

Former Prophet
2 Samuel 11:1-15

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.

¹⁵In 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.'

¹⁶*As Joab was besieging the city,
he assigned Uriah to the place
where he knew there were valiant warriors.*

¹⁷*The men of the city came out
and fought with Joab;
and some of the servants of David among the people fell.
Uriah the Hittite was killed as well.*

¹⁸*Then Joab sent and told David
all the news about the fighting;*

¹⁹*and he instructed the messenger, '*

*When you have finished telling the king
all the news about the fighting,*

²⁰*then, if the king's anger rises,
and if he says to you,
"Why did you go so near the city to fight?
Did you not know
that they would shoot
from the wall?"*

²¹*Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal?
Did not a woman
throw an upper millstone on him
from the wall,
so that he died at Thebez?
Why did you go so near the wall?"*

*then you shall say,
"Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too." '*

Gospel ***John 6:1-21***

After this
Jesus went to the other side
of the Sea of Galilee,
also called the Sea of Tiberias.

²A large crowd kept following him,
because they saw the signs
that he was doing for the sick.

³Jesus went up the mountain
and sat down there with his disciples.

⁴Now the Passover,
the festival of the Judeans,
was near.

⁵When 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?'

⁶He said this to test him,
for he himself knew
what he was going to do.

⁷Philip answered him,
'Six months' wages
would not buy enough bread
for each of them to get a little.'

⁸One of his disciples,
Andrew, Simon Peter's brother,

said to him,
⁹There is a boy here
who has five barley loaves and two fish.
But what are they among so many people?’

¹⁰Jesus 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.

¹¹Then 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.

¹²When they were satisfied,
he told his disciples,
‘Gather up the fragments left over,
so that nothing may be lost.’

¹³So they gathered them up,
and from the fragments
of the five barley loaves,
left by those who had eaten,
they filled twelve baskets.

¹⁴When 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.’

¹⁵When 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.

¹⁶When evening came,
his disciples
went down to the lake,
¹⁷got into a boat,
and started across the lake
to Capernaum.

It was now dark,
and Jesus had not yet come to them.

¹⁸The lake became rough
because a strong wind was blowing.

¹⁹When they had rowed
about three or four miles,
they saw Jesus
walking on the lake
and coming near the boat,
and they were terrified.

²⁰But he said to them,
‘It is I; do not be afraid.’

²¹Then they wanted to take him
into the boat,
and immediately
the boat reached the land
towards which they were going.

Reading the Former Prophet this Week

The 3-year RCL Year B tour of David gets to Bathsheba
(continued next Sunday with consequences)

This is pivotable in the cycle of the David saga –
The institutional monarchy, the king sedentary,
'our institutions do our sinning for us'

David's abuse of power ignores Bathsheba's consent
She, purified, married, but not free to resist the king
She breaks silence to send and tell David: 'I am pregnant'

David starts with a coverup plot, tempting Uriah home
The soldier's integrity resists the king's manipulation
He carries his own sealed death warrant to Joab

I've italicized what the lectionary omits,
The 'friendly fire' withdrawal to expose Uriah,
The duplicitous reporting of the even to David

In this core story, do you identify with David,
Or with Bathsheba, or with Uriah,
Or Joab, or his messenger?

Try hearing the whole chapter in Everett Fox' translation,
With notes and audio link from 2021:
<http://www.hereticslikeus.com/2024/06/2-samuel-11.html>

I preached it as abuse of power in 2012:
<http://www.billbrucewords.com/2012/08/powerful-notes-from-www.html>
not much different, as corruption in 2018:
<http://www.billbrucewords.com/2012/08/powerful-notes-from-www.html>

Next week, the consequences, delivered by Nathan.

Reading the Gospel this Week

The RCL cycle follows Matthew (A), Mark (B) Luke (C)
Insert John in high/low seasons – 5 Sundays now on John 6
Feeding 5000 appears in all 4 gospels – most elaborate here
Linked in Mark and John to walking on water... (not in RC lect)

John's elaborations are more evident in the next 4 Sundays
Focus this week on the core narrative:

Up on a mountain with disciples,
In Galilee/Tiberias, 2nd of 3 Passovers in John

Philip and Andrew foregrounded, with a little boy character
Specifying barley loaves – peasant food, half the cost of wheat

5 loaves and 2 fish, divided for orderly distribution,
12 baskets full of leftover meaning and food

The crowd proclaims him prophet
Threatens to make him king by force, so he flees

Jesus up a mountain alone, disciples rowing in storm,
3 or 4 miles out, Jesus strolls up – and they've arrived!
Not stilling the storm, but saying *ego eimi* + do not fear
(the first of 7 'I am', 'bread of life', is coming in c6)

Compare each of those narrative elements absent in
Matt 14:13-21/22-33, Mar 6:30-44/45-52, Luke 9:10-17/nil

If the 'beloved disciple' author of this Fourth Gospel spins it,
What's the point of each twist to the common story?
Why keep the hyperbole of 5000 men (+ women & kids?)

Epistle
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.

Reading the Epistle this Week

The RCL Year B tour of Ephesians selects 3:14-21
With some nuggets, phrases, diction I relish in liturgy

It's part of the grand cosmic vision shared with Colossians,
Which I'm ducking this year, but neighbours are using

Try the audio recording of Hart's translation:
<http://www.hereticslikeus.com/2019/02/wednesday-wk-4-ephesians-3.html?q=%22ephesians+3%22>

Don't lose its implications for a perspective on our lives,
How our mundane participates in Christ's sublime:
More than we can ask or imagine, eh?