# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“David and Bathsheba”**

**2 Samuel 12:1-14**

 **August 8, 2021**

This summer we have been exploring the life of David in 1 and 2 Samuel, the tale of a shepherd boy who became king of Israel. So far, it has been a story about a man who consistently sought God and lived his life as directed by God. But, there came a day when he turned away from God and lived his life as he wanted. This great man of God, a man whose heart was after God’s own heart, committed a series of terrible sins that resulted in terrible consequences. We read about it 2 Samuel 11 where we learn that he coveted his neighbor’s wife, Bathsheba, thereby breaking the ninth commandment. Instead of admitting this sin and turning away from his lustful thoughts, he pursued his desire and broke the seventh commandment by committing adultery with her. She became pregnant and, once again, instead of taking responsibility for his sin, he covered it up by breaking the sixth commandment when he had the woman’s husband, Uriah, killed.

When the period of her mourning was over, David brought Bathsheba into his palace and made her his wife. In time, she gave birth to a son. It looked like he had gotten away with it. It looked like his cover-up had worked. But, his sin did not go unnoticed by God. Chapter 11 ends with the words: “What David had done was evil in the sight of God.” It may have looked like no one knew or cared about what had happened, but God knew and God cared.

And, just in case you are tempted to believe that David’s life during this time was filled with delightful and guilt-free nights with his new wife, and that he was in a marvelous state of mind enjoying the power of being a king who could get away with just about anything, let me read to you what David wrote in Psalm 32:3-4

When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.

David wasn’t enjoying the spoils of his sexual conquest because the guilt of his sin was ever before him. It was with him at night when he couldn’t sleep, tossing and turning in his bed. It was with him during the day when he tried to do the business of the kingdom, all the while wondering how much his advisors knew and what they were saying about him behind his back. He was a miserable husband, an irritable father, and a poor leader. He lived a lie, but he couldn’t escape the truth of what he had done. Have you been there? I know that I have.

The blessing of belonging to a loving and merciful God is that he will not leave us in that place. For a while, perhaps, he allows us to stew in our own juices as we go through the motions of trying to justify our sin. I’m sure that David tried to rid himself of his guilt with thoughts such as, “But I’m the king and the rules really don’t apply to me,” or “It’s better for my nation if this is kept a secret and the people don’t lose respect for their king.” But, none of his self-justifying thoughts worked. Finally, when David was ready to hear the truth, God acted. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Samuel 12:1-14

So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man’s own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.” David was furious. “As surely as the Lord lives,” he vowed, “any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity.” Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man! The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own. “This is what the Lord says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel.” Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan replied, “Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won’t die for this sin. Nevertheless, because you have shown utter contempt for the word of the Lord by doing this, your child will die.”

David listens carefully to Nathan’s words, believing that Nathan is talking about something that has happened in his kingdom. David, having been a shepherd, was deeply moved with compassion and anger over the situation. Unknowingly, he passes judgment on himself when he declares that the rich man deserves to die. David has stuck his head in the noose, and all Nathan has to do is give it a pull: “You are the man!”

Nathan goes on to deliver God’s message to David. God had given him everything but David wanted more; especially, he wanted what was not rightfully his to have: another man’s wife. In the death of Uriah, David had chosen the sword to cover his sin. Now he will live by the sword, meaning that his future will include the deaths of those he loves. There will be trouble and tragedy, rape and revenge, within his own family. A son will rebel against him and will drive David from the throne. While there is forgiveness, “You will not die for this sin,” there are also consequences.

Confronted by the terrible reality of his sin, David drops to his knees and speaks truth in the midst of disobedience: “I have sinned against the Lord.” With that admission, David’s restoration begins. Nathan leaves the presence of the king, and David is all alone. Perhaps it was that same evening that he wrote Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. Don’t keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Like David, you and I desire to follow God, yet we find ourselves in times of unconfessed sin and suffer the consequences of guilt. Our sins may not be as shocking as his were, yet the guilt we experience is just as real. There is only one way to deal with sin and guilt, and that is to confess it, repent of it, and accept God’s forgiveness. His forgiveness restores our relationship with him by removing the stain of sin, allowing us to go forward with cleansed hearts and willing spirits to do his will. Life is joyful again as we return to living freely in his love.