**Figures Don’t Lie…**

Psalm 14 or 51 or 130 in call to worship

2 Samuel 11:1-15

Ephesians 3: 14-21

* Numbers
* Do you like working with numbers?
* Do you enjoy simple arithmetic?
* How about math
* My dad worked in numbers, he enjoyed it
* Determining the cost of manufacturing work in aerospace industry
* Anyone here ever use Friden STW-10 calculator
* Before chip based electronic calculators
* All gears, levers, motor and springs driving the counting gears
* Innards like old NCR machines
* Desktop Friden calculator that weighed 42 pounds



* Cool looking hardware
* Operator had to know how to run the machine
* Carriage would slide back and forth as gears crunched the numbers
* This may be origin of “crunching the numbers”
* Gears clicked and clicked as the arithmetic was performed
* Maybe this is part of why I went into computer programming
* Figures don’t lie but liars figure
* Been a numbers guy forever
* Do the math
* Figures don’t lie but liars figure
* Or some folks are just unable to do the math



* There are a few of us who think this is fabulously funny, but very few of us
* I spent a 42 year career doing arithmetic in binary numbering system
* Or for convenience, we did arithmetic in hexadecimal
	+ That pretty much sums up a computer programmer
	+ We prefer to do arithmetic in base 16 because it’s easier, or more accurately, shorter, than binary
	+ But rarely in decimal
* That’s ok, we all are good at some things and not others
* There are countless skills at which folks excel that I can’t contemplate
* For example, took me 3 tries to spell contemplate on my computer when I was tying this, and that is with spell check
* I wasn’t close enough for spell check to fix me
* I watch Carol work word puzzles and am amazed.
* I can’t spell
* Plenty of things I can’t/won’t do
* But I can handle arithmetic and mathematics
* Percentages, math geek here
* accuracy
* Statistics
* To those of you who have math ability, does it seem that many public figures, don’t?
* Did you hear about the politician who promised that, if he was elected, he'd make certain that everybody would get an above average income?
* He certainly didn’t do the math
* I spent 42 year career breaking computer systems
* I worked for Lexis for 30 years until recent retirement
* Lexis wants 99.95% reliability
* Stated goal was for our website to be available, working, successful, 99.95% of the time
* For every 10,000 user actions, the goal was 9,995 would work
* The other 5 must have hit something that I wrote
* 99.95% might sound like a high goal
* But, Who would board an airplane when then airline boasts 99% reliability?
* More arithmetic and life – look at baseball
* In baseball, a team that wins just 60% of their games, wins championships with 97 wins
	+ 40% failure -- loses
* Baseball player who hits 300 (30%) is considered a good hitter
	+ 70% failure rate – outs
* so, what is a good percentage?
* Parking lot discussions
* PTO, school board mtgs, soccer games
* Church
* Might talk about what you liked, but more frequently, what you didn’t like
* Been in discussions in CLM academy classes, and important parking lot sessions
* In some of those sessions, there was lot of chatter about who was acceptable to serve as a leader and who was too covered in sin to lead
* In that context, I confessed to being a sinner
	+ Yet big church gave me credentials
	+ Local church loved and encourage me
* But am I worthy?
* I looked at 10 commandments and did the simple arithmetic
* God said comply with these 10, yet I have broken 8 of ‘em
* 8 missed commandments over my life
* This has been bothering me – my 80% failure rate
* I have put at times put career and money ahead of God
* I’ve been jealous and envious
* Now about telling truth and stealing, anyone from IRS here?
* Now I have never stolen from the government, but maybe, but have fiddled the numbers to soften the tax burden?
* Yeah, maybe tax form 1040 has led to honesty issues
* Lord’s name in vain – same tax forms
* Lost Dad 25 years ago
	+ Very good man
	+ Humble man
	+ Loved him a lot
	+ But I have vivid recollection of a time I very much disrespected him
	+ I was a teen, which may explain a lot, but shouldn’t
	+ He was \*speaking\* to me about selfishness
	+ He spoke, then asked if I had anything to say
	+ Best I had was “are you through”
	+ Should have been clobbered for that
	+ But was forgiven instead
* All this brings us to today’s scripture
* Lectionary – 3 year calendar which includes weekly readings: old testament lesson, Psalm, Gospel lesson and Epistle lesion.
	+ In three years, if strictly followed, most of the Bible would be read
* Then as today approached, I read the lectionary assignments for 26th, which is story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah and it struck me
	+ I broke 8 commandments
	+ In these few verses, King David smashed the remaining 2 commandments
	+ I am not a king, but King David and I share a name
	+ And between us, King David and peasant David, we have violated all 10 commandments
	+ My eight, and in these 15 verses, David breaks the other two
* Yes, David and David combined to break all 10 commandments
* All of ‘em
* 100%
* 100% failure
* King David went on to write Psalms, probably not all 150
* But maybe half of them, not known for sure
* Peasant David wrote computer programs, just not the same impact as Psalms
* Most know 23rd Psalm, said to be written by King David
* Fair to say that peasant David didn’t have same impact with 23rd computer program
* So I’m not saying I’m on a level with David, just that he and I combined to break 10 of 10 commandments
* Now let’s poke on this concept of sin
* In his epistle letters, Paul used Greek term hamartia when speaking to sin
	+ Litteral Miss the mark
	+ We miss God’s mark when we sin
* Paul used that term 52 times in his letters
* 52 times he addressed missing the mark
* So where do I and anyone like me go from here? For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6)
* John Wesley was Anglican Priest. He knew the scriptures, he believed, he preached, he taught.
