

“Adultery & Advent”
2 Samuel 11:1-12:1a
December 6, 2020
Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service
Pastor Nicoletti

We return this evening, after some time away, to the Book of Samuel, chapter eleven through the first half of the first verse of chapter twelve.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this evening:

^{11:1} In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

² It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. ³ And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” ⁴ So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. ⁵ And 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 was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the door 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, “Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?” ¹¹ Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah dwell 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 this 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 and the next. ¹³ And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he 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. ¹⁵ In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die.” ¹⁶ And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. ¹⁷ And 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 also died. ¹⁸ Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. ¹⁹ And he instructed the messenger, “When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, 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 the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast 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 also.’”

²² So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. ²³ The messenger said to David, “The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. ²⁴ Then the archers shot at your servants

from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.”²⁵ David said to the messenger, “Thus shall you say to Joab, ‘Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.’ And encourage him.”

²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. ²⁷And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD [Yahweh].

^{12:1} And the LORD [Yahweh] sent Nathan to David.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

Let's pray ...

Lord,
Let your saving hand be close to us,
for we have bound ourselves to your precepts.
We long for your salvation, Lord,
because your law is our delight.
Give our souls life, that we might praise you,
and help us now through your word.
We have each gone astray like lost sheep.
As we come to your word now, we ask you to seek us.
For we have not forgotten your word to us.
Grant this, we ask, in Jesus's name. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:173-176]

CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM

Christian personalism is a framework in Christian ethics that views the commands of Scripture through the lens of the doctrine that human beings are made in the image of God, and so must always be treated as image bearers, and never reduced to a mere means to an end for another human being. Because people bear God's image, they must be treated with dignity, and never reduced to either an object to be used for our own purposes, or an obstacle to be cast aside for our convenience. [Waldstein & John Paul II/Wojtyla]

Tonight I want to approach Second Samuel chapter eleven through the lens of Christian personalism.

There are, of course, a number of lenses we could read this passage through, and each could yield insight – each could show a different angle on David's sin, and then on our own sin as well. This passage is that rich with meaning. But we cannot say everything in one sermon. We will have to narrow down a bit. And so tonight we will consider this passage through the lens of Christian personalism.

Because one thing that unites David's actions throughout this chapter is his failure to treat the people around him as persons made in the image of God, and his tendency to treat them either as objects to be used by him, or obstacles to be eliminated by him.

CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM AND OBJECTIFICATION

And that tendency begins in the very first verse.

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. [...] But David remained at Jerusalem.”

Now, David wasn't morally obligated to physically go out with the army for every battle and lead them there in person. But the author seems to be making a point. He tells us that the army was off and at war. And he tells us that the king was expected to go out with them. There are some textual questions about that, but the author of Chronicles confirms the point. The king was expected to go out with the army ... but David remained at Jerusalem.

And if that contrast wasn't sharp enough, a few verses later Uriah will sharpen it. When encouraged to go home and relax, Uriah will say to David: “The ark and Israel and Judah dwell 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 this thing.”

In other words, the soldiers of David are out in the field, living in danger, risking their lives, and so even if he is not with them physically, Uriah is committed to remembering their plight, and remaining with them in spirit and in mind. His thoughts are focused on them. He lives after their pattern as if he were with them. Uriah sees those men not as mere objects for use in battle, but as persons – as men made in the image of God, whom he values.

How does David live while his men are in the field?

We read in verse two: “It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch ...”

One commentator points out that as a typical mid-day nap in the heat of the day began at noon, if David is getting up in the late afternoon, then he is taking quite a long nap indeed.

And, in fact, the mention of his lounging on his couch is completely unnecessary to the story that follows. The narrator could have just started with David on the roof. But he wants us to have that detail. He is making a point.

David, we are being shown – David who has exhibited such solidarity with his men in the previous chapters – David has shifted in how he views the men in his service. He no longer sees them as his brothers in arms. He no longer sees them as beloved servants. He no longer seems to even have concern for them as people. But they are simply pawns in his kingdom. They are objects to be manipulated for David's ends. And the narrator makes it clear to us that while they are in the field, David does not give them much thought or concern. He has reduced them in his mind to mere objects.

And that's not only true of his men in the field. We also get a hint that it is true of his servants around him in Jerusalem.

