

A Narrative 07, 2018
October 21, 2018
Poulsbo
Pastor Alison Shane

2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26-27; 12:1-9

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle...”

David sent his armies to destroy their enemies.

But he did not go, as kings are supposed to.

Late one afternoon, David got up from his nap,

Saw a woman bathing.

No matter that she was obeying the law, ritually cleansing herself after her period.

No matter that she was someone’s daughter.

No matter that she was married.

She was naked! She was beautiful! He had to have her.

And so he did.

Bathsheba had no choice – he was the king.

Bathsheba should have been safe.

Bathsheba was just obeying the law.

He shouldn’t have even been home.

And even if he was, he shouldn’t have looked. She was doing something sacred, holy. He should not have looked.

And even if he looked, he shouldn’t have touched.

She should have been safe. The law should have protected her.

But he was the king. And he took everything from her.

Because she conceived.

So she told David she was pregnant.

And David, knowing that if this were made public, he would lose honor, instead of making things right, he covered it up.

He called Uriah back from the war and said, “Hey! How’s the war going? Since you’re here, why don’t you take a break? Go home, and... “wash your feet.” Which is a biblical way of saying, “Sleep with your wife.” Because if Uriah were to sleep with his wife, then the child that she carried could “conceivably” (no pun intended) be Uriah’s, and David would be off the hook.

But Uriah did not.

He slept on David’s front porch.

In the morning the servants came to David and said, “Um...sir? So, Uriah slept on the front porch.”

David called Uriah back in and said, “Whatcha doin’, sleepin’ on the porch??”

Uriah said,

“How could I go home, to my nice, safe, warm home, and eat my wonderful food, and drink my fill, and sleep with my nice, safe, warm wife, when MY men are out there, sleeping on the ground, sleeping under the stars, sleeping in tents, freezing! I could not.”

Uriah was an honorable man.

So David said, “Fine! I’ll send you back to your men. Spend another day here, and I’ll have you escorted back tomorrow.”

And David proceeded to try to get Uriah drunk so he would go home and sleep with his wife, and David would be off the hook.

Uriah slept on David's couch.

So David had no choice but to kill him.

Because that's the next logical step. *sarcasm*

David sent Uriah back to the war, but he also sent word to Joab, Uriah's commanding officer, telling him, "Here's what I need you to do. I need you to send Uriah to the front lines, and then I need you to have everyone else take a step back, so that Uriah will surely be killed."

And Joab did as he was told. Only he didn't just send Uriah to the front lines. He found out where Israel's BEST fighters were battling, because he knew that wherever Israel's best fighters were, then the enemy's best fighters would also be there, and Uriah would surely be killed. And he was. But so were David's men who had accompanied him.

So Joab sent a messenger to David, saying, "Tell the king his men are dead. He's gonna get angry. And when he gets angry, THEN say, 'Oh, and Uriah the Hittite was also killed.' That should appease the king, and you'll probably get to keep your head."

Now the messenger was so freaked out, he didn't tell the story the way Joab had instructed. Instead, he just blurted out the whole thing. And cringed.

But David saw his discomfort and said, "What's the matter? It's all good. It's war. Men die in war."

No matter that David had sent Uriah to his death. And what's a few other men, more or less?

When Bathsheba heard that Uriah was slain,

she obeyed the law – AGAIN! – and made lamentation for him.

And when her time of lamentation was over (at least according to the law), then David took her again and made her his wife and she bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

So the Lord sent Nathan to David with this story:

"There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him."

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

Here's the thing: we're all better at seeing others' sin.

Remember Jesus: take the log out of your own eye, so you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

We need Nathan's parable in our lives, to show us, "You are the man."

We need the mirror held up so that we can see our own sin.

That's why we start worship with confession. With time to contemplate. Time to look at ourselves in that mirror.

Seeing himself clearly, finally, David repented.

And we hear his repentance in Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

But here's another thing: David's repentance didn't fix what he had broken.

David's arrogance, his feelings of entitlement broke Uriah.

David's arrogance, his feelings of entitlement broke his family

For generations to come. You don't grow up with a father who acts like this and remain unscathed.

David's oldest son Amnon raped his half-sister and was therefore murdered by his half-brother Absalom. Absalom tried to kill his father, so David had him killed. David broke his family.

David broke Bathsheba.

Bathsheba had to bear the grief of a murdered husband.

Bathsheba had to live with the powerlessness of being raped.

Bathsheba had to live with the cultural shame of bearing the child of a man who was not her husband.

Bathsheba had to be confronted with the face of her abuser every day as he took her as his wife.

Bathsheba had to keep putting one foot in front of the other, even as her firstborn was dead at a week old.

David broke the law. And in breaking the law, he broke people.

The law that God gave to protect us from each other and from ourselves.

The law that God gave, reminding us of all that God has done for us, and asking us to do these things for each other in response.

After all that God had done for Israel

After all that God had GIVEN David,

David wanted more.

David chose to believe that being chosen meant he was entitled to everything.

David broke the law. He refused to protect the neighbor.

And God was most seriously displeased.

In fact, God was brokenhearted.

God said, "You despised me."

God said, "You have utterly scorned the Lord."

Do we need a Nathan parable to see that we do the same thing?

That we carry a sense of entitlement that is detrimental to our neighbor?

That because we are Christian, we believe we should have the final say in how our country is run. That because we are Christian, we believe our country should have the final say in how the world is run.

That because we are here, active worshippers, we somehow are better than those who are not here, better Christians, better people.

That, for many of us, we run through our lives blissfully unaware that we are offered certain assumptions, benefit of the doubt, if you will, simply because we are white.

That even today, we afford maleness a power that gets wielded, sometimes unintentionally, but needs to be addressed intentionally.

Do we need a Nathan parable to see how our own sense of entitlement hurts our neighbor?

We have been David to SO many Bathshebas.

And all we can do, like Davis, is confess. To our Bathshebas and to our God.

Have mercy on me, O God,

cleansing me from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart.

And God says, "Oh, my dear child. I am here. I have forgiven you.

Just as I did not leave David when he despised me, I do not leave you.

You are mine, and as I continued to walk with David, I continue to walk with you.

As I forgave David, I forgive you.

As I continued to mold David into the king I needed him to be,

I continue to mold you into the servant I need you to be.

Don't ever think that what you have done changes my love for you.

I love you, I will stay with you. And I ask in return that you mirror my love for others."