

“DAVID: II – ‘PRIDE GOETH BEFORE THE FALL’”

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II Samuel 11:1-17

Luke 18:9-14

Over the past few months, I've been working with a group of eight Cub Scouts on their God and Family project. It's been a lot of fun, and one of the reasons for that is that we've revisited a lot of really good Bible stories – stories that I remember first learning as a child. As many of you know, my early years were spent in this church, and I had some wonderful Sunday School teachers who taught me these great stories. Looking back, I think about stories like Jonah and the whale, the paralyzed man whose friends lowered him through the roof to get to Jesus, Zacchaeus up in the tree, and of course, David and Goliath. All of them are larger than life stories that fascinate little kids and stay with us all of our lives.

Now, many, many years later, I spent the week looking at an entirely different side of David from the one I heard about as a child. That David was a little guy who stood up and faced a huge giant and won, and was cheered and proclaimed a hero.

This David – well, let’s just say in today’s story – he faces a giant as well, but as one person put it, instead of it being David who slew the giant, today, it’s the giant who slew David. Call this giant what you will – sin, self-centeredness, ego, pride – but it was a giant with whom David battled and lost.

Let’s look at the story together this morning. You’ll remember that last week young David, the youngest of Jesse’s sons, was chosen to be king, and now that has come to pass. He is the king, and he lives in a palace. He is mighty, he is honored and respected, and he’s in charge.

So the scripture begins – “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.” That friends, is the first clue that something is going wrong. Did you hear it? In the spring of the year, when kings go out to battle . . . David stayed home. In other words, he wasn’t where he was supposed to be – thus begins the slippery slope into trouble.

So while he’s there, where he’s not supposed to be, one afternoon, he takes a stroll up on the roof, and, as he does, he sees someone on an adjacent roof – a very

beautiful someone – a woman named Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite. The scripture says she was very beautiful, and David noticed.

And here's where he starts even further down the slippery slope. He decides he wants her. And being the king, he knew he could probably have her. So temptation and pride and ego rise up inside of him, and pretty soon he's believing his own publicity. "I'm the king after all, aren't I? Wasn't I was the one out of all of my brothers chosen to be king? Didn't I slew that giant Goliath?"

By the way, the scriptures tell us that David was in an unhappy marriage to Michal, so of course, he was probably thinking, "Don't I deserve to be happy?"

Well, it doesn't appear that it took David very long to talk himself into sending for Bathsheba, which he does, and then he takes her to his bed, after which he sends her home. So, it appears that he's gotten what he's wanted – no harm, no foul.

Not so fast! A while later, word comes to David that Bathsheba is pregnant, and of course, the child is his, because her husband Uriah is where he's supposed to be as a loyal citizen soldier – out in the battlefield.

Well, now this mighty King David is reduced to panic. Now he's got to figure out how to cover-up his sin. He figures he will call Uriah back from the battle front to go home and be with his wife, and after he lays with her, and people find out she's pregnant, they'll assume it's his – her husband's child.

So that's what he does. He has Uriah called back, but Uriah does not go in to his wife, because he's an honorable man. He won't go to be with his wife or sleep in the comfort of his own bed, while his own soldiers are sleeping outside in the elements. Of course, this mightily angers David, because it doesn't solve his problem, and probably because it makes him look even worse himself.

So David moves on to plan B. He decides to try to get Uriah drunk, so when his defenses are down, he might weaken and go to be with his wife. Well, Uriah got drunk all right, but still he did not go to his home and be with his wife.

Now, David's back is up against the wall. He's forced to take drastic measures, and so he does. He sends Uriah back to the battle, and orders others to make sure he is put in such a place that he will surely be killed – and indeed, that's what happened. Uriah was killed on the battle field, Bathsheba mourned his death, and then after the period of mourning was over, she married David, and when people saw she was pregnant, there were no questions.

Problem solved, right? No indeed. Because even though, from all outward appearance, everything was straightened out, inside, in David's heart, he knew the truth, and it was ugly. One preacher put so well, what all of us already know – “You can't hide your heart from God.” We know about that, don't we? God knows our hearts, God knows our actions, God knows. We can't hide from God. It's what keeps us wrestling in the night – when we've done things we know we shouldn't have – we may have fooled everybody else – but we can never fool God, or hide away from God. You can't hide your heart from God.

