

MONDAY, 6/17

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5.

King David wasn't where he was supposed to be. With the winter months behind him, it was the time for kings to fight to expand their territories. Where was David? At home in his nice, comfy palace, enjoying the rooftop view of a beautiful woman named Bathsheba bathing below.

Now, it is common today to hear people say that there is no harm in just looking. It's easy for us to convince ourselves of that, but there is harm in it. The mind thinks on what the eyes dwell on. That's why Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount equated adultery with "looking lustfully at a woman" for that was committing adultery "in his heart".

Jesus' point is that even looking lustfully feeds the root of the sin of adultery. While looking with lust may not be as damaging as having committed the act of adultery, it is destructive to us and our partners. It also dehumanizes another human being, reducing them to something we use for our own selfish gain. That's what David did. It started with a look and when the dust settled, a marriage had ended and a man was dead. Yes, that's an extreme example, but let's not fool ourselves. Looking can and does hurt.

Of course, David doesn't stop with a look. He inquires about her and discovers that she is married to one of his faithful warriors, who is away at battle. In spite of what he discovers about her, David sends for Bathsheba anyway. With her husband Uriah away at war, she is defenseless. David has her brought to the palace. David sleeps with her and sends her back to her home. It is clear David was interested only in using her for his own pleasure.

This story gives us insight into why Jesus holds such a strong line on lust. David's desire turned into lust, and propelled by lust, David couldn't see Bathsheba as a person. She became something far less. She became a pawn, a thing to be used for his own gratification. Once David got what he wanted from her, he sent her away as if she were nothing.

It's a serious problem when we can look at another human being that way. This is not the vision Jesus has for His Kingdom people. In God's Kingdom, we are to see everyone as a person of sacred worth. Each person was created intentionally by God. God wants us to see their humanity and love them as He does.

Praying Together:

"Father, help me to see others as You do. Forgive me when I look at another person whom You made as something less. Heal my broken eyes and heart. Forgive me when I use another person for my own benefit while not considering their need. Forgive me when I judge another and reduce them to something I can easily write off. Help me live today as a person who reflects the deepest values of Your Kingdom. Amen."

TUESDAY, 6/18

Read 2 Samuel 11:6-13.

David has done a terrible thing. He took advantage of Bathsheba, using her for his own pleasure. He brought harm into a marriage of one of his faithful warriors while he was away at war on behalf of the king.

With the news that Bathsheba is pregnant. David has a decision to make: confess and come clean, or cover it up. David chooses to cover it up.

When we sin, it is such a temptation to cover up what we have done rather than face it. We would much rather avoid the consequences of what we have done than deal with them. Chances are you know the awful place David finds himself in right here. It takes courage to confess and come clean. That courage is, at times, in short order when we know there are repercussions.

Here is how David tries to cover up his sin. David sends for Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to come home under the guise that he will be giving the king a report. While Uriah is home, he will be free to go home and enjoy all benefits that home has to offer, if you catch my drift.

There is only one hitch in David's plan: Uriah is a man of utmost integrity. Uriah comes to David with the report, but he initially refuses to go home to his wife while the other soldiers are still off to war. How could he go home and make love to his wife while those under his command are suffering on the frontlines? Uriah chooses to sleep at the entrance to the palace instead.

David immediately goes to Plan B: get him drunk and send him home. If Uriah won't act while he's of sober mind, perhaps he will compromise when he's drunk. No such luck for David. Uriah remained at the palace.

This passage shows us how foolish it is to try to cover up our sin. David continues to compromise his own character in his attempts to cover up his sin, while Uriah holds to his integrity. This passage affords us a dramatic contrast between David and Uriah. Uriah is clearly the role model in this story. He holds tightly to what is right and goes above and beyond what it means to be faithful.

What we learn from David here is that it is foolish to think that we can cover our tracks. Our attempts are never as clever as we would like them to be. Sin will always expose itself in our lives in one fashion or another. It's as Jesus said in Luke 8:17, "Everything that is hidden will become clear, and every secret thing will be made known." Whether people find us out now, or God discloses it when we stand before Him, nothing will remain hidden. Confession is the only means we have of healing from what we have done.

Praying Together:

"Lord, I wonder how many times I have faced the decision to come clean or cover up what I've done. I have often bought into the idea that I can hide my sin and avoid the consequences. Hiding is no way to live. You came to set us free from sin and from deceiving ourselves. I bring to You all that I have done and my need for Your healing grace. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 6/19

Read 2 Samuel 11:14-27.

After two failed attempts to cover up his sin, David still faces the same choice: confess and come clean, or continue to try to cover it up. The difference by the time we get to verse 14 is the only means left of concealing his sin is even more horrific than what he was trying to cover up. The only thing David can do to protect his reputation is have Uriah killed.

David orders Joab, the commander of his army, to send Uriah to the frontlines and for the army to retreat from the fight. This would leave Uriah on his own, and he would certainly fall.

