

David and Bathsheba

Good morning. My name is Jeff and I am one of the pastors here at City Church. Apparently some of y'all only know me as the pastor with a spicy sex life. If you don't know what I'm talking about, this is in reference to a sermon 2 weeks ago. And if you're wondering surely there's a context where spicy sex life in a sermon that would make sense, unfortunately, there wasn't. We are in the fourth week of a series we're looking at the life of David. We have been looking at different snapshots of David's life and see what we can learn about who God is and who we are.

So far we have talked about his origin story. He was the 8th son in his family, the runt of the litter, and when God needed to install a new king over the nation of Israel, He picked out this little boy who had been watching sheep. An epic underdog whose place in life had been working his father's fields. It turns out, God used those years in the pasture to prepare David for one of the most incredible stories in this narrative, where he picks up a sling and takes on a giant warrior for the Philistines, Goliath. Paving the way ever since for every kid's Sunday School class ever to marvel at this story.

2 weeks ago we looked at his friendship with Jonathan, the rightful heir to the throne, and how Jonathan stepped out of the way of what God was doing through his friend David.

And then we looked at what God demonstrated through David's relationship with Saul, the current king who wanted to kill him and tried every way imaginable. And how David wouldn't take matters into his own hands, but trusted God even with his life on the line.

In all of this we have seen how God raised David up. He was revered by the crowds. David was consistently trusting God's power and sufficiency in the face of all odds. All of these stories and more provide the foundation for why David shines so brightly throughout the pages of scripture. Like Marcus said the first week, it's not often that you have a warrior king who is also a songwriter, and through the Psalms we see his posture of trust and reliance and faithfulness to God. David is called "a man after God's own heart." All of these things inspire us to love and trust God the way we see David doing so so many times.

However, today we are going to get introduced to one of the darkest moments of David's life; a total trainwreck. There are some times on Sundays where we look in Scripture, and because of what the Bible says in the particular passage we are looking at, we all leave smiling and encouraged, joy filling our hearts, gladness on our faces. Today will not be one of those days. Today hits like a ton of bricks. It is an absolute catastrophe.

David shipwrecks his life. It is heavy, beginning to end, and so will the feeling in the room be so. You have been warned.

2 Samuel 11 is where we will pick it up. We will look at one of the lowest moments in David's life. And what we'll try to do is take two of the main characters in this story and draw out some conclusions that we can think and pray about.

2 Samuel 11

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, [So apparently they have seasons for war like we have football season and basketball season.] David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

This is like the ominous music beginning to play. Kings, in this time, would lead their armies in battle. They would go out with them. David's kingdom is currently at war with the Ammonites and Rabbah, and if you noticed, David isn't fighting with them as he should be. This is weird if you've been keeping track of David's life up to this point. David's claim to fame, prior to becoming king, was how good of a warrior he was. It started with him killing Goliath. Then he proceeds to defeat several of Israel's other enemies that would try to take their land and/or oppress God's people. David was a fighter. Not only that, David has consistently been at the gift place, doing the right thing, following God even at great cost to himself.

But at this point, he's chilling at the palace. He sent his army, the men who had pledged their lives to him, away without his leadership, skill, and help. So he could lounge around, presumably.

We see from this one verse that in this moment David was not protecting his men and his people by fighting their enemies. He was not providing safety and covering for his kingdom. And he was not pursuing problems, he was hanging back to let other people handle them. He is disengaged here. Turned off to his purpose as King. Neglecting his responsibility and calling as a King. He is not living into who God has called him to be. And that doesn't end well.

2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her.

Some of you who grew up around church may have heard a saying that goes like this:

“Sin will take you further than you want to go,
keep you longer than you want to stay,
cost you more than you want to pay
and will hurt others along the way.”

It rhymes so you know it's true.

So David sees her and asks about her...

The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

One of the things at the root of most sin is objectification. Turning people into objects to be used for our benefit or pleasure. In fact, most crimes begin with dehumanizing. How you end up with Nazi Germany or the slave trade or sex trafficking...begin to see people as less than human. This unnamed person says to David, Bathsheba is someone's daughter. She is someone's wife. This is a person. Not an object. She exists in relationship with others. She's loved and valued by others. She has a life, a story, a personality. She's a human person, in the image of God. Not an object for you to use.

