

July 9 2017

Reading from the Bible Psalm 51:1-12

Sermon *David: A Sinner, Forgiven and Restored*

I would like for you to turn in your bibles to II Samuel chapter 11, we are going to try to trace this story of David and Bathsheba. We are going to review one of the spiciest stories in the Bible.

But first, let me tell you a story from the New York Times from about 9 or 10 years ago. The woman in the store front building pointed her figure and silently beckoned to a little sign bordered in black, "Air your dirty laundry." It is one hundred confidential, and free." She was dressed in white like a 1900 washer woman and with a clothes pin she pointed to the sign. She had a clipboard with blank sheets of paper and an envelope stamped secret. People began to write and after a few seconds they would seal the envelope and drop it into a bucket on the sidewalk. When they were out of sight, she would open the envelope and read the message and tape it to the window for the whole world to see. Then in this art institute, her partner would be drawing faces of some of the people. By the end of the day the store front window was covered with all kinds of confessions. Some were that-"the crab was still alive when I put it in garbage chute"--- "I am having an affair with a married person- he is rich and I am 27"-----" I pinched my sister when I was in first grade"-----"I murdered someone in 1950" All these different things went on that store front. They did it for several days and the two performing artists invited anyone and everyone to share their darkest secret and share.

Now I have always thought in our small congregation that if we put up such a display of notes that we would try to hide our hand writing or tried to hide what we had written, we would just walk right out and never come back again.

The wonderful thing about this story in the Bible in II Samuel, it is not just about guilt and the nature of human rebellion but it also about restoration, forgiveness's and a fresh start. It is like when Jesus said-"You are a new creation."

Now Psalm 51 and Psalm 23 are like the difference between daylight and dark. In Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd. I have no need. He takes care of me. He saves me from my enemies. He protects me in dark valleys. David the famous son writer, wrote that Psalm at a different time. In fact Psalm 51 is written to "my leader" when the prophet Nathan came to him after he had gone into Bathsheba. Psalm 51 is like someone who is tormented. He realizes his guilt has separated him from the most important force in his life-his God. He had committed a terrible act. David had danced with all of his spirit before the Lord. David who had been called by God, anointed by God, was slayer of giants, anointed as king, and lived by the covenant. God had said about David, "This is a man after my own heart."

Let us take a look at this David.

We start at the beginning of II Samuel chapter 11 it says-“It is the spring of the year when the kings go out to battle.” Ok it is spring-no more mud, and where do we find David? Is he out there leading his people? His soldiers? No-no He is up on his house flat roof and he is taking a little walk around over looking at Jerusalem his royal city and he sees Bathsheba. Now poor Bathsheba is taking a bath on her flat house roof. Unfortunately some see her as show-off hussy. Oh No, she has every right to think she had privacy on her own roof. She was the wife of Uriah the Hittite. He was not Jewish but he was one of David’s loyal leaders and soldier.

David did not know this very beautiful lady-she was very beautiful. He is home. He is bored and he looked twice and then sent someone to find out who she is. He could have stopped it right there but he sends someone to get her. In the movies Bathsheba is pictured as a very enticing woman. I doubt it. She was married to Uriah. But who can refuse the command of the king when he says-come. It is the power issue. And David took her and he enjoyed her and then sent home as” damaged goods.”

Later he gets the message from her that she is pregnant. Sometimes we get the picture that this was ongoing affair, probably not. David took her and enjoyed her. She was only something to enjoy when he was bored. He had his own life and wife and all the wives of Saul. He had ample opportunity so to speak but he took her and wanted her and then she comes up pregnant. So now he has to cover up and set about doing that.

David sent word to Joab-send me Uriah the Hittite. And Uriah came to him. David asked him, ”How is the war going?” Then David told him to go to his house and wash his feet and enjoy his wife. Uriah even gets a present from the king. But loyalty prevents him from sleeping with his wife. David asked, why didn’t you go to sleep with your wife?” Uriah said your servants. Your soldiers are camping and sleeping in an open field. Should I go to my house, eat and drink and enjoy my wife when your soldiers are camping outside, Uriah said I would never do such a thing. So David gives him a couple more days and gets him drunk and then sends him home. The cover up does not work. Uriah has too much integrity. So what does David do? The soldiers and others know what is going on. People know what is going on.