It's a brilliant plan, but my goodness, David! How far you have fallen from the man after God's own heart that we have seen so many times before. This again shows us the evils we are

capable of when we allow our desires to run our lives. We lose sight of who we are and what it means to live as a reflection of the Lord. When our focus turns inward, we are capable of unimaginable things.

You might read that and be skeptical. You might think, *I could never do something truly terrible like that*, and on some level, you might be right. You will hopefully never get to the point of murdering someone out of malice or protecting your dignity. We all have sins that we think are too great for someone like us to ever commit. Be careful with that. I've counseled with countless people who surprised themselves and not in a good way. Like David, when we lose sight of who we are and we get desperate, we get closer to doing the unimaginable.

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are capable of committing grievous sins that impact others beyond us. The path to such sins takes place one step, one compromise at a time. We don't just dive off headlong into something atrocious. The illustration I like to use is swimming at the beach. Have you ever gone out into the water directly in front of where you set all your stuff and then an hour later look up only to find you have drifted far away from your stuff without even realizing it? It's a surreal experience, and that is precisely how sin works. The first step to avoiding such sins is to be aware that we are capable of them.

It's also worth stating that it doesn't take a big sin to do great harm. Even our everyday, seemingly common and more mundane sins can wreak havoc on others and our own souls. We cannot be complacent and think that as long as we keep sin on a certain level, we're doing ok. Sin is sin and it is destructive, which is why God hates it. All sin harms. It harms us and others. It disrupts God's vision for the good world He created. That is why God will deal with sin one day, so that His good world can be restored.

Praying Together:

"Father, help me confront the sin in my life. Open my eyes to my constant need for Your grace and accountability. Give me a conscience that is sensitive to what is right. I want to give life, not harm, to those around me. Amen."

THURSDAY, 6/20

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-6.

David's sin against Bathsheba, Uriah, and the Lord doesn't stay concealed for long. The Lord reveals David's sin to the prophet, Nathan, who confronts David.

Nathan needs David to see the grievous nature of his sin. The question for us is this: how do you make someone see something to which they are obviously blind? You either confront them directly or help them see it objectively. Nathan chooses the latter, to help David see the story from a different angle.

Nathan tells David a heart-wrenching story of a rich man who took advantage of a poor man. The rich man took the little lamb the poor man had. He disgraced him and took no account of how much the poor man loved his ewe lamb, and mercilessly had it ripped away from him.

David reacts like we do to that story. He is so passionate in his response that Nathan doesn't even have to ask what the king would do to one like the rich man. David, who again is so blind he cannot yet make the connection, levels a harsh punishment for the fictitious rich man. He condemns the man to death after he reimburses the poor man for the lamb four times over.

Little does David know that he is standing on the gallows with a rope around his neck, literally kicking the bucket out from under his own feet. He is justifying God's own judgment against him.

This story is a masterful way for David to see his sin. He was blind to it when he was involved. We often are blind to the things we don't want to see. David needed to see his sin in a new light, so God shows it to him.

While it is painful to see our sin and the damage we cause, it is a merciful thing. Sin will destroy us if we don't yield it to God's healing power. Sin must be seen and acknowledged before it can be turned over to the Lord for our own healing and forgiveness.

This is why the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin. The Spirit is the voice of gentle nudging to keep us from destructive behavior. Paul's solution to dealing with sin is to "walk in the Spirit". He encourages us to live with an awareness of and dependence upon the Spirit's presence in us. It is the Spirit's leading that enables us to live as we should and avoid evil.

As you navigate your day today with all of its challenges, seek the Spirit's guidance and help. Pray often, asking for the Spirit to lead you and be your help. This is one of the ways we walk in the Spirit.

Praying Together:

"Holy Spirit, thank You for loving me enough to show me my sin. Be my help as I go through this day. I want to honor the Lord and live into who I am in Him. Show me the places where I might stumble. Give me the wisdom and grace to be faithful and obedient. Amen."

FRIDAY, 6/21

Read 2 Samuel 12:7-14.

David's eyes are finally opened. He has been blind to his arrogance and sin. He didn't want to see what he was doing and the damage he caused when he slept with Bathsheba then killed her husband Uriah. Now he finally sees it for what it is, and it hurts.

Nathan declares to David that he is the rich man in the story he had told in the verses just before our passage today. David is the one who has done the terrible thing in taking advantage of Bathsheba and having her husband killed.

God lays down the consequences of his short sightedness. God reminds David that He was the One who made David what he is. God gave David all of these blessings. God is the One who wants to bless us, but as we have said throughout this series at times, we must be able to be trusted with God's blessings. That's why humility is so important. Humility helps our hearts remain in a position of reliance upon and accountability to the Lord. David's humility gave way to pride. Pride, if left unchecked, will ruin us. That is why God opposes pride. Pride destroys and deceives.

David's pride had blinded him to his actions. Since David chose the sword as a means of protecting his own dignity, the sword would remain on his household. We will watch this unfold in the coming chapters. It's worth noting the difference between punishment and consequences here. What God spells out for David in verses 7-12 are not punishments, but the consequences of his decisions. They are the direct result of David's actions. Let's take a peek at some of them.