But David dismisses the fact that he's dealing with a real person with real relationships...

4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

OK, let me point out a few things here so that we can see more clearly what actually just happened.

First, when it says that Bathsheba had been purifying herself from her uncleanness, that means her bathing is a ritual washing after her period. It's a symbolic, ceremonial bathing in line with cultural custom and Leviticus chapter 15. **In other words, she's obeying God.**

Second, the text says that David sees her from his roof. It doesn't say where Bathsheba was located. But there is no indication that she is somewhere that she shouldn't be, in fact the person we are told is not where he should be is David. He should be off at war. So while she is fulfilling her God given responsibilities, he is abdicating his.

Third, in the next chapter, David will be confronted about all of this. And in the illustration used to confront David, Bathsheba is compared to an innocent lamb.

Finally, it says David sent messengers who “took” her. He saw her, took her and laid with her. In Genesis 34 when that same verb structure is used when Shechem rapes a woman named Dinah. He takes her himself, while here, David uses his kingly authority to send armed soldiers to take her and bring her to the palace bedroom. In other words, Bathsheba does not have a choice here. Her consent isn't just not given, it isn't even considered relevant. Her thoughts and feelings on the matter are irrelevant. In a kingdom, whatever the king says or does, goes.

In light of all of this, what is actually happening here is that Bathsheba is a victim and a survivor of sexual assault. As we will see as we continue to read, she not only has her body taken, she will lose her husband, she will lose her home, she will lose her baby. She is a victim who suffers because of David's sin. I do not believe that it is best to describe this as an act of adultery, it is that but it is more than that. This is sexual abuse, or to use more modern language, it's called power rape. She does not have a choice, she is a victim.

“Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, cost you more than you want to pay and will hurt others along the way.”

5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.” 6 So David sent this word to Joab: “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent him to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going.

David is looking for a way to cover this up.

8 Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him.

He tries to get Uriah to go home to his wife, hoping he will sleep with her, think the baby is his and the whole thing is covered up.

9 But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. 10 David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?” 11 Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How

could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

David's plan doesn't work because Uriah is too honorable. Of course he wanted to go home to his wife. But he slept outside the king's palace, because his fellow soldiers weren't at home with their wives. They were protecting everyone out there. So how could he enjoy what they couldn't?

Most of David's life so far, he has been the one acting faithfully, even when it costs him. Now a man who is acting honorable and faithful is keeping him from covering up the worst thing he'd ever done.

That was plan A, to cover up what he had done. It didn't work. So he moves to plan B.

12 Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

Plan B. Uriah won't go home and sleep with his wife sober, maybe he will if he's drunk. David invites Uriah over for a little dinner party, and gets Uriah wasted, but Uriah still doesn't go to his house. **David is at a point now that a drunk Uriah is more righteous than a sober King David.**

It started with him just not being where God wanted him to be and not doing what God wanted him to do, and now he's spiraling out of control. He's getting more desperate and willing to take it further.

Here is Plan C...

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. 15 In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

The King writes this message to the army commander, seals it up where Uriah can't read it, and Uriah literally carries his death sentence back to war. Hands it to his supervisor Joab. Next thing you know...

16 So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. 17 When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. 18 Joab sent David a full account of the battle.

David has him killed. Uriah isn't the only one who dies. Because in this King-led cover-up attempt, Joab had to do something unwise from a military perspective to get Uriah killed. And other people got killed too. The king of Israel, the man after God's own heart, the Psalmist, is now a sexual predator and a murderer.

David's power gets corrupted and abused. Instead of using his power to protect and provide like he is called to, he sees this opportunity to use his power to take. To grab something that isn't his, but that he wants anyway. He uses his God-given authority to harm instead of to bless. He's given this immense power to point outward and protect and bring flourishing to others, and he takes that power and turns it in on himself. He uses this gift for him. And heartbreakingly, it takes the form of forcing a woman, who is missing her husband, to have sex with him without consent. And then he uses his power to cover it up, because he can have someone murdered and get away with it, and he does.

