

The only Son from Heaven - but not the only son

IV - The "love child" - and the Love Child

II Samuel 11:2-5; 14-15, 26-27; 12:1-7a, 9, 13-18a, 20-23

There are different ways of looking at things. It used to be common, back when marriage made a difference in the minds of most, to call a child born out of wedlock a *bastard child*. We do not do that any more, and that is good, for it reflected the attitude that a child born out of wedlock, itself not at fault at all for being that, should be seen as *less* than other children, and treated worse, which is not right, as if a such child were less precious to God, which it is not.

Another word for a child born out of wedlock is *love child*. I am not sure that that expression is common, either, any more; I do not think marriage matters enough for common culture today to even *need* a word for a child born out of wedlock. Be that as it may, this expression does reflect a different way of looking at things, although not a much less ungodly one. It implies that for sexual relations to be considered an expression of *love*, they must take place out of wedlock, without the commitment to be faithful and mutually take responsibility for one another, and for the children that might come about as a result of one's recreational procreational activities.

I am not sure if the term *illegitimate child* is in common use, either, any more, nor am I sure it should be; it seems that it, too, casts aspersion on a child that should rather be cast elsewhere. I believe it was Chuck Norris who coined the term *illegitimate parent*, repentantly applying it to himself, which would seem a more appropriate term, although, obviously, also open to abuse.

At any rate, there was a time when it was common to refer to a child born under the same circumstances as the child David had with another man's wife as a *love child*. And it is still common to view circumstances similar to those under which their child came into being as a *love story*. In many *love stories* on films and television it is but an unfortunate and ethically insignificant circumstance if one of the lovers is already married, or both; the one or the ones to whom promises have previously been made are seen as obstacles who should be eliminated from the equation, rather than as human beings whose feelings matter, and expectations that the promises made to them be honoured. Although, of course, in *love stories*, such spouses are usually also portrayed as *evil*.

There are different ways of looking at things.

Certainly God had a *love story* to tell involving David and Bathsheba. But the *love* in the story God had to tell was not David's adultery with Bathsheba; on the contrary, it was Uriah's love for his wife, and God's love for Uriah, and His love for all human beings, really, children and adults alike, expressed in His ordinance of marriage as the only rightful context for sexual relations between human beings, a context of *committed love*, of faithfulness and caring for each other, which is what real love is, and the love of God.

There are different ways of looking at things; but God's way of looking at what David had done was so obviously right that even David himself could not help but see it, when it was presented to him in a such manner that he had to see it *objectively*, apart from himself, his own desires, his lust, and his wish to justify his own actions. So often that is what it takes for us to see that which is obviously right: that we are made to see what our own actions would look like if they were done by somebody else; or better yet, what they would look like, if others did the same to *us*.

David had done evil, that was the bottom line. He had done evil against his faithful servant. And he had done evil, also, against God, as all sin ultimately is evil done to God. Although, so often, sinners do not care about that, not until we are made to see our sin as evil done, also, to other people; but ultimately, all sin *is* evil done against God. God deserves better from us than sin, and we owe it to Him to do better than to sin. As David was made to see it, and confess it: *Against You have I sinned, You only, and done what is evil in Your sight.* That is the bottom line, even though, by most of our sin, we also do harm to others, and to ourselves: ultimately, all sin is evil done against God. And that it is the gravest injustice all sin entails.

As David was made to look beyond himself and his own feelings and desires, he was made to see: *I have sinned against the Lord!*, he said. And Nathan said to him: *The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the Child who is born to you shall die.*

And die David's love child did. Now, that part of the story makes us somewhat uncomfortable, does it not? Why did the child have to die? It does not seem right to us, does it, that a child be punished for the sin of his father. Would it not imply that the child born to David and Bathsheba was indeed *less* beloved in the sight of God because of the circumstances under which he had come into the world?

There is much more to what we hear tonight than immediately meets the eye; or the ear, as it were.

Well, it is all there, for us to see, or hear; but to see it from what we hear, we need to look beyond what we see at first glance.

We are all punished for the sin of our father Adam. But that does not mean that we are punished for no fault of our own. *Sin came into the world through one man, writes the holy Apostle Paul, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*

We are born into the inheritance of sin. *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me, as David was also made to confess it; and the wages of sin is death, as the Apostle also writes it. We are not innocent victims of sin, though. For we all sin. More than that, we have sin in us from our very first moment of being, evil and ungodliness; which means that we ourselves are, well, evil and ungodly. And it usually does not take long before we make sin our own, and make it manifest that we are not innocent at all when it comes to our sin.*

Moreover, that the child born to David and Bathsheba died does not mean that the child was not beloved by God. We often misread Holy Scripture that way, and assume that whenever somebody dies, it also means that that person dies into *eternal death*. Our instinct is to assume that death is the end, and the worst that can happen to us, which is *not true*, and not the faith, rather, it is *unbelief*.

The child born to David and Bathsheba was indeed a *love child*; it was a child created by God, as all human beings are, out of His love, and made in the image of God, for His love. And that is all we shall take time to observe, for now, in this particular regard.

More importantly, the death of the child born to David and Bathsheba pointed to an even greater reality which was only later to be revealed in its fullness. Another Child was to be born to David, who would die on account of his sin, and not for *his sin only*, but for the sin of all sinners. Centuries later, the Son of God would be born of a daughter of David, and He would adopt a son of David as His earthly father, and thus become a son of David.

The Lord has put away your sin, Nathan announced to David; you shall not die! For God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit had already resolved in His heart that the Son would bear and take away the sin of the world, and with it also the sin of David. Unlike the man in the story Nathan told David, God would not spare His Beloved, rather, He would give Him up for sinners. And for this Child, death would be eternal death, that is: the fullness of death, the judgement and damnation of God.

He would have Himself baptised with sinners to take upon Himself the sin of sinners and bear it for us, as the Lamb of God, and take it away from us, and the judgement of God against it, to ransom and rescue us sinners from eternal death and damnation. And He would be slaughtered for us, for our salvation, as the Lamb of God, crucified and cursed and condemned in our stead and on our behalf as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of all sinners. *The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die; the Child who is born to you shall die.*

Obviously, all this was not known to David in such detail as it is to us. Equally obviously, though, it was not entirely unknown to him, either. For David knew of the goodness of God. And although it is rarely spelt out in the Old Testament, the faithful were aware that because God is who He is, death could not be the end; that *the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob*, as our Lord Jesus would later say it, *He is not God of the dead, but of the living*. They knew that a Saviour was to come to bring God's will for His people to completion. From the sacrifices, and from the life of God with His people, they knew that God is good and forgiving toward sinners. They knew to look to the goodness of God, and to His goodness alone, for life and salvation.

Much of this we see reflected in David's somewhat strange reaction to the death of his love child. *While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, as he said, for I said: 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.*

There is peace in closure; what is done is done, and there is nothing more to do about it. Once fears are realised they are fears no more, but facts, although, perhaps, painful facts.

What God has done is done; and it is often easier to leave to Him what He has already done than it is to leave it to Him to do what He has promised to do.

More than David saw done has been done. The Love Child has come, out of the love of God, and in Him the fullness of the love of God has come, His love brought to completion, for the salvation of sinners. He has come, the promised Saviour from God. He has come, and it is done, what was foreshadowed in the life of the love child of David. And as the Letter to the Hebrews writes it, *Christ, who was offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but rather to save those eagerly awaiting Him.*

Blessed is He that comes, in the name of the Lord. Amen.