Dysfunctional might be the best word to use to describe David's family following this event. While God says that he will bring calamity on David's house, it is really David's actions that bring

the most harm. The brokenness in his family is self-inflicted. David did it to himself. When the many children David has with his different wives grow up, they begin to compete against one another. Rivalry takes hold of his family and creates a toxic environment in his household. Wives will distance themselves from David out of resentment toward him, and some of his children will turn against him. That could have been avoided had he not taken different wives as God had warned.

David confesses his sin against the Lord. Nathan assures David that he is forgiven. David is certainly given more mercy than he gave to Uriah, but that is because the Lord is merciful.

We know that God is merciful to us as well. While we too often are left to face the circumstances of our own making, God will forgive us and heal us of our sin. 1 John 1:9 reads, "If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Again, we are free to turn to our Father to find mercy and grace.

Praying Together:

"God, thank You for showing mercy to me. As the psalmist says, 'You know my sin and my sin is ever before me.' I am in need of Your healing grace. Help me walk in the newness of life and freedom that is mine in Christ Jesus. Amen."

SATURDAY, 6/22

Read 2 Samuel 12:15-25.

I have little doubt that verse 14 raised some eyebrows. I'm sure many of us are wondering why God would take a child for the sins of his father. Let's take a deeper look. The NIV says, "But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die." Let's consider that in the original Hebrew, the word "because" is not present. It was placed in some translations because the translators believed that the two events, David's contempt for the Lord and the death of the child, were placed beside each other to illustrate a cause and effect. David showed contempt; therefore, the son would die.

In the original Hebrew, the passage reads as two separate statements: David showed contempt. The son born to you will die. That means the text doesn't necessarily link the two events as a cause and effect.

Ok, so what do we make of that then? I don't know exactly. It doesn't answer the question that this brings up. We can't be sure that the death of the child was a result of David's sin. The child's death could have been natural and something that compounded the event itself.

My point is that the original text is written in such a way that it isn't clear, and any attempt we make to answer the question is reaching to a degree. I would not take away from this that if something happened to your child that it is your fault. That is not how this passage reads.

When we read scripture, we will encounter passages that challenge us and passages to which there are no clear answers. Having faith means that we cannot and will not have answers to every burning question. While we often like things to be crystal clear, faith often invites us to embrace mystery.

The bottom line, as I see it here, is this: do you trust the Lord? Do you trust that God is good? Tough passages can challenge us and that's ok. In the end, can you say something like, "God, I may not understand, but I trust that You are good. Whether You took David's son or not, I know You gave Your Son so that I might live through Him. I can trust Your goodness."

Praying Together:

"Father, I trust You. When I come across questions that make me pause, teach me. As I wrestle, may You reveal who You are. Help me to see You more clearly even when my faith is challenged. I want to know You more. Guide me into a deeper knowledge of You. Amen."

SUNDAY, 6/23

Read Psalm 51.

This is a sobering passage, especially when you consider the event that inspired it. David got so lost within his own sin that after everything was said and done, he had dishonored both his and Bathsheba's marriage, killed her husband, and taken her as another of his wives.

I doubt David ever thought he would have been capable of such a thing. I wonder how often we've done something that we never thought we would ever do. If we're being honest, we are more capable of doing evil than we would like to admit. We need the Lord and one another so that we can walk faithfully in this world.

Fortunately for us, the Lord is far more gracious than we deserve. When we sin, our Heavenly Father invites us to come to Him rather than run from Him. Even when our sin is great, He offers us healing and restoration. Of course, that doesn't mean that we are exempt from the consequences. Those we must face, and yet even at our worst--when we're wallowing in the mess we made—God still loves us and invites to new life.

That's what Psalm 51 is about. It is a prayer of confession, whereby David acknowledges the full gravity of his sin and brokenness. I once had a pastor say that confession was agreeing with God about your sin. That didn't make much sense at the time, but I get it. The Lord already knows our sin. We may think we're slick and that we've covered it up, but He knows. We just haven't acknowledged it to Him. We likely haven't even been honest with ourselves about it. Most of the time we aren't. That's why we're able to justify the things we do.

Confession is an essential practice for a child of God. If we want to live into who we now are as God's sons and daughters, we need to be honest with our Father. If we want to be close to Him, we need to admit when we've done something that interferes with our relationship. That's how the relationship is made whole again.

The good news for us is that no one knows our brokenness more than our Father in heaven, and He loves us. He has a vision for us to live abundant lives that are empowered by His grace. We don't have to hide from Him like Adam and Eve tried to do. We can go to Him, like the writer of Hebrews says, with confidence that "we will find mercy and grace in our time of need."

So, when you sin, remember you need not run *from* Him, but *to* Him. Jesus died so that sin would no longer be a barrier between us and our life with God, so don't let it.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, I am in desperate need of Your grace. I confess my sin before You. I acknowledge how badly I need Your healing mercy. Thank You for restoring me. Thank You for not taking the Spirit from me. Restore the joy of my salvation. Amen."