
My Sermon from Sunday July 4, 2021, '6th Sunday after Pentecost' ~

"The Missing Words"

Speak, Lord, your servants are listening. Amen

What kind of family do you have? Do people in your family share all the stories or just the nice ones? Are the unpleasant ones not talked about or are they shared? Everyone has a different kind of family dynamics. If there has been a major trauma in the family and the family wishes to move forward and to heal, the telling of the story, the telling of the truth is essential. People often don't wish to share the story because they feel it will hurt too much. It is human nature to hide the ugly stories.

Grieving parents have always told me that it is worse if no one mentions the child's name again or shares stories about the child. They say that then it becomes a 'double' death ~ it is as if the child never lived. I know why caring people practice these omissions. They are trying to protect the family from hurt but it actually just makes everything worse.

I have been asked to do a presentation on ZOOM to bereaved parents this month, to parents who have lost a child. This is difficult to prepare as I don't have the words to say. However, I commend *Hospice Northwest* for doing this memorial and for keeping the memories of these children alive. Truth-telling. Essential to healthy individuals, healthy families, healthy workplaces and healthy countries.

For decades, we have had the reading from the 5th chapter of the second **Book of Samuel** in our Lectionary (called the *Revised Common Lectionary* or *RCL*). These are the readings from the Bible for use in Christian worship, all around the world. Today on the 6th Sunday after Pentecost, we have scheduled readings from **Samuel, 2nd Corinthians** and **Mark's gospel**. Until this year and my heightened awareness of the importance of telling the story and listening to the story and acting upon the story, I did not realize that the 3 verses omitted from the Samuel passage and intentionally left out are highly significant. 3 whole verses from the 2nd book of Samuel, chapter 5. Verses 6, 7, and 8.

Why did the authors of the lectionary leave them out? Why was this reading censored? It seems to be a narrative of David becoming the king to replace Saul and then telling us that King David reigned for 40 years. The passage also speaks about Jerusalem becoming the capital of the United Kingdom of Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The passage ends in verse 10 with David becoming ***"greater and greater for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him."***

All good stuff, isn't it? So what has been left out? I hope you are getting curious. What is in the 3 missing verses that you may have never heard or, like me, never paid attention to before?

I will read them to you: **THE MISSING VERSES . . .**

The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, even the blind and the lame will turn you back" – thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now the city of David. David had said on that day, "Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates." Therefore, it is said "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."

What are we learning? David conquers the city of David, the city of Jerusalem. The Jebusites are convinced that their city is invincible. They taunt David by saying that the blind and the lame will be able to keep them out. David decides to conquer the city by using the tunnels that bring water into the city and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He then decides to shut the blind and the lame out of the city. Not a very compassionate action is it?



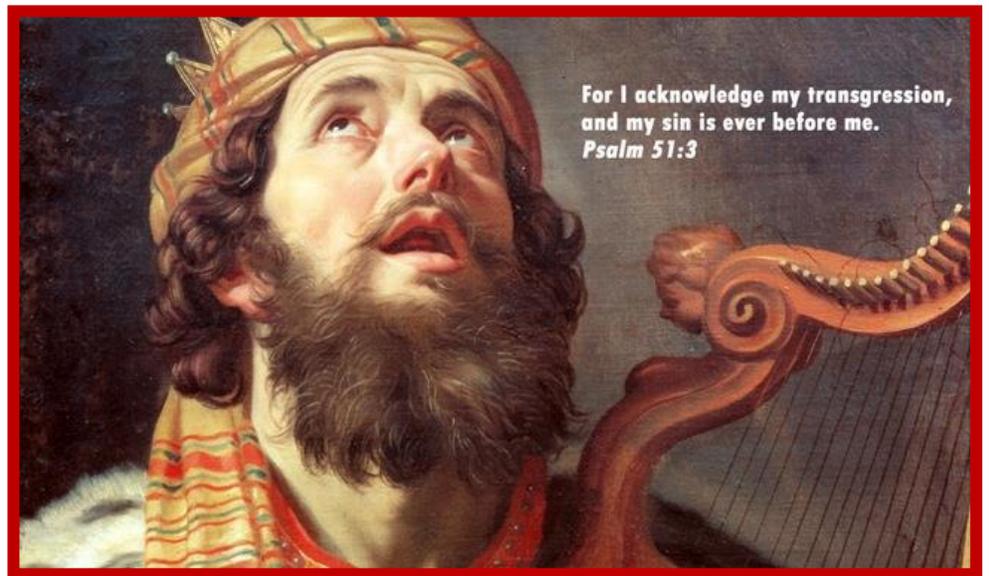
The author of the reflection for this week's scripture from the book *Disciplines, Daily Devotions for 2021*, James Harnish, writes this about the missing verses:

Ugly stories of exclusion, racism, injustice, and violence are embedded in the history of every city and nation and continue to infect our lives each day. We all have reasons to repent for the ways we succumb to the worst demons in our sin-infected economic and political systems.

In spite of David's sin and his turning away from God and his treatment of the marginalized and his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, God continues to favour David because **David is able to repent and to do better.** Our loving God forgives us, heals us, blesses us, and gives us a vision for the future.

