



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Pentecost 11, Proper 13 – Year B**  
**August 5, 2018**

**[RCL]: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a; Psalm 51:1-13; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35**

### **2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a**

In this passage, we see the prophet Nathan, being the voice of God, in confronting King David about his behavior. David had abused his authority as the king and had not treated Uriah the Hittite or his wife Bathsheba with justice. This greatly displeased God and God gave hard justice to David by taking from him the child conceived by Bathsheba.

But we discover later that after this first child died, David and Bathsheba conceived another son, named Solomon. Solomon later becomes the next king. So even in God's justice there is mercy and second chances.

It seems that too often in life we forget to acknowledge that some of the suffering that we endure is caused by our own actions. And at other times we allow ourselves to be caught up in the difficult moments of life and forget to see the joy that can come at a latter time from our suffering.

Have there been times in your personal life or in the life of your faith community when suffering happened that was directly caused by either your decisions and actions or the decisions and actions of the larger community? Were you able to see God's hand at work in those times of difficulty or was it only later that you were able to see God's work in the midst of the strife?

### **Psalm 51:1-13**

Our psalm reflects a tone of acknowledging one's sinfulness and wishing to reestablish a relationship with God. There is no attempt to blame someone else or to pass the buck.

The psalmist clearly believes that (s)he is the one who has wronged God and that God has every right to do what God wills, not what the psalmist wants. The psalmist also freely admits that it is up to God to cleanse or not cleanse. The psalmist can only admit to the sins and desire to be restored to a right and loving relationship with God.

Have there been times in your life when you have wronged another person and have asked for forgiveness? How does it feel to be in the "helpless" position in a relationship?

## **Ephesians 4:1-16**

Paul's image of the church as a body with different parts is an image that is used to describe how different people have different gifts. We like to think that we have unique gifts and that we can all work together in harmony. But this image depends upon the individual parts all acknowledging that God is in control. This image also insists that our desires are to be secondary to God's call and God's plan for us.

But as we have seen with the other readings listed above, we don't always freely and happily accept God's control. We also don't always follow God's call and plan for us. When these things happen, it is like the body is fighting with itself or even the body is getting sick.

How can we do better at accepting our own place in the body of the church, or in God's plan for us, even if we aren't comfortable with that plan or that role? Are there times when our own wrestling with God can throw other parts of the body into discomfort or confusion?

## **John 6:24-35**

Jesus challenges the crowd that is following him to understand that God provides them with the things that they need. He also reminds them that God, not Moses, gave their ancestors manna when they were in the wilderness. At times, it seems that it is very easy to think that a person is doing God's work, when in fact the person is doing the work with God's direction and help.

God freely gives us what we need, whether we deserve these things or not. God also provides us these things when we take them for granted or aren't paying attention to them.

When was the last time that you really saw and appreciated a sunrise or a sunset? How often do we take for granted the multitude of gifts that God gives to us each and every day?

*This Bible Study was written by Patrick Collins and originally ran August 5, 2012.*