Poor David tried to – he thought he had everything in order, until one day a man by the name of Nathan came to see him. And when he did he told him a sad little story about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had many herds and flocks. The poor man had nothing but one tiny little ewe lamb, whom he adored. One day a traveler came to visit the rich man, and being unwilling to sacrifice one of his animals to feed the traveler, instead he took the poor man's tiny little ewe lamb.

When David heard the story, he was outraged at what the rich man had done, and he cried out to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.” To which Nathan responded words that would put a chill in

David's heart – “You are the man. You have taken what was precious to Uriah for yourself. You are the man.”

With those words, in that awful moment, David's sin was laid bare, and he knew it. There was no running away, and thanks be to God, David didn't try to run away. He confessed it all. He didn't make excuses, he didn't blame anybody else, he confessed and humbled himself before God.

Did God let him get away with it? No. There were consequences to pay, and David paid them – and they hurt badly. As one person so aptly put it, “We can be forgiven for breaking the window, but we still have to sweep up the broken glass and repair the window.” (On-line, “David and Bathsheba: Sin, Cover-Up, Condemnation, and Restoration,” www.casestudies.com)

So David had to pay the consequences of his sin, still, because he confessed, God restored him and poured on him grace to start again. And did he ever, for many good things happen to David after that. His marriage to Bathsheba turned out to be long and loving; together they gave birth to a son named Solomon, known to this day for his wisdom; and of course, David is known as the greatest king Israel has ever known.

Did you ever wonder why this sordid story was included in the holy scripture? You might think that a book written to inspire and guide us wouldn't include such a sad occurrence. Nevertheless, it's right here, as are other sordid stories throughout the Bible. And here's why, I think.

Because truth be told, these stories are our stories. If all we ever read were happy stories of perfect faithfulness, we would wonder where we fit in, we who are sinners. Instead, we see these stories of people just like us, who struggle just like us, who sin just like us.

But more than that, we see a God who walks with us through our sin and struggle, who invites us to confess those things, and when we do, by his grace walks with us into new beginnings. That's why these stories are there – to remind us that nothing we could do would ever be so bad, that if we confess, God will not be willing to forgive us, and let us begin again.

There's probably not a one of us here in this room today who hasn't had thoughts rolling around in our heads as we thought again about this sad time in David's life – thoughts about our own wrongdoing, our own wrong choices, our own sin. When I talked about David not being where he was supposed to be, maybe that shook you up a little, because you know you're spending time where you're not

supposed to – on the internet, with someone who is not your spouse, in situations where you shouldn't be.

Or when I talked about David's pride and ego making him forget what was right and wrong, did you squirm, knowing sometimes you do the same thing? Maybe somebody here is thinking "well, my spouse isn't paying much attention to me, maybe I'll look elsewhere, after all, I deserve to be happy." Or "I pay more taxes than a lot of people, who's going to be hurt if I cheat a little on my tax returns this year." Or "I need good grades to stay on the team, and they really need me, so what will it hurt if I cheat off of somebody else's test." Oh, how easily it happens.

And there may be some here today who are lying awake at night because your sin is weighing down heavily on you, and you know you can't hide it from God.

Well, friends, no matter where you are today, please know this. God wants you to be healthy and whole, free of the sins that take away life, free of the sins that pull you away from him and those you love, free of the sins that make you less than you can be. God wants to restore you and set you on your feet by his grace to begin again. All you have to do is what David did, and that is confess.

So as we turn the page on David this morning, I'm going to invite us to be in prayer, and think on those things that we need to confess. Then, open your heart to God, knowing he loves you and wants you to be healthy and whole – confess before him, that he might pour upon you his amazing grace and mercy, and send you forth from this place today a new person with a fresh start.

So let us now be in a time of silent prayer.

O Lord our God, we know that David's story is our story. We know, like Paul said, that too often, we do the things we know we shouldn't do, and don't do the things we should do. Lord, hear our prayers of confession this morning. Be with us, as your forgiven people, as we go forth from this place. Guide us that we might live more fully and faithfully as you would have us live. Thank you Lord for the amazing grace you poured into David's life. Thank you Lord, for the grace and mercy you pour into each of us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.