Jump down to the end of the chapter to finish this part of the story:

26 When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 27 After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

"Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay, and will hurt others along the way."

What a gripping picture that this story provides. A king's laziness and apathy toward God's calling on his life becomes temptation which becomes covetousness which becomes sexual assault which becomes murder of an innocent, honorable man and others caught in the crossfire.

For the rest of our time today, I want to draw out some conclusions from two of the main characters here. We'll start with David.

David

Up to this point, David was a hero. He almost always does the right thing, the God honoring thing. He's an extreme example of faith and humility and love and strength of character. I mean, he is the best of us. He's God's guy, he's the king that God appointed. A man after God's own heart. That's what makes this situation so horrifying. This is what sin can do to us, to the best of us. If you read this story and think "I could never do something like that." then you have missed the whole point. You might not do exactly what David does, but you are just as capable, actually more capable, of blowing up your life and the lives of the people around you. I am just as capable.

- If I rolled up to a battle stand off and Goliath is standing there, huge and scary, and it's winner take all representative combat...I'm not fighting him. judge me if you want. Imma say "somebody needs to step up here. One of y'all soldiers, let's go."
- If I found myself in a cave with the dude who's been ruining my life and trying to kill me for years and he doesn't know I'm behind him...he's catching a shiv right in the back. "That's what you get! That's what you get comin after me!"

And David is all "you know I'm just gonna trust God with this situation."

He's the best of us. That's the point. He's the best of us, and this is what sin does to him. How much danger are we in, then? Do not read this and think to yourself "how could David be so despicable; I would never". No no, we have the same disease as him, and he was stronger. That's how much danger we are in.

And here is an insight we get from the story. It starts small. You make 1000 decisions before you make the 1 decision that ruins everything. Nobody shipwrecks their life out of nowhere. We go prayerless for weeks. We conceal our struggles for weeks. We don't let people who love Jesus into our struggles and speak into our lives for weeks and months.

In my time as a pastor, I came across a woman that was happily married for many years. I knew her and husband when they started dating and got to see them get married and build a life together. Then she had an affair. And after the affair happened, her husband was crushed. She was desperate to keep her marriage together. And when we finally talked she said she doesn't know what happened, what led her to this place. She can't believe she had done this. She loves her husband and can't believe things got this far. I asked her about her relationship with God. And she went on to say she hasn't felt God's presence in a long time.

I asked "when was the last time you prayed?" She said "I haven't really prayed much at all for the last year.". Did you tell anyone that you were struggling? "No. Not really." Who

are the people in your life that's speaking truth and encouragement to you? "My co-workers". Do they know Jesus? "No." Did you have anyone in your life who loves Jesus and loves you to speak truth to you? "No."

Every day for the past year she decided she would not draw near to God, confess her struggles and doubts to him and ask for grace and power to change. She would not repent and lay her sins before the Lord. She didn't allow other followers of Jesus to help her or speak truth to her. She didn't make 1 decision, she made 1000 decisions all leading up to 1 decision. And the devastation this 1 decision brings.

Most of us are not making the 1 decision that could ruin our lives, but we are making some of the 1000 decisions that could lead us there. A few of you, right now, are making that 1 decision, the decision that will destroy your life. And please please hear me: don't do it!

Some of you are thinking "I am never going to do something that totally ruins my life. I have more sense and self control than that. So the 1000 decisions don't really matter that much, I'm just never going to get there." Maybe, you might be right. But the goal is not to avoid ruining your life, the goal is to walk with God. And the flipside of that...

There was a time where Jesus basically said "Don't be afraid of people, they can only kill you once. Be afraid of God, who can kill you forever." The worst thing that can happen to you is not your life being ruined. The worst thing that can happen to you is to be apart from God. Now and forever.

So I don't know exactly how that needs to fit into your life, but I'll add that no one has ever ruined their life by obeying God one day at a time. Ever.

While we are talking about David, it would be pastoral negligence if I didn't at least talk for a few minutes about sexual sin. While sexual sin, of all types and kinds, has been one of the primary ways God's people have been rebelling against God through out history. And it is pushed onto us today in ways God's people years ago could not have imagined.

