

July 26 2015 .. Bill Morley

In the Spring of the year when kings go off to war David sends his generals in his stead and remains in Jerusalem to recline on his couch.

It's in the book!

Last week, to the tune of thunder and lightning, we learned from Sid that David, the hero who killed Goliath, the youth who wrote songs, the traitor who went to the other side to fight against Saul, somehow gained a throne on Saul's death. Two weeks earlier we learned that David killed the messenger who brought him news of Saul's death.

If some of that rings a bell, then you've been watching the exploits of Mr. Underwood in *House of Cards*.

We have reached the most recent revelation in the life of David. Late one afternoon he roused himself from his after-lunch snooze on his couch, stretched to ease the kinks from sleeping so much since the generals went to war, and thought it would be nice to climb the steps to the roof of the palace. Don't forget, it's Spring.

He gets to the roof and finds his binoculars where he hid them between some potted plants and steps to the parapet to see if he can see any part of the war that is being fought in his name. Keep in mind that when Saul was king he went to war with his generals. That's how he came to be dead: wounded in battle and dispatched by the soldier who ran and told David and was killed for his effort.

Now while David is casually looking around, wondering if it will be a nice sunset and breathing the pleasant springtime air, he sees a woman bathing on a different roof. We all know the woman's name. It has to be Bathsheba. Is that Hebrew for "woman spied taking a bath?"

But David doesn't know her name so he sends someone to inquire about the woman. Someone goes to the woman's home, knocks on the

door and says, "the king wants to know who that is bathing on the roof". Of course, they can't decline to tell the messenger the woman's name, can they? After all, it is the king... the one who doesn't go off to war like a normal king but the king that stays at home on his couch.

Not only does the messenger learn her name, she brings her back to David. And then, even though he knows Bathsheba is married, he nevertheless uses the prestige and power of his position to seduce her. If the paparazzi got ahold of that, "such a scandal." At least this time the messenger doesn't get killed. Only the husband. But the husband only gets killed when he doesn't take the R&R the king offers him. The man is too dedicated to the war and wants to get back to it as soon as possible where his death is easily arranged.

Good heavens, What is David thinking?

Maybe he wrote the psalms and maybe he didn't, but back in the day, he probably knew them all by heart. If not that, at least he read them frequently in the days when there wasn't much reading material and absolutely no ebooks for the electronic reader.

And if David didn't compose Psalm 19 (that one is pretty near the front of the book of psalms) he knew the worshipful content:

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech and night to night declares knowledge"

And later we read:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;.....the ordinances of the Lord are

true and righteous altogether, more to be desired are they than gold....sweeter...than honey....”

Oh David, how often might you have read the final stanza. We all know it. Stephen used it a lot when he was our interim rector; we read it in unison every third year:

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

David’s fling with She who is spied while bathing was not due to the words of his mouth; it was the meditation of his heart.

The meditation of his heart. I want us to think about what that means. Because our hearts don’t meditate; they pump blood, hopefully.

This theme, the one about the meditations, is found in many aspects of our culture. When my older brother and I were put to bed we were allowed to listen to the radio for a little while. Radio was all the electronic entertainment there was in those days and there were some fine entertainments to be found. On some nights a program called “The Shadow” came on. The show opens with a low volume varying, extended chord in the lower range. At a time when the listener asks himself where the chord is headed, a clashing sound comes in and then..... *laugh...* “ who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of man... the Shadow knows” .. *laugh.....* Once again we see the meditation of the heart with a bit more explicit information about what we are talking about, the evil, when we say that psalm.

Another thing I experienced when I was younger. The Wise Monkeys. They were in magazines and they were little sculptures on knick knack shelves. They were “See no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil”. It’s the “see no evil part we are contemplating. Along the same

lines is the motto of the Order of the Garter, "Honi Soit qui Mal y pense".

You ask "why is it in French?" Go figure. Between all the invasions and inner bickering, English had a difficult time becoming the dominant language. Hence, the French motto, "Honi Soit qui mal y pense" for the order of the garter. That motto translates roughly as "if you think what you see is evil, the evil is in your own mind."

I didn't intend to leave those three monkeys sitting there with their cute little hands covering respectively, the eyes, the ears, and the mouth.

The monkeys, the motto of the Order of the Garter, the Shadow, and the last stanza of the 19th psalm all have the same significant challenge. The symbolism of having our hands over our eyes would in fact prevent us from seeing evil but the act of seeing with our eyes is not the intention. It's just the same as with the meditations of the heart. What we "see" or "think about" is what can get us into trouble, as it did with David. Just spying a woman bathing was not the problem; the thoughts that he dwelled upon led him to action that was not acceptable to the Lord, his rock and his redeemer.

The culture abounds with admonitions to think rightly, to not wish bad luck on others, things that can lead to actions, sometime harmful. To not think of things that can be self-destructive.

One would think that we have problems keeping our thoughts on the straight and narrow. But how often we see what happens when the "heart meditates"

We all have a difficult time with the "see no evil", the meditations of the heart. We generally keep the words of our mouths acceptable but what is it that often dwells behind the words? The thoughts that were not uttered. These thoughts can lead to sad and criminal activity or they can lead siblings to squabble over what little there may be at the death of

parents. How do we personally suffer from those thoughts? They cause or contribute to ulcers, high blood pressure, headaches, insomnia or, as we learn from Hamlet , “The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.”

O Lord, let the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my rock and my redeemer.