Robert Alter makes the point that David does almost nothing himself in this chapter – instead, David “is constantly operating through the agency of others.” [Alter, 250] In verse one he sends Joab to lead the army for him. In verse three he sends someone to find out more about Bathsheba for him. In verse four he sends someone to get Bathsheba for him. In verse six he sends a messenger to Joab to get Uriah for him. In verse eight he sends someone to bring a gift to Uriah for him. In verse fourteen David sends Uriah to give Joab a message for him. In verse fifteen David calls on Joab to commit murder for him. In verse twenty-five David sends another messenger to communicate his thoughts to Joab for him. And in verse twenty-seven David sends a messenger to get Bathsheba once again for him.

This is not just David delegating the leg work: the mention of David’s ordering others to do his work for him – including going to get the woman he wants to commit adultery with for him – is excessive. David, who had fought Goliath himself, who lived in the field for so long, who defended the people of God so often with his own hand, has become one who orders others around to do his bidding. He treats those around him as objects to fulfill his desires.

And, of course, that attitude continues in his treatment of Bathsheba. David sees Bathsheba. He desires Bathsheba. And then he calls for her and takes her.

The narrator describes David’s pattern so that as we witness his fall, we cannot help but think of the original fall. In Genesis 3 we were told that Adam and Eve “saw” the fruit, “desired” the fruit, and then “took” the fruit, in a similar pattern we see David see Bathsheba, desire her, and take her.

That highlights the fact that we are witnessing here the fall of David ... but it also highlights the fact that David here treats Bathsheba like a thing.

David is not pursuing Bathsheba as a woman – he is not seeking her as a person. He is using her as an object.

C.S. Lewis puts this concept quite well in his book *The Four Loves*. He writes: “We use a most unfortunate idiom when we say, of a lustful man prowling the streets, that he ‘wants a woman.’ Strictly speaking, a woman is just what he does not want. He wants a pleasure for which a woman happens to be the necessary piece of apparatus. How much he cares about the woman as such may be gauged by his attitude to her five minutes after fruition (one does not keep the carton after one has smoked the cigarettes).” [Lewis, 263]

David begins to treat his soldiers as objects rather than people. David begins to treat his servants as objects rather than people. And then, David treats his neighbor’s wife as an object rather than as a person. And this trajectory of objectification will, in the chapters and the years ahead, bring disaster on David himself, disaster on those around David, and disaster on all that David has built.

That is the pattern that begins to play out in the first five verses of this chapter.

And we don’t need to be convinced that this pattern is alive and well today.

But if we did, *The New York Times* decided to help us out by publishing, on its front page, this morning a story about the recent downfall of a megachurch pastor in New York City, by the very same pattern.

The pastor led a large evangelical church, with a congregation in New York City that averaged seven thousand people in attendance each Sunday morning. In addition to that congregation, there were three other congregations – one in New Jersey, one in Connecticut, and one in Massachusetts – all of which were overseen by this pastor.

The church, which began small, had grown to this size, and soon the pastor began connecting with various celebrities. He would show up in tabloid pictures with them. He became known in their circles. Soon the pastor could be regularly seen on the celebrity website TMZ. He was interviewed by Oprah. He gathered 700,000 followers on Instagram.

But concern began to be expressed about his behavior at the church and how he was starting to run things. Volunteers at the church describe how the church's culture shifted into a system where regular attenders and volunteers were there primarily to support the lavish lifestyle of those on top. Volunteers were enlisted to keep anyone without the right pass from going backstage on a Sunday before or after a service. They were to keep the pastor's area backstage stocked with particular foods and wardrobe options that fit his style. One volunteer describes how the church "staff enjoyed catered dinners on Saturday evenings at the church offices, [after which] volunteers would be summoned from home to come in and clean" up after them.

And then a month ago the pastor was fired.

The reasons the church listed for the firing included "leadership issues" "general narcissistic behavior, manipulating, mistreating people," "breaches of trust," "lying" and finally ... extramarital affairs (more than one). [Graham]

Three thousand years later ... and it's the same script. Human beings are reduced from people made in the image of God ... to objects there to meet their desires.

And such a pattern of predatory objectification is not limited to kings and mega-church pastors.

Because just the day before that story appeared in *The New York Times*, another one ran featuring the same pattern of objectification, but in ways that were both more tragic and more common. It was an article about a porn website.

The website is not on the fringes of the internet. Far from it. Instead, this one site has 3.5 *billion* visits a month. That's more than Netflix or Amazon. One ranking lists it as the 10th most visited website in the world. And it has worked to cultivate a wholesome public image, donating to charities, and providing public services to cities in need.

And in the article, Nicholas Kristof chronicles how the site is infested with videos made and posted without the consent of those in them, along with videos depicting assault, abuse, violence, and children. And it is all monetized. The website, run out of Canada, makes money off of it all.

