

Be Thou My Vision

Leader Notes and Bible Passages

By Rev. John Heckmann

Borrowing from the popular slogan, "Can you hear me now?" I ask you, "can you see this now?" Are you reading this to yourself, is someone reading it to you, is the lamp shining brightly on the text, are glasses or contacts assisting, are you stretching your arms just a bit longer, or are you bringing the text a little closer? Whatever the case, I am hopeful you're focused.

About 10 years ago my arms began to shrink and I was no longer able to read much of anything, especially things like hymnals and bulletins. So, my dear brother-in-law, who just happens to be a world-famous eye surgeon, told me I needed these things called "cheaters" to set on the tip of my nose. He said a good place to begin would be a pair of cheaters marked as 1.5. That worked for a while. The focus was beautiful. But soon I began to lose focus again. So he said go to 1.75 and I have been going up ever since. And the point? What I am trying to focus on has not changed, only my need to refocus on what was always before me. Now when I can't find my cheaters (and I have them strategically placed all around the house, the car, the office and anywhere else I might be), I can't see much of anything — and when my vision is blurry, to say the least, I am not worth a whole lot. The same is true for each of us. When our vision is messed up, when our focus is off, we are unable to clearly see what is really important.

So what's your focus on today? School, work, sports, marriage, illness, forgiveness, reconciliation, family, spiritual growth? More than likely it's a combination of these with many more included. This was the case for King David as well.

Opening prayer:

Heavenly Father as we begin this time together in Your Word, focus my eyes on what You would have me see as I grow in my relationship with You. Help me see with clearer vision how You continually refocus me on what is important as Your called and redeemed child through the faith my Holy Spirit has given and continues to nurture in me. I make this bold request in the name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior, because the time is now to regain my focus. Amen!

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–2.

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.

What was King David's initial focus that fine spring evening? The beautiful young lady on the roof top across the way taking a bath.

Read 2 Samuel 11:3-15.

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."

David's focus continues to change as Satan leads him further and further down a slippery slope. To what does his focus shift to in the following verses?

- 2 Samuel 11:3-4a – [Finding out about her](#)
- 2 Samuel 11:4b – [Sleeping with her](#)
- 2 Samuel 11:8 – [Getting Uriah into bed with Bathsheba](#)
- 2 Samuel 11:14-15 – [Uriah had to die](#)

King David, a man as we hear in Acts 13:22 about whom God said, "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will," had shifted his focus.

King David's focus had shifted from what it should have been — taking care of the battles, protecting and providing for his people, running his country, doing the things God had in mind for him to do as the king of His people — to a fine looking Bathsheba, how to cover his tracks that led to the conception of a son and soon his birth, how to keep all of this out of the Jerusalem Daily Tribune, and how to make it all look so right, at least in the eyes of the world.

How easy it is for us to follow in these footsteps of King David. Rest easy. We are not going to go that far in this study and uncover any of our dirty little secrets, but how easy it is for us, **people after God's own heart**, people called by God and redeemed by Him through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, to lose our focus.

And as we said before, it is very easy for us to lose focus in so many areas of our lives. Share a time in your life when you have found it easy to lose focus.

If your group is stuck, think...

- New Year's Resolutions
- Pastor Heckmann's broken leg – About five years or so ago, I destroyed the bones in my leg in a fall. It was the worst looking mess of a leg that my orthopedic surgeon had seen in all of his years and there were many for about six months after he put me back together again, he retired. Was it easy to come back from that injury? NO! How many of you have ever had a broken bone that laid you up, or spent an extended time in bed with a sickness or something like that. If you have, or if you are near and dear to someone who has, you know what I am talking about. At times it is easier just to sit in the Lazy-boy and eat. When you do, you get weaker and fatter. Both of which happened

to me. Then a doctor said to me that if I don't get with the program, if I did not re-evaluate where I was headed in the recovery process, he would just fit me for a brace for my leg and foot and I could drag it behind me as I walked on crutches for the rest of my life. It was time to re-evaluate and refocus.

We all do that same thing over and over again. Satan is very good about distracting us with things that don't matter as much, taking our eyes off of what is truly necessary. It is so easy for Satan to convince us to **"major in the minors"**, to get all worked up about minor things in the grand scheme of things, making them into major issues, while the major issues, what really matters, don't get dealt with.

How does he do this in our families? He does it in our families as we chase after so many things at the expense of family relationships.

How does he do it in our communities? He does it in our communities as we think we are always too busy to even meet our neighbors much less form a relationship with them through which we can share the love of Jesus with them.

How does he do this in our churches? He does it in the church as he gives us a zillion little projects that we think just have to be done, while we neglect the one thing needful that Mary chose that day Jesus came to visit.

How does he do it outside the church? He does it outside the church as he gives us a zillion distractions to keep us from ever being a part of a church family.

