was the military commander who following David's orders got Uriah killed on the front line. David says to Joab "Do not let this matter trouble you". David just does not see the tragic and profound implications of his actions. Later we hear Nathan say to David "Why have you done what is evil?" Don't you get it? Don't you see? This confrontation rips away the veil from David's eyes. David sees things in a radically different way.

Moments of truth come to us all. They challenge us. They enlighten us. They move us to repentance. They lead us to hope. They come to individuals, communities, congregations and nations but they are generally preceded by blindness and deafness. So, and this is important, we don't see them coming. We only know our moments of truth in retrospect.

David, my long patient husband, is very good at letting me know where I have been blind about my

behaviour. He presents me with these truth moments quite regularly. I hate it. I am not nearly as gracious and quick to repent as King David was.

I don't think I am alone in not liking having someone tell me where I am wrong. I don't think Jesus listeners liked it very much either. Today's gospel has its own moment of truth. Jesus tells his listeners that they are looking for him because they ate their fill of bread, not because they saw anything new. They go on to ask him what they must do to perform the works of God and he explains that the works of God are to believe in the one whom God sent, Jesus Christ. However they keep asking for signs but they never see the truth even when it is standing in front of them declaring it to them. It is the crucifixion and resurrection that eventually leads them to the ultimate truth about themselves and their own blindness and culpability.

At times it seems as if we need a crisis to turn our eyes and ears in a different direction.

Right now we have had an interest rate rise. This will be for some people a crisis and a moment of truth. As we look at our credit cards or our mortgages, that renovated bathroom and the new family car then our debt and our potential inability to pay it back stare straight back at us. We realise our blindness in thinking we had unlimited resources and our blind faith in economic security. These have hidden the truth from us. In our nation too they say we are heading for a skills shortage of immense proportions. One day and not very far away our short sightedness in the areas of immigration and training will come back and bite us.

And what about in our congregation and our communities? I wonder - where are we being blind? What are we not seeing? What are we not hearing? What moment of truth is hurtling towards us?

I have had many moments of truth – some small and seemingly insignificant. Others cataclysmic. There is a saying in 12 Step groups – God keeps trying to teach us and we just don't get it. Are you listening yet?

This for me is the great strength of King David. He did get it. He did see reality in a new way. He did see what he had done. He owned the consequences of his behaviour. David says to Nathan "I have sinned against the Lord". He recognised his sin and he repented. When you think about it that is extraordinary. He could just as easily have had Joab kill Nathan and be done with the pesky prophet who exposed his great crime. How often have we turned away from the truth about ourselves? Justified our actions? Let ourselves off the hook?

Don't mistake me – it is one of the hardest things to do - to admit fault. It is uncomfortable, indeed deeply painful, but it is the way through to a new perspective and to new hope. Being human is well - part of being human. Our great tragedy is when we are so blind, so deaf, so closed down to the full life God calls us into that we continue to hurt ourselves and others and we ultimately abuse the gifts of potential and becoming that God presents to us.

As we know from the story of King David and our own story, admitting fault and repenting does not absolve us from the consequences of our actions. Repentance does put us in the realms of hope but it will not wipe away what we have done. It cannot change the past or what those past actions throw up into the present. David's mistakes do come back to haunt him. Yet repentance put us in a different place emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. From that new place we can live with what we have done. We know we are connected again to God who has never in fact left us even if we have closed our eyes and our ears to his presence. In the assurance of God's love and forgiveness we have the strength and the where with all to go on. God is supremely compassionate, patient, forgiving and merciful. God can and does redeem anything, anything. Our hope is not in vain.

And God does not leave us alone. God gives us "Nathan's" of all types who help us see God's perspective. They help us know ourselves and find a better path. Our Nathan's might be our partners. It might be friends. It might be a book we are reading. It is certainly the inspired word of Scripture. The Buddhists have a saying – everyone is my teacher. Are we listening? Are we seeing? Are our hearts open?

David is the archetypal everyman or being political correct, every person. His story is our story. Like David we are blessed with God's gifts – life, community, an awesomely beautiful world, sufficient resources for all of us to live well. Like David we are loved by God. And like David we make choices that are not life giving for others. Sometimes they are downright destructive. And then we have our moments of truth. If we are lucky we see things differently, we hear differently and we are moved to repent. We move in to hope and newness of life.

Each Sunday we have the act of confession, followed by absolution. We get on our knees and take a look at ourselves. We lay our pride, ego, self-centredness and abuse of power and privilege before God. We ask God to redeem what we have done. We ask that others will not suffer because of our failings. We open ourselves to

the flow of Gods grace and we commit ourselves to love and obey God in newness of life. These are not empty words from an outdated ritual. They are profound markers in our journey of faith. They acknowledge that we are a work in process and that we need Gods grace to love and live well.

From a new place we approach the lord's table. All that we are, all that we can be, all our humanity, our weaknesses and strengths are offered to God in thanksgiving. We share in the food of life and hope.

May God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and lead us into everlasting life. Amen