Kristof goes on to discuss not only the horror of what is being done in many of the videos, but the fact that the videos continue to haunt those whose assault or abuse is depicted in them – resurfacing again and again, revictimizing the victims.

And we might ask: How could this be? How can people turn to these videos?

And the answer is that viewers have, in their hearts and minds, stripped these individuals of their humanity, and transformed them, in their hearts, from people made in the image of God to mere objects to be used for their own satisfaction.

And then we might ask: How can the people who run this site allow this? Knowing what is depicted, knowing the damage it does in so many ways – including how it continues to haunt those depicted in them against their will – how can they continue not only to host such content, but to make money off of it?

One former employee of the site told Kristof that he didn't believe that the top executives were evil, but were just focused above all on maximizing revenue.

In other words, those who run the site, in their hearts and minds, have stripped the individuals in such videos of their humanity, and transformed them in their hearts from people made in the image of God to mere objects to be used to make money.

Those are two extraordinary examples from just the last week. But this pattern of objectification – of treating people as objects instead of image-bearers – plays out in all sorts of mundane ways in hearts and minds everywhere.

It comes up in how we often relate to the people we work with. Now, I don't mean that we are necessarily called to get into the personal lives of everyone we know or work with – not at all. That's not the point. The point is the dignity with which we think of them and treat them. And the truth is that we are often tempted to treat those we work with as mere cogs in a machine, there to make our job easier, and we have little patience for having to deal with them as actual people, and little interest in discovering how they bear the image of God.

It might come up in how we think of or treat those we are supposed to serve in our job, when we no longer care about blessing them, as people, with our work, but only with doing the minimum we need to to extract money from them and then move on. We don't think of them as people, but objects we have to deal with to acquire an income.

Or it might show up in how we treat those whose job it is to serve us. It might show up in how we treat that retail worker, or that customer call-center worker, or that physician's assistant – that person who doesn't deliver, or is unable to deliver to us, exactly what we want. When that happens, do we see a person before us, or an object whose only purpose is to serve us? What is really reflected in how we speak to them?

The same pattern might also come up in our families. We can reduce our spouse to only the functions they serve in our lives. We can reduce a parent to only what we want to receive from them. We can reduce our children to only how they reflect on us. And we reduce them to objects there to meet our needs, rather than real people whom we are called to love and treat with dignity.

Or it can show up in the church, as we expect to be served, without expecting any demands to be made of us – as we look around us and don't see people bearing God's image, with their own lives and own struggles, but volunteers who are expected to carry out our wishes and never to inconvenience us.

We can go on about all the arenas of life this pattern can show up in.

But, of course, in verses two through five it shows up in the area of sex. And there are various ways this pattern can show up in the area.

We've mentioned a few, but there are others.

It shows up in any form of pornography. It shows up in hook-up culture. It shows up in casual, non-committal encounters between consenting adults. Because just because everyone agrees to be objectified, doesn't change the fact that they are being objectified. They are being stripped of their humanity and having their true identity as people made in God's image denied, by being reduced to an object for someone else's satisfaction.

Every human being bears the image of God. And no person has the right to act in a way that denies that image in others, or in themselves. Human beings don't have the right to objectify others. But biblically speaking, human beings also don't have the right to consent to being objectified themselves.

And any sexual union outside of marriage necessarily includes objectification – even if they sincerely care about one another.

Because any physical union outside of marriage necessarily denies the unity of the person by trying to separate their body from the rest of who they are. As Tim Keller describes it, to choose to be sexually united to someone outside of marriage is to seek to be fully united with them physically, while refusing to be fully united with them emotionally, or socially, or financially, or legally. It's to say, I want to separate your body from everything else – I want to receive your body fully, but I will not fully commit myself to receive your personal struggles, or your emotional needs, or your financial troubles, or your uncertain future. Outside of marriage, such union divides the person, and so denies their united humanity. It is a form of objectification. [Keller, 223]

This is the pattern of objectification.

But objectification is actually only one way we see this denial of people's humanity in our text this evening. The other comes in the verses that follow.

CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM AND OBSTACLE ELIMINATION

The second pattern we see of denying the image-bearing nature of human beings comes by treating them not as people, but as obstacles that need to be overcome or eliminated.

And that's what the rest of the chapter is about.

Because, despite all the attention it gets, the adultery is over by verse four, and it is the lesser of the two major sins in this chapter. For the remaining twenty-three verses of this chapter, the focus is on cold-blooded murder.

