

## Justice and Grace

Pr 13 Yr B 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13a August1, 2021

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David has a problem. He has gone from being the model leader, a person who follows God and strives to do what is right to being an adulterer and a murderer. While David has never been perfect and occasionally gets things wrong, the evening he summoned Bathsheeba to his bed he started down a path that fundamentally changed who he is and his relationship with God and the people he rules.

David abused his power and position. After all Bathsheeba had no choice but to come to him when he sent for her. Uriah had no choice but to go where he was ordered to go in the fighting as a soldier. David violated the trust and responsibility for those under his care. And the worst thing is that David doesn't realize he has a problem.

After all David seems to have been able to put the whole thing behind him because Uriah is dead and no one is any the wiser. Bathsheeba is now part of David's household and her pregnancy raised no eyebrows. But as I talked about last week, sin is putting ourselves on the wrong path and the actions of David are starting to ripple in his life, the life of those around him, and the nation itself. Which is where Nathan comes in. Because Nathan has to confront David about his actions, his sin.

Which is why Nathan tells David a story. A story about the man who has plenty and the man who has very little and the injustice and cruelty which is done when the man with power abuses the one who is powerless. And upon hearing the story David is enraged and declares that the man who abused his power, abused his authority, abused his neighbour, will be punished. Which is when Nathan announces "you are the man" and the truth stands in front of David.

Because the fact is that we can't simply assume that because other people don't know, or because it was in the past, or for any other reason that the wrongs, the hurt, the pain we cause don't have an effect. The Bible makes it clear that Bathsheeba carries what David did to her her whole life. Her husband is dead, she has been forced into David's household, and she has suffered because of him. And let's not forget that Uriah has been murdered at

David's order. God chose David to rule over and care for the people. David was entrusted and responsible for the nation and he abused that responsibility and trust. He was selfish, thoughtless, and caused pain and destruction as a result. And that can't stand. God refuses to leave the sin of David alone.

Which is the point we sometimes struggle with. Because when something lies in the past sometimes we want to leave it there and not deal with it. After all in our reading Uriah is dead, Bathsheeba is cared for, and time has passed. So why all the fuss now? David was wrong then but why is Nathan still worried about it and why is God upset? What's the harm in the present?

The harm is that David has done wrong and by not repenting, changing his direction in life he is on the road to ruin not just for himself but the people around him and the land. And he is living like no harm has been done, like he is still a faithful and good person, like he has done nothing wrong. Which is why God calls him to repent, to change his life.

And David understands that because he says "I have sinned against God" as that truth strikes home. Because David realizes what he has done. Not just to Uriah, not just to Bathsheeba, not just to the life God has put into his hands, but to God as well. David has turned his back on the commandments, on the calling, on the possibility which God has given him and gone his own way. Leaving a trail of heartache and lies behind him.

And that understanding is important in this reading. Not just because David has actually sinned. Not just that he is the man who has done terrible things. Not just that David as king condemned himself in Nathan's story but because without that recognition that he has sinned there can be no change.

You can't change direction if you think there is nothing wrong with the way you are going. You can't repent if you don't realize that you need to turn back to God. You can't start the healing until you see the pain and hurt. For recognizing sin in your life, not in general but in specific terms is what is needed to allow you to receive forgiveness and grace.

For the point of Nathan's story isn't to make David feel bad about himself. He does when he realizes what he has done but the fact is that realization is

the only way to get his life back on the right track. So that he can see where he has fallen and ask for help. Because asking for forgiveness means nothing if you don't know why you need to be forgiven. Which brings us to forgiveness itself.

God is a God of justice and what David did was wrong and offensive to God. But God is also a God of forgiveness because honestly that is the only way to deal with sin, the wrongs we have done in our lives. There is no way for David to atone, to make things right. He can not turn back the clock and undo what has been done. He can not pretend he didn't do wrong. He needs to confess, accept responsibility, and ask for forgiveness.

Now I want to repeat something I said last week. That does not erase what was done. You can't destroy someone else's life and say "sorry" and then move on. Which is why David laments, he mourns, he lives differently from this point. And he lives with an awareness of what he has done and the effect it has had in his life and the lives of others. Which is why of all David's sons Solomon, a child he has with Bathsheeba after Uriah's death becomes his heir. Which is why David is a changed man in the way he treats those around him after he repents. Which is why God's grace acts in his life.

Because there is good news. Our sins, the wrongs we have done do not define us and shape our lives if we turn to God and repent. No what defines us is how we change, how we see our flaws and ask for help, and how we understand and experience the power of forgiveness.

And that's the point of this story which I hope all of us hear. Not that a powerful man did terrible things and was called to account. But that a good person who lost his way was able to come back to God and live anew. Because that is not a story about someone else but a story about us. And an invitation for us to recognize our need, our flaws, and come to God for the forgiveness and grace we need to live as new people this day and all of our days.