How does he do it in the LWML? He does it in the LWML as he knows that if he can get us weighed down with so many petty and unimportant things, which he leads us to think are incredibly important, then he achieved his goal. That is what I referred to above as "Majoring in the minors".

It is also very easy to lose focus when we are too close to a situation and at times when we are too far removed from a situation. Then comes the need to refocus. Of course, it is not easy or enjoyable to evaluate what we are doing. You know how painful the yearly evaluations can be at work.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-12.

1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him,
"There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2

The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." 7 Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'"

What happened with King David when he had reached the bottom? God in His loving grace and mercy sent Pastor Nathan to have a chat with his wayward King. Nathan knew the time was now, the time was right, to confront his king with his sin.

Pastor Nathan shared the well known story of the little ewe lamb with his king and pointed out to David very clearly that the "children's sermon" just shared was about him. Not the David that was "**Da Man**" in celebration of his immorality, but that David who was "**the man who has so lost focus and done the unthinkable.**"

And David's response. "**I am the man.**"

Read 2 Samuel 12:13-14.

13 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14

Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." 15 Then Nathan went to his house.

What happened next? After a time of mourning the death of his son, David refocused on what God was calling him to do as King of Israel.

Was life a piece of cake for him from then on? Sadly no.

He had already dealt with an unwanted pregnancy, his murder of a trusted friend, and a dead baby. But that wasn't the end of it. If time permits, refer to the following verses to find out what else transpired.

2 Samuel 13:1-22 - His daughter raped by his son

Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. 2 And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. 4 And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." 5 Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" 6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. 9 And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. 10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. 11 But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." 12 She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. 13 As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." 14 But he would not listen to her, and

being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. 15 Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up! Go!" 16 But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. 17 He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her." 18 Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. 19 And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went. 20 And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. 21 When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. 22 But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had violated his sister Tamar.

2 Samuel 13:23-33 - One son murdered by another son

23 After two full years Absalom had sheepshearers at Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 And Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold, your servant has sheepshearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant." 25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you." He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. 26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" 27 But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28 Then Absalom commanded his servants, "Mark when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Do not fear; have I not commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." 29 So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled.

30 While they were on the way, news came to David, "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left." 31 Then the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the earth. And all his servants who were standing by tore their garments. 32 But Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, "Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day he violated his sister

Tamar. 33 Now therefore let not my lord the king so take it to heart as to suppose that all the king's sons are dead, for Amnon alone is dead."

2 Samuel 15:1-12 - A civil war led by one of his sons

After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," 3 Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you." 4 Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." 5 And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. 6 Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. 7 And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron. 8 For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the Lord will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to[b] the Lord.'" 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'" 11 With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. 12 And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

1 Kings 11:1-8 - A son who imitates David's lack of self-control, leading himself and much of Israel away from God.

1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after

Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

As God blessed him with a refocusing on what mattered, Nathan assured David that his sins were forgiven. In the exact same way, God comes to us when we lose our focus through our personal “Nathans” to show us our sin and offer to us the sweet assurance of forgiveness of all of our sins through faith in Jesus Christ our crucified and risen Savior.

Want some proof? Read the following verses.

1 John 1:8-9 - 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 8:1-4 - There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

David was blessed to write for his and our edification many Psalms; he was blessed to be a part of the royal line that would ultimately bring into this world his Savior from sin, death and the devil, as well as ours; and God would use him, even though he would not have the blessing of building the temple, to prepare the people for that crowning glory under the reign of his son.

And God uses us. Just like the forgiven and refocused King David, through the working of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, our eyes are refocused to concentrate on what really matters, God's Kingdom both here on earth and for all eternity in heaven through faith in our crucified and risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We refocus on the task at hand, for the time is now, through the power and working of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, to bring the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with our Triune God as our heavenly Father gives us those opportunities and the tools with which to accomplish His purpose.

Closing Prayer: "Chief of Sinners Though I Be" (LSB 611, TLH 342, LW 285, LBW 306)

Chief of sinners though I be,
Jesus shed His blood for me;
Died that I might live on
high,
Lived that I might never die,
As the branch is to the vine,
I am His, and He is mine.

Oh, the height of Jesus' love!
Higher than the heavens
above,
Deeper than the depths of
sea,
Lasting as eternity.
Love that found me--
wondrous thought!--
Found me when I sought Him
not.

Only Jesus can impart
Balm to heal the wounded
heart;
Peace that flows from sin
forgiven,
Joy that lifts the soul to
heaven;
Faith and hope to walk with
God
In the way that Enoch trod.

Chief of sinners though I be,
Christ is All in all to me;
All my wants to Him are
known,
All my sorrows are His own.
He sustains the hidden life
Safe with Him from earthly
strife.

O my Savior, help afford
By Your Spirit and Your
Word!
When my wayward heart
would stray,
Keep me in the narrow way;
Grace in time of need supply
While I live and when I die.

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