

Law/Gospel
The Law and Gospel work on King David
2 Samuel 11-12

WFAGC

Ask the kids to color a picture of King David and explain who he was.

We live in a world of either/or, good or evil. This is especially true for the Western world view, and even more so in our own American culture right now. You are either for or against, on my side or against me. Things are either good or bad, and there is little room for nuance – or for the Lutheran notion of PARADOX. This summer we will be looking at Lutheran doctrinal concepts and each one will have differing levels of paradox. A paradox is when you have two seemingly contradictory statements that are both true, and the paradox is increased when the statements are both true AT THE SAME TIME. So you'll have to be ready to be challenged, but when we are done, I think your response will be "Thank God!"

Today's concepts are Law and Gospel. At their simplest levels, they are words, one demanding what God wills for humanity, and the other announcing God's unconditional love for humanity. Both are true, and both are true at the same time. They are, however, more than ways of speaking. Law and Gospel are the two ways we see God working in the world also. The Law is not only the commandment, "You shall not kill," but it is also working in our lives, so that when you drink too much and drive a car too fast around a short curve, going off the road and hitting a telephone pole, you might get killed. The law works, and in the end it also always accuses us. The gospel also is a word of promise, and we hear it in words like, "Jesus died for your sins," but the gospel also works. The women hosting the meal after a funeral is the gospel at work.

We must be careful in distinguishing, because the Law often poses as gospel. "You gotta believe," or "If you accept Jesus into your heart, you will be saved." It may sound like gospel, because those statements use gospel words, but they are really Law. If the statement or the announcement begins with "you", then it's probably law. The gospel always announces what God has done.

Maybe the best way to explain it is to tell you a story and ask you to keep track of when you think the law is at work and when the gospel it at work. It's an Old Testament story, so you won't have Jesus to rely on as the source of the gospel, but the gospel has been at work since the beginning of time, so it is at work in our story also.

Tell the story of Dave and Bathsheba, David and Uriah, David and Nathan, and David and his son, reading 12:5-8; 12:13-14; and 12:15b-23.

The Law is at work in all the consequences of the actions David took. David opened himself up to temptation by not going to work. Bathsheba becomes pregnant which is what can happen when you rape a woman. Trying to hide what happened can lead to another sin of murder, and sometimes it looks like you can get away from the consequences. Nathan brings the law into full focus with his little story, but he also proclaims the good news that God has put away your sin (which is what God is always doing). The law, however, is also always at work, and the child dies. Sometimes the law works in

seemingly completely unfair ways. The innocent child dies. The gospel is also always at work also, and it has a power that is a wonder to behold. The advisors think David might kill himself because of the death of his son, and that is what the law might drive someone to do, but David doesn't do that. The gospel has been at work in David, and he knows that he belongs to God, that in spite of everything else that is going wrong, God still loves and forgives him, so he goes to the house of the Lord to worship. It is nothing shy of a miracle. Only the good news of God's love, in the face of all the law's bad news, is able to give us the strength to worship. And that is why we were created in the first place – to worship God.

I don't know how the law has been working in your lives during this past week. Some of you may have been dealing with issues of guilt or loss as deep as David's, maybe of your own making and maybe innocently, but it is a miracle that you are here. It's a miracle of God's Spirit that you are here to hear a good word that says God has claimed you. God loves you in the middle of all that is happening in your life. God will care for you through the valley of the shadow of death. God will give you God's very self. Come, taste and see that the Lord is good.