

The Fourth Sunday of Pentecost

June 12, 2016

Prayer of the Day: O God, protector of all the faithful, you alone make strong; you alone make holy. Show us your mercy and forgive our sins day by day. Guide us through our earthly lives that we do not lose the things you have prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia! May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy. Alleluia! (Psalm 132:9)

Sermon Text: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

Who can David blame? Does that question cross your mind at all? It probably does not because the answer is really obvious, right? David has no excuses when Nathan comes with an outstretched finger and cries: **"You are the man!"**

Back up and remember how we even get to this point. In ancient Israel, springtime is when *kings go off to war* ([2 Samuel 11:1](#)). So, King David sends his generals to war, but he himself stays home.

On one lonely, sleepless night, he walks around on his rooftop and spies a woman bathing out in the open. Instead of giving her privacy, his eyes remained locked on her body. His heart beats for this woman. His mind drafts a plan to meet her. With

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

²⁶When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

^{12:1}The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

⁵David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! ⁶He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

⁷Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own' ...

¹³Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. ¹⁴But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."

¹⁵After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill.

one simple question about her identity, he puts his shameful plan into motion.

His servants sound a caution. She is a married woman— married to Uriah the Hittite, a soldier currently fighting a war David is not. Yet, David ignores their careful warnings. He invites her to spend the night with him— and she accepts. After their one-night stand, the woman, Bathsheba, informs David that he will be the father of their love-child.

When faced with his crime, he invites the husband home from the battle lines. In fact, he pleads with Uriah to relax and spend the night with his wife. Yet, Uriah, never goes home; he could not bear the thought of sleeping indoors while his fellow soldiers slept outdoors. So, he sleeps outside the palace ([11:11](#)).

The very next night, David again invites Uriah to dinner and this time pours wine until Uriah gets drunk. Yet, David cannot even persuade a drunk man to go home and spend the night with his wife. Uriah instead sleeps in a room with the palace servants! ([11:12-13](#))

Since Uriah will not go home, David scribbles down a top-secret message for him to deliver to the general: *“Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die”* ([11:15](#)).

That is exactly what happened. The general leads Israel into battle. The Israelite army fights. They abandon Uriah on the front lines. Uriah is killed. When the general worries about David’s anger because of such a sloppy battle strategy, David sends encouragement: *‘Don’t let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another’* ([11:25](#)).

Then, just like that, **[a]fter the time of mourning was over, David had [Uriah’s wife] brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son.**

If you are like me, you are happy when Nathan arrives because David never once grieves over what he did. It seems that David never once stopped to think about exactly what he was planning to do. When one obstacle foiled his intentions, he simply tried harder to cover up his sin. To give even a more warped view of what is happening in David’s mind, you see that David somehow had enough sense of right and wrong to blurt out a death sentence on the rich man, but was too blind to see that this story describes what he had done. It finally reaches the point where Nathan has to painfully point out: **“You are the man! You stole! You murdered!”**

Who could David blame? Uriah is not the man who got Bathsheba pregnant. Army general Joab did not dream up the order to kill off Uriah. The Ammonite enemy did not single out Uriah from all the other soldiers. No one forced David to commit adultery, scheme, deceive, and kill. David knew exactly what he was doing— and you know that.

In fact, maybe you know that a little more than you might care to admit. The other week I was driving past a church and its front sign said: “Sometimes we make mistakes, but God forgives us.”

Is that what David did? Just made a few mistakes in life? He accidentally slept with Bathsheba? He accidentally pleaded with Uriah to spend the night with her? He accidentally got Uriah drunk? He accidentally scribbled down orders to leave Uriah alone

on the front lines? Was every single attempt to cover up his crime a simple, careless mistake?

Do we just make “mistakes” in life? Just little accidents that we cannot control? Does your mind dream up intimate fantasies because someone else’s clothing forced you to look at them a certain way? Do you daydream about a life with someone else because another person who is not your spouse put the ideas in your head? Does your heart beat with thoughts about how you can torment someone else to death just because you accidentally forgot to think nice thoughts? For the times we toy with the idea of adultery and imagine harming another person’s life— are these just simple, careless mistakes?

Our sinful nature loves to cover up our crimes against God by labeling them as little “mistake”—something that is really not all that serious. If we believe that our thoughts, words, and actions accidentally tell God that we will not obey his commands of life and marriage, then we do well to check our hearts against what God says.

