

**The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 13
Holy Comforter Church
The Rev. John E. Shields
August 2, 2009**

You da Man!

You da Man! Or ‘You da woman!’ (do they say that?)

This is an exclamation that we hear a lot these days.

It seems to be heard in sports events very often.

Tiger Woods makes a putt, and somebody seems to always yell above the applause, “you da man!”

Now this is not an endorsement – some might find the saying trite or crude. Frank Deford a sports commentator on National Public Radio - in a recent commentary - was especially critical of the folks who shout out “you da man” on the golf course.

Of course “you da man” isn’t just restricted to sports – it is often used when someone has taken over some responsibility, or been elected to a particular function or office.

I remember the last day of the Rev. Donald Goodheart’s ministry as rector of St. Paul’s, Winston-Salem -- at the end of the reception, just before the Goodhearts drove off into the metaphorical sunset, Ronnie – Don’s wife and my good friend – turned to me and said, “Well, Johnny, you da man!” (meaning, of course, that they were leaving and that I would now be in charge or left holding the bag.)

To be honest with you, it sounded rather ominous.

You da man!

Of course, ‘you da man’ is simply slang for ‘you are the man.’

And you know something; there really is nothing new under the sun.

Here we’ve been thinking that the phrase, You da Man! is a modern, contemporary phrase, and we find that today - in our first lesson – from the Second Book of Samuel (OT or Hebrew Bible) it ‘you da man’ was being said by Nathan the prophet to King David sometime in the period of about 1000 -965 BC.

I believe that would make the phrase about 3,000 years old.

My mother used to read Bible stories to me when I was small. I always liked the stories about David. He was sort of my hero:

- **David, the young shepherd boy who could play an instrument;**
- **David, the brave young boy who took on the great giant, Goliath.**
- **David who was the hero of his people;**
- **David who became King Saul’s greatest supporter and aid;**
- **David who was a faithful friend to Jonathan.**
- **David, who becomes a king and leads Israel to its greatest glory.**

As a child, I knew a lot about David. But, you know, I don’t remember my mother reading to me about King David and his encounters with Bathsheba or Nathan the prophet.

Perhaps I was too young to hear the spicier stories of lust and intrigue that lead up to this encounter that we hear about today.

In any event, we can all agree that David was quite a guy.

Apparently, David had it all – looks, charm, power, and talent; yes, he had it all. Well, he had it all except for one thing --- Uriah's wife. Her name was Bathsheba. David was very attracted to her and wanted her for his own.

So, this man who had it all – except for one thing – decides how he is going to get the thing he lacks. He has Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, sent into a battle where he will surely be killed. You heard about it last week.

David has Uriah put on the point of an attack by his army – he instructs the commanders to pull everyone back when the enemy advances – leaving Uriah alone and defenseless – in other words – Uriah was given a death sentence by the very man he was trying to serve.

This is pretty sordid stuff – it is the stuff of soap operas – or for that matter classical operas – it is the stuff of Country songs and R-rated movies.

This all happened just as David planned it. Everyone carried out their orders, and that is where our story picks up this morning.

Nathan, the prophet goes to see David. To get David's attention he tells him a story. You just heard it.

A rich man with plenty of livestock takes a poor man's little lamb –the poor man's only possession- a lamb that he dearly

loves --- the rich man takes this lamb to feed his guest, so he does not have to use some of his own stock.

David is furious with the rich man in this story for being such an unkind, selfish and evil person. In fact he is so furious that he says, “.. ...the man who has done this deserves to die...”

Then Nathan delivers the punch line, “You are the man.”

You are the man!

In its current use in slang – ‘You are the man!’ – ‘You are the woman!’ has a very different meaning now than when Nathan used it. ‘You are the man/woman’ implies – you are it. You are the leader. You have the right stuff. --- It is positive as opposed to accusative.

The way it is used by Nathan is not positive by any means. It is a pronouncement of guilt: You are the man! You are the guilty party.

When David hears this, he is contrite; he admits his guilt. He says, “I have sinned against the Lord.” and Nathan tells him that God will put away David’s sin. David is forgiven.

As King, David was ready to put to death a person who had done essentially what he himself had done. He felt that anyone who would so take advantage of a weaker person should pay a very high price.

But when confronted with his sin, he confesses and is forgiven.

David, his family and his kingdom did pay a high price – as you will see if you read further in II Samuel. Yet, God forgives David.

It has been speculated that Psalm 51 was written by David after this event in his life. You may recall that this is the psalm we say on Ash Wednesday as we begin our own season of reflection and repentance.

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.*

*Wash me through and through from my wickedness
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.*

And later he says:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.*

OK -- it is late in the game and I haven't gotten there yet:

SO WHAT?

Here it is: Throughout the history of God's people we find time and time again very imperfect people – today it is David – it could have Jacob who cheated his brother Esau – it could have been Peter who denied Jesus when Jesus needed him the most - -- it could have Paul who persecuted and had Christians killed.

It could have been the countless throngs of imperfect sinners that might have worn the label – you da man – you da woman.

It is from these very human sinful people that God has chosen to build God's church. It is through these folks that God's forgiveness and grace has been transmitted.

The message is simple – if God can use such flawed and imperfect folks to build God's church – then God can surely use you.

God is always on the lookout for some imperfect, flawed sinners so that God's work on this earth can be continued and expanded.

You da man!

You da woman!