# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“I Have Sinned Against the Lord”**

**2 Samuel 12:1-14**

 **July 23, 2023**

About one thousand years before Christ, there lived a man who became a great king and ruled over a great nation under the blessing of a great God. Sixty-two chapters of the Old Testament are devoted to telling his story, and no Old Testament person comes close to the fifty-nine times he is mentioned in the New Testament.

Yet, David, this great man of God, committed a series of terrible sins. When he was about fifty years old, he broke the tenth commandment by coveting his neighbor’s wife. Her name was Bathsheba. Instead of confessing his sin and turning away from it, he pursued his desire and broke the seventh commandment by committing adultery with her. She became pregnant, and he tried to hide his sin by breaking the sixth commandment when he had the woman’s husband killed. His name was Uriah. Taking Bathsheba into his palace and marrying her, he tried to make it look like everything was okay. Hopefully people would think the child was legitimately his.

But, David was unable to hide his sin from God. Chapter eleven of Second Samuel, which tells the story of David’s sinful behavior, ends with the words: “What David had done was evil in the sight of God.” And, just in case we think 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 away with just about anything, let me read what David wrote in Psalm thirty-two, verses three and four: “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. It was with him during the day when he tried to go about the business of running the kingdom while worrying that the people knew about his actions. He was a miserable husband, an irritable father, and a poor leader. He lived a lie, and he couldn’t escape the truth of what he had done. I’ve been there – have you? Having done what we knew to be wrong, we kept hoping our cover-up would work, but all along we knew that even if others were ignorant of our sin, God was not.

The blessing of being the child of a loving and merciful heavenly Father is that he will not leave us in that place of guilty misery. For a while, perhaps, he allows us to stew in our own sinful juices, as we go through the motions of trying to justify our sin. I’m sure David tried to rid himself of his guilt through such thoughts as, “But I’m the king and these rules don’t apply to me,” or, “It’s better for my nation if this is kept a secret so the people don’t lose respect for their leader.” But, none of these self-justifying thoughts worked. Finally, when David was ready to hear the truth, God sent Nathan, the prophet, to confront David with his sin. 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 to Nathan’s story, thinking that Nathan is telling him about something that has happened elsewhere in his kingdom. His guilty conscience has been at work for so long on his mind that he can’t see the obvious truth that the story is about him. Unknowingly, he sentences 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 his to have. David had chosen the sword to cover his sin; now he would live by the sword, meaning that his future would include the death of those he loves.

Confronted by his sin, David says the only thing that can begin to bring about healing: “I have sinned against the Lord.” With that confession, David’s restoration begins. Nathan declares God’s forgiveness, which includes the sparing of David’s life. There will be consequences for his sin, but God will be with him.

You and I are a lot more like David than we’d like to admit. We don’t share with him the outward characteristics of his life – a shepherd who becomes a king – but our hearts are much like his. Desiring to follow God, yet finding ourselves in times of unconfessed sin, we suffer the consequences of guilt before God. Our sins may not be as heinous as were David’s, yet the separation from God we experience is just as real. There is only one way to deal with sin and guilt, and that is to confess it and accept God’s forgiveness. Only then will the joy of our salvation be restored, and only then will we be able to say with David: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”