Because David's treating Bathsheba as an object has resulted in a pregnancy. And if Uriah finds out, David could face consequences. And so now David turns to Uriah, and sees him no longer as a person made in the image of God, but as an obstacle that he must overcome or eliminate.

First, he tries to overcome him – to trick him into thinking the baby is his. He invites him to Jerusalem. He encourages him to go and see his wife. But it doesn't work.

And commentators point out that Uriah's actions and words can be read in a number of ways. It could be that he has no idea what David has done, and he is simply so faithful to his fellow soldiers that he refuses to enjoy the comforts of home while they are in battle – providing a stark contrast with David. Or it could be that Uriah suspected something – after all, it was very strange for David to send for Uriah specifically, to ask him for information that David could have received from an ordinary messenger. Uriah may suspect something, and so he refuses to go to his wife, forcing David to decide what he will do next, when Uriah will not help him cover up his sin. Or it could be that at first Uriah was simply acting as a model soldier, but as things went on, he began to suspect something. [Alter, 252-253]

Either way, David is pressed to a decision: What will win out? What will take precedence for David: the fact that Uriah is a human being made in the image of God – and not only that, but a faithful follower of God – or the fact that Uriah is an obstacle to David.

And David decides that he will view Uriah primarily as an obstacle. He will disregard his humanity – disregard is faithfulness to David and to the Lord (to Yahweh) – and he will eliminate Uriah the way one would eliminate an object that had fallen across the road.

For that, David calls on Joab for help. Joab, we have seen, already has a history of eliminating people – even good people – as if they were merely obstacles in his way. We might wonder if it was for needs like this that David kept Joab around after all. Who can say whether Joab's continued prominence in David's army was calculated or coincidental?

David sends Uriah back, with instructions to Joab to have him murdered on the battlefield.

And along with the evil of sin, the foolishness of sin is also on display here. David sends the orders with Uriah ... disregarding the risk that Uriah might open it before delivering it. And David hatches a plot that requires bringing more and more people into the conspiracy: if Joab tells a bunch of soldiers to withdraw from Uriah in battle, then those soldiers will know that Uriah was murdered by his higher-ups. So Joab "corrects" David's murder plans. He sends Uriah and others into a situation where a number of them will almost certainly die. Joab recognizes that in order to protect David, a few more innocent soldiers must also be murdered. [Leithart, 241]

And what should strike us as especially chilling is how casually David accepts Joab's correction. David learns that Joab has changed his orders to not only murder Uriah, but to murder a number of other Israelite soldiers who had sworn their loyalty to David. And David's response? He says to Joab: "Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another." Commentators point out that with these words David meant to communicate that he approved of Joab's alteration of his instructions. As one commentator puts it "David concedes that many a good man had to die in order to cover up his murder by proxy of Uriah." [Alter, 255]

Because to David, both Uriah and those soldiers by his side were no longer image bearers – no longer human beings who by nature of their reflection of God's image were due dignity. They were simply inconvenient obstacles to what David wanted. And so he was happy to have them eliminated.

And that attitude towards other people is pervasive in our culture.

Our culture is filled with approaches and avenues to help us either eliminate or push aside inconvenient human beings who have become obstacles to what we want.

Sometimes the elimination is literal. That's what abortion and euthanasia are, after all. With all the talk of compassion on behalf of those who support such practices, we should not allow ourselves to lose sight of them for what they are.

In the United States at least two-thirds of babies diagnosed before birth with Down syndrome are aborted. [Kaposy] In other countries, that rate is much higher. Yet research has shown that adults with Down syndrome overwhelmingly report being happy with their lives. One study published in an academic journal and made available by the National Institute of Health found that 99% of respondents with Downs syndrome said they were happy with their life. [Skotko, et al.] That is a higher rate than the general population. [McCarthy] So who is really being served with those abortions?

And when "not wanting to be a burden" often factors so much into discussions of euthanasia, we should ask ourselves the same question.

As a society, we literally look for ways to eliminate people who are obstacles to our goals.

Of course this tendency need not be so stark as total elimination. Other times we just push people aside as obstacles. Society is full of mechanisms for brushing the poor aside, and keeping them from getting in our way. We can find ourselves wanting or looking for ways to push aside those who struggle with mental health, so they don't make us uncomfortable. We can feel a desire to turn away from or to mute the voices of different marginalized groups of people who are pointing to injustice they are suffering, because the correction of that injustice may inconvenience us. In any variety of ways we can ignore the humanity of those in need, and find ways to push them aside and go on with what we want.