* But after he was in pulpit, he had a defining moment, a moment that is noted and celebrated by United Methodists today.
* Pastor Suzanne shared this back on Aldersgate Day in May, from Wesley’s journal:
	+ In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, **even mine**, and saved from the law of sin and death
* Wesley had that strong moment – he went from knowing with his intellect about God’s grace to knowing it with his heart.
* He went from believing to **feeling and believing**
* Mathematicians can calculate probability of outcome
* What is statistical likelihood of an outcome
* If wages of sin is death – what is likelihood that Wesley could earn salvation?
* Could he do enough good to overcome wages of sin is death?
* He finally realized on Aldersgate Day, named for the location of the society meeting, that God’s grace comes through faith in Jesus and Jesus alone
* Jesus gives a gigantic pay raise –
	+ Wages of sin is death
	+ Wages of faith is salvation!
	+ **Wages of faith is salvation**!
* Probability of this saving grace is 1 in 1 or 100%
* Undeserved, the saving grace can never be earned, but God’s grace given to you and me even before we knew we needed it
* My moment of reaching this level of spiritual maturity came maybe 12 years ago, right there, during worship, while singing a hymn.
* I was already a Sunday School teacher, and many other jobs around here.
* I knew intellectually that Jesus died for my sins
* But during singing of the hymn, this intellectual fact became part of my heart
* I felt it in my heart
* We were singing My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin not in part, but the whole; is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord oh my soul!
* Forgiven, even me
* 80% broken commandments
* 100% forgiven
* Did I earn this through good work?
* Of course not
* God gave this to me
* Some months back, I read Adam Hamilton’s book on life of John Wesley, entitled ***Revival***.
* Hamilton, film crew at hand, visited many sites of note from Wesley’s life.
* The chapter on grace struck me.
* I’ve read and reread this chapter many times
* I will widely quote from the Hamilton text on grace now
* Some picture God as an angry judge, who sees our sin and is disappointed
* But Jesus paints a different portrait of God through these images:
	+ God the shepherd, who looks for lost sheep
	+ God the father, who runs to meet his prodigal son
	+ God is a friend to drunks, drug abusers, prostitutes, all kinds of sinners
		1. Even those with 80% failure rate
* God is gracious and merciful
* Perhaps some have become disillusioned with church as they see a focus on guilt, shame, sin all leading to God’s wrath.
* Yes we sin, some of us at 80% clip
* But dominant message of the Gospel is not that we sin, but that Jesus saves
* Message of Jesus is not guilt laden, but **Grace laden**
* **Grace laden**
* we are in the business of raising awareness of the Grace, not of the sin
* What have I done to merit this grace?
* How did I earn it
* Maybe if I do a lot of good, pay better attention to the commandments, I can then earn the grace
* Nope, nothing I can do to earn it
* Only by God’s love and mercy, signaled by the death and resurrection of Jesus, can any of us receive this grace
* **John Wesley preached Grace** after his life changing warmed heart
* Wesley’s sermons were published and studied still today by scholars and seminary students.
* It is noted that Wesley had over 40 sermons that included discussion of Grace in Ephesians
* Greek term that is translated to English Grace is Charis (note similarity to English charity)
* This greek term is found 148 times in New Testament.
* Like English Grace, charis has multiple meanings
	+ To move with elegance, smoothness, is to move with grace
	+ Paul uses charis to indicate an act of kindness, an expression of selfless love
	+ **We are never more like God than we give selflessly**
	+ Paul writes Quality of God’s character revealed God loves, blesses and forgives humanity, **despite our sin**
* Wesley went on to describe Grace as prevenient, justifying and sanctifying
* You have no doubt heard many sermons on these distinctive forms of grace.
* I had privilege of expounding on grace with DCOM in one of my interviews
* Kind of a Methodist rite of passage – discuss Grace with DCOM
* At the heart of it:
* I sin
* Saved by Jesus which reveals God’s Amazing Grace
* So now what
* Sin more?
* Relax?
* Or does God want me in action?
* No, not to “pay” for the grace
* For as Paul wrote the Ephesians:
	+ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-0)
	+ Grace freely given, not earned
	+ Can struggle with the concept of earned if we forget that everything comes from God
* That is so easy to forget – all I have is from God
* Not self-made, but God made
* But I want me in action too
* I want to share
* Share the liberating freedom of living in Grace
* I am currently reading Adam Hamilton’s book on the Apostle Paul, called ***The Call***. He traveled the routes taken by Paul during his lengthy missionary trips, using Acts and the Epistle letters to write a marvelous text about life, faith and ministry of Paul
* Paul spent a lot of time in Ephesus, and his letter to the Ephesians speaks a great deal on faith
* Hamilton choose interesting title ***Called*** for his book on Apostle Paul
* Called
* Clergy are called by God
* These saints sense the call,
	+ go thru discernment process,
	+ pray about the call
* Then respond to the call
* What about us?
* Are we called to enter this building for an hour at a time, when convenient? Is that our call?
* Has God placed something else on your heart?
* Lots and lots of ways in which God may call
* How are we called?
* We are called to service, we are called to let all know of God’s grace
* Wesley felt his strangely warmed heart
* He realized that Grace made him full, made him well
* Yet know knew and felt that sins, **even mine**, were forgiven
* So I can claim, that with m 80% failure rate, my sins are forgiven
* Even mine
* Even mine
* Know this for yourself!
* You can have this warmed heart, through faith
* Even mine