Although these 3 missing verses paint a picture of David at odds

with the Shepherd Boy King and the author of 'The Lord is My Shepherd' (Psalm 23), I think they are essential for all of us. When we truly understand and experience the redemptive power of God, we too can be partakers of God's holy grace. If we portray King David as perfect, then we will never rise to his level. **But David was a flawed human being, just like you and like me.** There is hope for us.



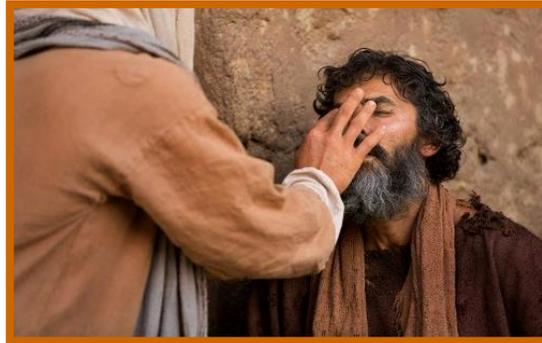
In his gospel passage from Mark 6, Jesus is judged unfairly and unkindly by the people of his hometown Nazareth. They call him the carpenter's son and are disdainful and dismissive of his preaching, his wisdom, and his power. Jesus was very disappointed with their attitudes and negative perceptions of him and so was unable to do deeds of power that day in Nazareth. Their hearts were not open to grace.

A man who was open to grace, and exemplified Christ's compassion and inclusivity was a Lutheran Pastor who passed away in February 2021 in Thunder Bay at the age of 90 years. His name was

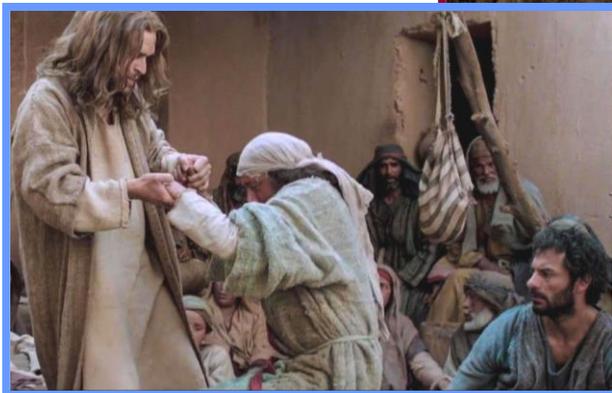
John Schmidt and 'Pastor John' did his long-time ministry with unconditional love. Pastor John was a true Ambassador for Christ and he took care of all of God's people, including the blind and the lame. He walked alongside many people in their journey of discipleship.

As we grow in grace, we begin to become more inclusive and more tolerant and less judgmental. We begin to pay attention. Harnish points us to the historical reality. A couple of hundred years after David's judgement against the blind and the lame, the prophet Isaiah has an inclusive vision of the city of Jerusalem. A couple of hundred years after that, the prophet Jeremiah included the blind and the lame in the return of the Jewish people from exile in Babylon. Micah prophesied that the lame would be welcome in Jerusalem.

We know why there are these mentions of inclusivity, and specific mention of the blind and the lame. The prophets would have been very aware of the feelings of David regarding the blind and the lame. They would have grown up knowing the 3 missing verses.



Now we know why Jesus spoke so much about the blind and the lame. **Jesus himself made a point of healing the blind and the lame.** St. John the Divine has a vision of all being healed in his Revelation.



Our country of Canada has done some great things in terms of universal health care and the discovery of insulin. However, we have real episodes of darkness.

Here are just a few:

- **Our turning away in 1939 of the boat full of 900 Jewish refugees** who were seeking safety and sanctuary. As no country would accept them, they had to return to Europe where many then died in Nazi concentration camps.
- **Residential schools.**
- Our treatment of **Chinese Canadians** in the early 1900s.
- The **internment of Japanese Canadians** during WWII.

The Italians and the Finnish were badly treated during WWII and my German ancestors changed the spelling of their last name from 'Schrumm' to 'Shrum' when they came to Canada.

As the archdeacon, I review the parish profiles of congregations seeking a new incumbent. The best profiles are those that tell the truth and share their struggles and their dark times. They do not censor out the stories that portray them in an unfavourable light.

I am thankful that when the prophet Samuel wrote the Samuel literature, he included verses 6, 7, and 8. I find **they add hope and reality** to the narrative of the life of David.

I had our **Lay Reader Marty** read the verses from Samuel as suggested by the lectionary and leave out the missing verses. In 3 years from now, when this reading comes up again, I promise you that the 3 missing verses will be included.

I believe in this country of Canada and **I know we can learn and do better**. In 3 years from now, I hope that the strength and the vision for this country of Canada will have moved us ahead. Will we still make mistakes? Of course, but we will learn, grow, and act. Did Jesus stop his ministry because of the attitudes of the people in his hometown? Of course not.

We tell the truth. We listen to the truth. We dream. We move forward together ~ united, inclusive, non-judgmental, caring and loving.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. **Amen.**

Archdeacon Deborah+