Or maybe it's more personal than that. Maybe our obstacle is a person who has sinned against us. And we want to take them out: emotionally, verbally, or socially. So we strike in anger. We don't seek to forgive them, or be reconciled with them, or restore them, but we strip them of their humanity because they sinned against us, and we want to see them taken out.

Remember the words of James. He laments how with the same mouth we both "bless our Lord and Father" and also "curse people who are made in the likeness of God." "My brothers," James writes, "these things ought not to be so." [James 3:9-10]

James doesn't qualify his words about what those we curse did to us. They are people made in God's image. But we do not treat them as such.

What does this pattern look like in your life?

Who do you tend to treat not as a person made in God's image, but as an obstacle to your own goals and desires, and so you think of them in ways, or treat them in ways that deny their humanity – that deny the image they bear of your God and Maker?

WHAT IS OUR HOPE?

This path of treating people this way, is ultimately a path of self-destruction. David's actions will wreak havoc in his life: in his personal life, in his family, in his kingly administration, in his kingdom as a whole. David's life, in the chapters ahead will be a testimony to the fact that sin naturally brings about self-destruction.

But if that weren't enough, it also does more than that. It also brings about the opposition of God himself. For God will not tolerate seeing his image – seeing people made in his likeness – either treated as mere objects: used for someone else's pleasure, or cast aside as mere obstacles to someone else's goals.

And so, in verse twenty-seven we read: “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

Such sins – sins of using and degrading others – destroy us. They can destroy those we sin against. They can destroy others around us. And they arouse the anger of the God who hates such sins.

What then is our hope?

And that question is answered in the first sentence of chapter twelve. There we read this: “And the Lord sent Nathan to David.”

What?

Look at what David has done. He has committed grave sins, using other people, manipulating others, committing adultery, and then conspiring to successfully murder not just one faithful soldier in his army, but several! We should expect one of two things. Either God should abandon David and leave him to his sin and his self-destruction, or God should act and eliminate David himself. Judgment without a word is what David deserves.

But instead, God sends Nathan, his prophet, to David. God reaches out to David. God, through his prophet, comes to David. He shows up.

And when he does, he will call David to repentance. There will be consequences – don't get me wrong. But there will also be forgiveness. There will also be restoration. David will be saved – not because he deserves it, but because we serve a God who forgives even heinous sins if the sinner will repent and trust in him.

And in that we see the same theme we have been considering in the morning these past two weeks: the theme of Advent. We serve a God who comes to his people, to judge the world, yes, but also to offer salvation – to call us to repentance and to offer us forgiveness.

In God sending Nathan to David, we see again the pattern of Advent. We see the reality that when all of humanity turned from God – rejecting him and denying his image in those around us – God did not withdraw, he did not simply destroy us, but he reached out. He came to us.

In sending Nathan to David, God also tells you that whatever you have done, God is not finished with you. Whatever your sins, however heinous, God still comes to you, and he offers forgiveness. You may refuse it. You may deny it. But it will be because you choose to reject it, not because he will not offer it.

Do you have sins that you think exclude you from God's grace – that make you think God is no longer reaching out to you? Let God's actions towards David stand as a rebuke to that idea. God reached out to David after all he had done. And God is reaching out to you even now. You need to turn to him in repentance and lay hold of the grace he offers.

God's initiative towards sinners is striking at the end of this passage.

And, of course, we should remember that his grace is not limited to after we have sinned.

For God reaches out to us in the midst of our temptations as well. He reaches out to us by his Spirit when we are first tempted to treat others as mere objects or obstacles. He reaches out to us even as we commit such sins, calling us to repent before we travel even further down that road. He offers us his grace at such times just as surely as he offers us his grace after we have fallen into such sins.

Your calling is to turn to him – wherever you are in that process – turn to him and receive his grace, and seek repentance earnestly.

God will forgive and restore David, which is a reminder that in this life you are never beyond the grace of God that is available in Christ.

But David also shows you what the path of sin leads to – what it looks like to let sin grow unchecked, without hesitation or turning to God before things reach their logical conclusion.

Let us not follow down David's path in this chapter. Let us know that, in Christ, the Lord has already reached out to us. In Christ, the Lord is even now reaching out to us through his Spirit.

Let us turn to him, and embrace him, and seek his mercy. Let us ask him to restore his image in us, to help us honor his image in others, and to love the God that that image points us towards more than anything else in all of creation.

And let us do it all relying on the grace of the God who reaches out to us in spite of how undeserving we are.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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