So Uriah is sent to the very front, to the most dangerous section of the war. He was killed as well as other servants of David. So not only is Uriah murdered by proxy but some of the other people are killed. His servants are told to be careful how they tell the king. They don’t know how he will react. So the messenger goes and tells David about the battle-how the enemy took advantage of the soldiers-they came out onto the field and the archers shot and some of the king’s servants are dead and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead

What was David's response was? He only said, "That is what happens in war- people get killed in the military don't let this matter trouble you for the sword kills one or other. Then David realizes, Uriah is dead and I am free. At this point there doesn't seem to be any attention in Scripture that he is going to make Bathsheba his wife or a concubine or have an ongoing relationship

But when Bathsheba heard that her husband is dead, she made lamentations for him and when the mourning was over David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife and bore him a son. What a charitable kind and sympathetic act. He did give Bathsheba a home, and a family and she bears him a son. I wonder if David would have done anything more without the next scene with Nathan the prophet.

Unfortunately even with us in our short fall sins that until we really face up to them we often do nothing.

In our story we have David and Bathsheba then Bathsheba pregnant –Uriah is killed and so she is probably seven or eight months when she becomes David's wife.

In Chapter 12 David's sin displeases the Lord and the Lord sends Nathan the prophet to David. Nathan as a prophet sends out God's word. He tells a little story about two men in this town- one is rich and one is poor. The poor man had one little precious sheep. The rich man has many sheep. But the rich man took the poor man's sheep instead of one of his own. He kills it and prepared it for his guests. Immediately David senses the unfairness of the story and he calls the rich man horrible and should die for his act. David has no pity for the rich man. Then Nathan said to David—you are the man! Nathan took his life in his hands to tell the king.

God tells David, "I made you king over Israel— and yet you took Uriah's wife. I gave you the house of Israel. If that was too little I would have added much more why you despise the word of the Lord to do what is evil in his sight. Therefore the sword will never depart from your house. And history bares that out. David's son's fought. Later Solomon enslaved his own people and after that the whole nation fell apart. God said, "What you did it secretly but I will do this before all Israel. Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan said now the Lord has put away your sin and you shall not die but nevertheless the child that is born to you will die."

Why did David say he sinned against God? When we sin against one and another, we sin against God. David confessed his sin and finds restoration and forgiveness. Confess isn't a popular term today. There is a lot more energy spent in trying to get around when we do something wrong We don't want to admit "I was wrong" We don't want to say, I did this" I am sorry" We blame parents blame-blame society- blame our parents -we blame our neighbors- we blame our dog we

blame anyone we can place blame on or we excuse it—it was only one time David could say, Sin lurks in the hearts of many people.

David knew what it was like to have unconfessed sin and in Psalm 32. He described how his bones hurt. He aches in side. He felt guilt. But I don't think he realized and anguished over his sin for months. At first he got away with it—doesn't that sound contemporary. Until Nathan brought God's word to David or we look at God's word, we don't realize that our whole being is threatened. Our breach with one another and with God breaks the covenant promises. God was flat out disappointed in David. "After all I have done for you and my highest expectations you did this-David"

Sometimes we hang on to those things that we want forgiveness for. I know a man who once committed murder. He killed a man. I and another strong Christian in the community visited him. We both talked to the person. We tried to convince him to talk to God and confess and receive forgiveness but he said God would never forgive him for something as awful. He never believed. He never stopped hurting. David provides the model that when he was forced to admit hi sin and when he went to God in confidence and asks for forgiveness. It was given. Not just erasing the blackboard but a heartfelt contrite confession would do-nothing less. St. Paul in the New Testament said, "I keep doing what I don't want to do, I do and I don't do the things I want to do." It is in our nature but we have a choice we can bring our confession to God. We can receive restoration because God is a merciful God. David knew that sometimes we have to put up our hands and the prayers sink into us.

In my previous church they never would use the Call to Confession. The people on the worship committee said, "We don't need to do confession in the church"-well confess them somewhere. Make it right with God. Don't let that nagging doubt come back. That's Satan. That's evil. God is saying "If you are truly sorry and you truly want to change I am with you." It is good to know that we have a God in Jesus Christ did reconciliation at the cross. The joy of our salvation is restored. We are useful people to God. It is not about whether we can cover it up. It is what God knows and what God does. It is like an unfolding murder mystery I especially like the English murder mysteries. Finally the evil one is revealed to the light- their darkness is made manifest. Justice is given. We are blessed that our God is not just looking but justice but is the God of mercy.

Let's pray.

Dear Lord, we thank you for the stories in the Bible. We thank you for their darkness and sadness." The stories of the sins of a godly man can be forgiven and we thank you that it is recorded that there is nothing that we can do that will separate us from the love of God. Christ Jesus can make ourselves whole restore integrity we need to bring our sins we might be washed clean and our sins will be

taken as far away as the east is from the west. Help us to keep current with you God. Help us to let go of those things that we think are so bad that you would never forgive us. Let us release them to you that you might wipe our slates clean and that we might be faithful and true disciples of you Amen