In 1 Corinthians 6:18 it says

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from

God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

But now we all have access to every sex act imaginable through our phones. More hours than we could ever watch in a hundred lifetimes. In other words, instead of fleeing from sexual immorality, we now have access to it right in our pockets.

It's always been difficult to resist sexual temptation, always. But in our culture the access is historically unimaginable. Adding fuel to the fire is the cultural narrative that we are just animals with time and chance on our side, and when an animal wants to have sex, the animal has sex. That sex is an appetite that we have to feed and if you don't feed it, it is cruel and insensible. And then we are surprised when we have sexual addiction and rape culture. And so many of us are caught up in this to one degree or another.

And all of that should drive us to the cross. To the grace we have received through the shed blood of Jesus, and continue to receive every time we fail. To the sustaining power we need from God moment by moment to stand against temptation and hold fast to our trust that Jesus is better than sin. David's colossal failure should remind us that he was not the savior, and he most definitely needed one. Just like you and I.

Second character. I want to talk about Bathsheba.

Bathsheba

Bathsheba is a victim and a sexual assault survivor. She suffered as a choiceless, voiceless victim at the hands of someone more powerful than her. Statistically, 1 out of every 4 females and 1 out of every 6 males are sexually abused in their lifetime. This is rampant in our country. As a pastor I have all the evidence I ever need that sin is harmful and destructive. Sexual abuse has profound effects on a person. There is something uniquely painful and devastating about another human forcefully taking control over your body and doing with it as they please. It is a haunting, dehumanizing sin to fall victim to.

Someone who has been through this has had their sense of autonomy and control ripped away from them. Possibly even their self-image, due to the fact that they were treated like an object.

To make matters worse, many times they subtly or subconsciously feel partly responsible somehow (wrongly of course). But they still think, "What's wrong with me that this happened to me? Maybe if I wouldn't have worn that. Maybe if I wouldn't have done that." I shouldn't have _____. And that is devastating. There is this swirl of thoughts

and ideas always running through your mind. And so much pain. And you just want the pain to go away.

Sexual assault survivors so badly want some amount of control. So badly want a positive body image. So many origin stories of depression, anxiety, fear, substance abuse starts with a person experiencing sexual assault. And it feels like all of that has been torn away from and all sorts of things begin to be substitute saviors. Looking for some relief as they try to put back together a life. I remember the first time I was talking to a female friend who said that anytime it is dark at night, she walks to her car with her keys splayed out like daggers between her fingers, and I thought that I have never once felt the need to do that, and my heart just broke for her.

Conclusion

So we have 2 characters here. David, who did something terrible he never thought he would do. He would later be racked with guilt and shame over this. Broken over all of the destruction he had caused. Left with questions like, “How could I have possibly done this? How can I ever be forgiven? How did this go so far?”

And then we have Bathsheba, who had something terrible done to her that she never dreamed would happen. She is left, like all survivors, to try to regain what was taken from her. Feeling powerless, unclean, and hurt. Choking down questions like “How do I clean myself? How do I rid myself of this disgrace? How do I numb myself?”

Here’s what I know, for a fact, this morning. In our church, we have some Davids.

To a certain degree all of us are David, because all of us have sinned and separated ourselves from God. Some of us have done so in especially hurtful ways, and have caused damage we couldn’t dream of, and are left holding our mouths over what we’ve done and the wreckage it has caused.

In our church, we also have some Bathshebas. Some who have been gruesomely hurt by the sin, and especially sexual sin of others. Who never dreamed that would be part of your story, but it is.

To make matters more complicated, some of us identify with both. Like, “Yeah, I’ve been hurt like crazy by other people’s sin, so I’m like Bathsheba in a way, but I’ve also taken that pain and in turn hurt others in very similar ways.”

No matter which you identify with, the good news is that Jesus comes for both, and even through both. Jesus is specifically born through David’s lineage. David seemed like the perfect king, until suddenly he wasn’t at all. Until his sin nature caused him to assault

and murder the people who were loyal to him instead of protecting them. Through this, David learned that he wasn't the true King he needed--that he would need another King. One who would die for his people instead of having his people die for him.

