

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Pentecost 4 – June 13th and 16th, 2013

2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:10, 13-15 (NIV 1984)

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead...David had here brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD. 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. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but 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.

"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." David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!..

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!... Now, 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.

Dear Friends in Christ,

In our confession this morning we said *"Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child."* Our sinful thoughts, words and actions prove we are sinful by nature. We are sinful by nature for at the moment of conception we receive not the pure and holy nature of God, but the fallen sinful nature of Adam. We have good reason to start each worship service, indeed, each day with those words of confession, for daily we sin much.

In the reading for today, God shows us how the power of the sinful nature led King David, once described as a man after God's own heart, to commit murder to cover up his adulterous affair resulting in a pregnancy. God tells us about David's wicked sins not just to show us that even a very great believer such as David can fall into gross sins, but that through faith in Christ God takes away even our most grievous sins and forgives us, though the consequence of sin in this life may be very serious. We have reason to pay attention to this account for our sinful nature is no less powerful than King David's.

Recall that David committed these sins when all was going so well. God had firmly established David as king. David had conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital with beautiful palaces. Though Israel was at war, there was relatively peace in the kingdom, and though he was a great warrior and leader, he chose to stay behind in Jerusalem rather than to live in the fields with his fighting men. In this episode of David's life, we see what happens when a believer stops guarding his heart against the sinful nature, for one night, restless, David walked upon the palace roof and spied a beautiful woman taking a bath. Filled with lust he asked his servants who she was. The alarms should have sounded loud and clear when his servant said to him, **"Isn't this Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"** Regrettably the only alarm was one of lust and sin and David sent for her. Bathsheba came and the two united and she became pregnant.

Now Uriah was in the army and so he was away in the field. By the time he returned, Bathsheba would be showing and he would know the child was not his. So David devised a simple scheme to cover up his adulterous affair by first sending for Uriah to come home to report on the war and go home to his wife. But Uriah refused to go home to his wife, since it would not be fair to the men still fighting, far away in the fields, David sent Uriah back to the war with a secret order to the commander of his army to make sure Uriah died in the fighting. This is exactly what happened and this brings us to the reading for today in which each believer is encouraged to:

Theme: Listen To God's Call To Repentance

- 1. Confess our sins and repent**
- 2. Receive his forgiveness**
- 3. Face the consequences of our sin**

We are told, **“When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ After 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.”** The original language calls the thing David had done evil. Not only was the acts of adultery and murder evil, so was the cover up. The cover up was made all the worse by David pretending to be the gracious king taking the poor widow of the fallen war hero into his house as his wife, though she was pregnant.

God is amazingly gracious to us, even when we sin, as we see in God's gracious act to call David to repentance, even up to almost a year after his wicked deeds. God sent a dear friend, who was also his personal pastor, the prophet Nathan. As you heard in the reading, Nathan then told the story of the rich man stealing a cherished family pet, a ewe lamb, from his poor neighbor to make a meal for a stranger. It is worthy to note that where it says, **“but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep”** the original makes it much stronger for it says the rich man was unwilling to take from his own flock. Nathan presented his account to David, as king and judge over Israel for his judgment of the matter. We are told **“David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”**

Then Nathan proclaimed to David one of the most powerful condemnations of God's law ever spoken to a sinner so able to see the sins of others, but so unwilling to see his own, telling 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. ⁸ I 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. ⁹ Why 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.”** Nathan wasted not a word to sugar coat or to excuse or lighten David's sin in the least way. What a friend, what a pastor, David had in Nathan whom God sent to try and reach his soul. Oh that we would have such a friend when we have sinned.

One may think that David was happy and content thinking he had gotten away with his sin, but he was not. David tells us about the crushing weight he felt as he refused to confess his sins in the psalm for today, saying, **“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.”** You do not have to commit adultery and murder to feel the weight of sin, all you have to do is have unrepented sin on your soul, however grievous or light it may seem.

If that were the end of the story, we would wonder if David died in unbelief for the refusal to repent shows not faith, but unbelief. Repentance that avails before God is not only sorrow over sin; it is a turning from sin and a turning to God, trusting in Christ Jesus for forgiveness of the sin. But that is not

the end of the story for David's immediate response was, **"I have sinned against the LORD."** David sinned greatly against Uriah, he had him murdered, and Bathsheba as enticed her into adultery, but his greater sin was despising God, for God had given his laws forbidding adultery, and David knew it. He knew well the Fifth Commandment that decreed no one shall commit murder, not even a king. But David despised all that God had said and freely and willfully sought forbidden pleasures and then acted wickedly to cover up his sins. The worse of all this is his despising of God's call to repentance and forgiveness all the time. He had kept silent. But in the end, David in the simplest yet most profound way, finally, confessed his sin, without trying to make it less than it was, and in this confess he repented and received the forgiveness that only God can give, a forgiveness that is always there for you and for me and all who believe.

2. Receive his forgiveness;

Nathan responded to David's confession and repentance with the sweetest words any sinner will ever hear, saying **"The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."** The comfort of these words was only not only would David be spared the earthly punishment of death he so deserved for his sins of adultery and murder, through forgiveness he would not suffer the second death of eternal damnation, he so deserved. This sums up the heart of our Christian faith, for as God tells us in Romans 6:23 (NIV), **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** You miss the point of this reading if you merely condemned David as a wicked man and think of yourself as so much better, for by God's decree our smallest sin earns and deserves the full brunt of God's divine decree of eternal death. Yet in God's mercy he forgives all your sins through faith in Jesus.

David shows the proper understanding of God's forgiveness in Psalm 32 where he says, speaking for the heart of every sinner who repents of sin, small or grievous, **"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."** This is what it means for God to take away your sins.

When your sin overwhelms you, do as David did, as he tells us, in Psalm 32, **"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD' -- and you forgave the guilt of my sin."** Notice God not only removes the sin, he removes the guilt. So often we hang onto our guilt and let it beat us up, if you think not then reflect on the regrets of your life and how you wish you have a moment in time repeated in which you would not have said something or did something.

These words show us David did exactly what God wanted in sending Nathan to him, for he repented of his sins, trusting in God for forgiveness. Thus, David's sins and guilt were removed not by his wicked schemes but by the hand of God, allowing David to leave his sin and its guilt at the Cross, where it belongs. God wants no more and no less from you and me.

3. Face the consequence of sin!

Though David was forgiven for his sins there would still be a dreadful earthly consequence for his sin, as there can be for your sins and mine. Here we see a consequence that tugs at the heart. What David did was a public sin as leader of God's people, and so God told David, **"But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."** We are told **"After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill."** The Scripture tells us the boy died on the seventh day of life.

On the one hand, the heart may cry out how unfair, but the heart must always step back and say that whatever God ordains is good. David did not view the death of the son as God punishing the son, but as a consequence David had to suffer, for while the child lay sick he thought, **“Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live!”** Likewise, let us view the sufferings we encounter as a result of sin, not punishment from God for sin, but as a painful consequence to our sins or the sins of others, which God allows to discipline us as our loving Father that we might grow in faith and Christian living. May each of us be willing to always listen to God’s Call to repentance -- confess our sins and repent; receive his forgiveness; and face the consequence of sin! To God be all glory, Amen