Because in the Bible, nowhere does God blame someone else of leading you into sin. He does not blame the devil for your sinful actions. Never does God call life outside of his commandments an accident. God clearly says: *Surely you are sinful from birth, sinful from the time your mother conceived you* ([Psalm 51:5](#)).

That sin in which we are conceived, the sin which we inherit from our parents constantly wages war against a holy and mighty God! The mind creates fantasies because our hearts crave to know what someone else looks like. Daydreams about life with someone else come because we choose to not grasp every blessing God gives us in marriage. Hate and murderous thoughts come because we do not love God enough to love our neighbors as ourselves. If we are honest with ourselves, we are all too aware of the fact that our thoughts, words, and actions are not mistakes. They are intentional. Those who see no need to confess and turn from their sin will surely die ([Romans 6:23](#); [Ezekiel 18:4](#)).

If God’s judgment sounds unsettling, that is because it is. God does not send Nathan out to laugh off David’s sin or to call it an accident or to make up excuses as to why David would even do such a thing. He sends Nathan with a clear message: **“You did what is evil in the Lord’s eyes!** You (singular!), you only are accountable to answer to God for what you have done.”

Knowing that he— and he alone did what is evil with his thoughts, words, and actions, David confesses: **“I have sinned against the LORD.”** When Nathan compares David’s view of life and marriage with God Almighty’s love for life and love in and for marriage, David recognizes how guilty he is. He broke God’s command; his crime deserves death—death according to Old Testament law ([Leviticus 20:10](#)) and death forever in hell. He confesses it. No excuses. No blameshifting. Just admitting that God has every right to come at him in anger.

If that does not sound fair, you are exactly right. It is not fair that God would send his innocent Son to suffer for the guilty. It is not fair that God would have Jesus die because we hate. It is not fair that God would use Jesus to cover up our every secret and shameful sin. Yet, God does just that. **THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN.** In that little word, in the four

capital letters lies bound up a special love God has for you. Whenever you see “LORD” in all capitals, he tells you that he is a gracious God who has mercy on you. He does not treat you as your sins deserve. Rather, he has compassion on you, and lifts off your filth from you.

God does not wad up sin like a piece of paper and toss it into the trash. He takes your sin, your hidden thoughts, your secret shame, your guilt, and he places it on his beloved Lamb. That Lamb dies for the guilty. He dies as if he carried lust in his heart. He dies as if he hated people to the point of death. Yet, the Lamb of God cuts out a heart filled with lust and hate and replaces it with his heart of love and concern. He transforms a mind of impatience into his mind of patience. The Lamb has covered up your transgressions; he has removed God’s heavy hand off of you.

God lifted off David’s sin. No conditions. No: “You must demonstrate your sorrow by repaying your bad deeds with good deeds.” No probation period— that God will forgive David only if he does not murder or lust for 90 days. No forgiveness only if he only felt forgiven. None of that. Instead, the king who once sat on hell’s death-row hears: **“THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN.”** Just like that, David moves from death to life. That means the hell a lustful heart earned for itself is removed. That means a mind once-filled with murderous hate will not suffer eternally. It means that: **“THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN.”**

THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN. You are not going to die because the Lamb of God has taken away the sins of the world. You are not going to die because Jesus has risen from the dead and declared God at peace with you. You are not going to die because your sins are forgiven, there are no wages left to pay.

By no means is it fair—but God did not ask if you think it is fair. He simply announces a truth to you: **“THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN.”**

That means you are going to live. Yes, you are going to live forever with your God in heaven. Jesus has tossed the guilty weight of your sins into the deepest parts of the sea. Nothing now holds you down from that heavenly Jerusalem.

You are going to live— even right now here on earth. **THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN.** He has not ripped away your marriage because of your lust. He has graciously given you another opportunity to dig and reap the blessings he puts in your marriage. In a world where lust fills commercials and television programs, where a person’s clothing calls for attention, the new heart God has put in you beats with passion for God’s command.

THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN. He has not killed you even though you may wish someone else is dead. He has mercifully extended your life another day, so that you can thank God for your forgiveness. In a world filled with hate-filled-tweets, and Facebook attacks, and internet comments, you stand out to love your neighbor because God has loved you.

THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN, and that fuels you with a reason to live. Christ has changed your life. You have the pure heart created within you. **THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN.** Because of that, you are not going to die. You are going to live.