And because of cultural differences, this may not mean much to you. It may not seem like much of a consolation prize. But do you know what the last mention of Bathsheba in Scripture is? Do you know what the last word on her life is? It's not this moment of disgrace. It actually comes through the lineage of Jesus listed out in the New Testament. Just to be clear, what this means is that out of all David's wives, when God picked an earthly lineage for Jesus, He said "That one. Bathsheba. The one who had so much taken from her."

In their culture, for her, that would have meant the world. That God saw her pain and loss and responded in kind by lifting her head in dignity and honor. He raised her name up from the mud and put it in the royal halls of King Jesus, to show that the sin done against her would not have the final say about her life and legacy.

So for my Davids in the room...for those of us who still find ourselves clutching our hands over our mouths, wondering how and why we could have ever hurt that person like that. Those of us who have done something you never thought you'd do, who are racked with shame and guilt...

Here's the good news of the gospel for you: just like David, your sin doesn't get the final word. It is a part of your life and story, but it doesn't get the last word. Jesus does. Your failure doesn't get the last word in your life, Jesus does.

Your sin or sexual sin does not have the final say. You are forgiven and cleansed and redeemed by Jesus, and he is writing a story where that is not at the center. If you are in Christ, your truest identity is not porn addict, adulterer, or fill-in-the-blank with whatever yours would be. That will not be front and center when the credits roll on your life. But like David, the last word will be reconciled. Forgiven. Redeemed. Man or woman after God's own heart. Covered completely in the substitutionary righteousness of Jesus, the one and only unfailing King.

And for those of us who are Bathshebas in the room...Know that just like with David's act, God is displeased with what happened to you. He's angry about it. And He will enact a more judicious punishment than even you would. That sin will be paid for, either by Jesus or by the person.

Jesus was a victim. He was abused. A different type of abuse, but he was an innocent victim. He was stripped naked and publicly shamed. His very life was taken from him. You have a God who can rightly say to you, I know what it's like to be a victim.

And know that God intends to lift your head as well. To bring healing and honor and restoration. To bring freedom from anxiety and fear. To convince you that you are not damaged goods, but a royal son or daughter of the King of the heavens. Further work and therapy may be needed in that case, but this story has good news for you.

I said earlier that sexual sin does not get the final word. And that's true. But also, neither does someone else's sin. Someone's sin against you does not get the final word, Jesus does. So trust God to restore honor to you, remove your shame. Resist the temptation to strike out on your own to gain back what was stolen from you...that will never work. Trust God to do that difficult work as you lean into Him. Let him lift your head.

Trust Him to somehow, someday, be the healer and redeemer that nothing else has been able to. God is not in the numbing business, so going to Him may not bring as much initial relief as other things. But trust Him, because numbing doesn't heal anything. He wants to heal you, to keep you from turning into a David in all of your hurt and pain. Trust your true King who would never take advantage of you or hurt you like others have. Jesus is a better King, who uses his power in love, who sees you, welcomes you, cleanses you. He doesn't use his power to harm, but surrenders his power so he can be hurt and assaulted by others, so he can forgive and heal you and bring you to His table.

And to be clear, trusting God in this whole process also means exposing the person who has hurt you and holding them accountable. Trusting God does not mean sin should stay hidden or covered up. In fact we're gonna be talking more about this next week. Bringing things into the light out of darkness is very much in line with God enacting his justice. And if that is something you are afraid to do, our pastors and counselors are here for you so you do not need to do this alone.

For all of us, sin need not have the final word in our lives. Not the sin you've committed and not the sin committed against you. That's what the cross is about. Forgiveness and cleansing and new life and hope and healing. That's what we're doing here! I don't know what you think this is about this morning, but this is what it's about. I need for my sin to not have the final word in my life. I need for the sin that people have committed against me to not have the final word in my life. I need something other than sin to be the decisive power in my life. That's why I'm here. That's what I'm doing. In my life, I keep making a mess of things and other people keep hurting me, so I need some hope outside of what I can do and what other people can do.

No matter where you are this morning, the invitation is to come to the table of a better King than David. Come feast on the broken body and blood of King Jesus, crucified and shed for you, because we all need a better King than David.

Pray. Communion.