

Mindless Pleasure

2 Samuel 11:3–5

Today is the feast of the Apostle Thomas, who initially doubted the Lord's resurrection but who then acknowledged him as Lord and God. He received the grace of touching our Lord's wounds to overcome his doubt. We must reach out in faith to acknowledge Jesus's presence before us.

Cast off all sluggishness today to follow the Lord's royal way.

How is the Lord calling you to enter into spiritual battle right now?

You are in the royal palace in Jerusalem. David succumbs to temptation when he allows his desires to take him away from his present responsibilities. He is looking out the window of his life, wishing for something more exciting, more interesting, or more worthy of himself. He has taken for granted what he has and lost sight of the glory of God.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

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?" So David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am with child."

Reflection

In our society, it is just assumed that we cannot help ourselves when it comes to sex. Yes, of course, lust is the big culprit, as it is celebrated and promoted in our culture. But there is an element of sloth, too, as we do not think we are capable of resisting lust or that there is no meaning to sexual relationships. It is that feeling of moral relaxation (or that it is pointless to fight it) that is characteristic of sloth.

It is clear that David looks upon Bathsheba as an object for the satisfaction of his desire. He is given a chance to see her as a person when he is told she is "the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah." The narrator did not see David's response as meaningful; he simply tells us that he sent his messengers to take her. Here we have a very weak person—the very opposite of a true man. While his soldiers are out fighting, he is

sleeping in and using women to wake himself up, as it were.

David knew he had a problem with lust. We have seen his mistreatment of women before this. But his lust became a significant problem when it was given an opportunity by his sloth. His slothful spirit caused him to lose moral urgency and put himself in a compromising situation. In a state of stupor, he listlessly looks for some entertainment, some excitement, some desire to satisfy—anything to take his mind off his responsibilities and moral complacency.

Our palace perch is the internet. We scan websites and social media from our couch just as David surveyed his kingdom from his balcony. In a state of disillusionment, when we do not have something to do, or are saddened by our responsibilities, we look for something to distract us, make us feel alive, or give us a little shot of excitement or pleasure. And then, we see an advertisement, a social media post, or a website that tempts us with lust, and because we are weakened by sloth, we find it near impossible not to give in. We know it is wrong, but we are so numbed by the humdrum of daily life that we need that little jolt of intrigue.

This is where we go awry. When we find ourselves in a slothful state, we should not go scanning the internet or letting our eyes wander in the workplace or city street. It is the best time to pray. We should heed the advice of Evagrius and practice prayer when we are beset by sloth.

What do you do with those lulls in your day? Do you slothfully go out and seek amusements, thereby kindling desire and leaving the door open for other sins? Or do you use the time for prayer, spiritual reading, or touching base with family? Like St. Thomas the Apostle, we can come before the Lord to acknowledge his presence and strengthen our faith. We can reach out our hand to him, to touch his wounds, and so to be drawn out of our listless distraction.

Take time to really assess how you deal with the pull of acedia and the temptations that follow it in your life.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 6 Action Items

1. Pray for your fraternity.

We enter into spiritual combat together with our brothers. Remember one another in your fraternity every day in prayer. Pray for each other by name and bring each other's specific intentions to God. This prayer will form a stronger bond between you and keep you strong in the battle against pride and sloth.

2. Keep up regular exercise.

Summer may give you more time for exercise, but it may also lead you to step away from your normal exercise routine. Keep up the discipline of your

body and continue to build strength. We are body-soul unities, and the discipline of body and soul are connected. Come back to regular exercise if you need to.

3. Reflect on your vacation plan.

Have you had any vacation time yet? If so, how did it go? Do you need to make any adjustments for future time off? If not, how can you be proactive in planning to keep your good habits going? Make sure you prioritize prayer every day, even when you are traveling.

4. Invite men to join the Kings of Summer, Part 2.

This Sunday (Day 43, July 9th), we are entering into the second half of our reflections on Second Samuel. Our theme will move more toward the remedy for overcoming spiritual sloth through embracing spiritual fatherhood. We will see how David slowly pulls himself out of the chaos he has created. Are there men you know who need to reflect more deeply on this call? Invite them to join your fraternity or encourage them to get another one started. It's not too late to live differently this summer and become the kings and fathers God wants us to be.