



I bet you can remember a time you thought you had hidden something well — maybe as a kid sneaking cookies, or as an adult covering a mistake at work or in the home or maybe even something even immoral or unethical. A few weeks ago, all of our social media feeds and even traditional media outlets blew up with a video clip of a coverup that got exposed. **Watch this....**

They were trying to hide, but it didn't work. The truth got out. And sometimes the truth hurts and has consequences. Last week we saw what was probably the lowest point in King David's life, as he shirks his duties as king, uses his power to take what isn't his and commits adultery with Bathsheba, and then seeks to cover it up in ways that only make matters worse, including costing the life of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. David ends up taking her as his wife, and it seems like the cover-up has worked.

But much as the two people on the kiss-cam video couldn't be hidden, David's actions aren't quite as secretive as he believes. Life may feel "normal" to him, he may feel that the cover-up worked, but God isn't fooled. Chapter 11 ends with a verse we spent some time on last week, that what David had done was "evil in the sight of the Lord." And now today we see that because God loves David, he's not going to just leave him alone. He's going to confront him – not to condemn him, but to correct him and bring David back into communion with Him. So, let's turn to 2 Samuel 12:1-14, beginning with the first sentence of verse 1, **"And the Lord sent Nathan to David" (2 Samuel 12:1a).**

So, in the previous chapter, there are 5 instances (by my count) of David "sending" someone or something. The Hebrew word is "shalach". The first is to send Joab in his place to lead the army (11:1). The other four instances of "sending" are connected more directly to Bathsheba. David "sends" to inquire, to summon, to cover up, and to kill (verses 3, 4, 6, and 16). But now here in chapter 12, God is doing the sending. He sends Nathan to David to confront, correct and bring him back into communion (fellowship) with God.

David is no longer the one calling the shots and making things happen. Let's read all of **verse one and all the way through verse 6.**

This is the beginning of God's grace in this season of David's life. It starts with God initiating this confrontation, through the prophet Nathan. And he does so with incredible wisdom, telling a story, a parable, to bring everything to light. As many of you probably know, Jesus loved to teach in parables. It was his most common teaching tool.

So, Nathan tells a story of two people. The rich person is actually fairly uninteresting and doesn't take much to introduce him in the story. He has a lot of sheep and cattle, and that's all we're told. The poor man has one little ewe lamb. This would be a female lamb, a source of provision for the family as it gets older. He cares for it, nurtures it, raises it with his own kids as a daughter to him, as the text tells us.

If you've ever owned a pet, you know how they become a beloved family member. Oftentimes we don't even realize how much they've worked their way into our hearts until they die. One of the two or three saddest day in our family's history that I could think of this week, was from the fall of 2006 when our dog Ruth died. She was a gregarious and loyal chocolate lab and our family shed as many tears over her death as we have at nearly any other event in our lives. We still have her ashes in a little wood box, as if hanging onto that somehow still keeps her memory alive for us. Mind you, it's not sitting on a shelf in the living room or anything...it's in the shed. But I know right where it is. But pets are near and dear to our hearts.

So, this poor guy has this one little lamb that he's loved like a child, and will be an ongoing provision for his family. It's all he has in the way of possessions. When a traveler comes through their town, and the rich man wants to be hospitable toward him, rather than taking one of his own lambs out of the abundance he has, he takes the one from this poor man, and uses it as the main course of the meal. It would be heart-breaking for that family and likely put them in a financial bind.

Well, David immediately sees the injustice of the story and pronounces judgment upon the rich man in the story. And then Nathan speaks truth to power when we read in verse seven, **“Then Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man!’” (2 Samuel 12:7a)**. Please notice that how you read this statement, whether out loud or just in your head, radically impacts how you might interpret Nathan’s intention. This isn’t, “You’re the *man!*” as if Nathan is congratulating David for understanding the parable. No, it’s “*You* are the man!” As in, “That rich man in the story who you just pronounced judgment on, is you. The story is about you!” So, let’s read all of verse 7 up through 14 to get the rest of Nathan’s confrontation of David **(2 Samuel 12:7-14)**.

So, **David has been blessed by God. God has given him his predecessor’s (king Saul’s) house, wives, and all of Israel.** “House” doesn’t simply refer to a building, but really is an all-encompassing idiom that means everything that previously belonged to Saul, including the kingly dynasty. “Master’s wives” is not so much about romantic relationships, but is again language to describe that everything that previously belonged to or was connected to Saul, is now David’s. Kings would inherit their predecessor’s family. And then as if that isn’t enough, he’s reminded that he’s been given all of Israel. He’s king over the whole nation. And this is all God’s activity. Nathan is speaking on behalf of God here, from God’s perspective, and it’s all “I” did this, “I” gave you that, “I” would have given more if it weren’t enough. The VBS theme this week was, “God gives good gifts.” David has a lot of good gifts from God. But it wasn’t enough for David, and he took more. That was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and there are going to be consequences.

Now, at this point, through verse 12, after Nathan speaks on behalf of the Lord, David really has two options. **One option is to respond with defensiveness and pride, and ignore Nathan or even have Nathan removed from office or killed.** He’s done it once before to cover his tracks, so why not here? When someone calls out an inconvenient truth, people in power remove others from their positions sometimes. Today we often call those people “whistleblowers” and we see it in business, in government, in churches, in all spheres of life: someone calls out a truth, it implicates someone above them in a position of power and authority, and the truth-teller

is fired or re-assigned or worse. Not always, but certainly with some frequency. David could have done that.

But he goes the other route. Despite his reprehensible behavior in chapter 11, he *is* a man after God's own heart, as Scripture calls him. Clearly, he's not perfect in carrying that out, but in his response, we see that his heart is for the Lord, and that wins the day. And he chooses the second option: **Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13).** It's very simple and straight-forward. No qualifications, no excuses. He takes the high road. He lays down his pride, and humbly acknowledges the truth, and confess his sin. This doesn't mean there aren't consequences.

There are, they're named by Nathan, and they come to fruition over the course of David's life and for generations beyond: He loses his son with Bathsheba, his son Absalom unsuccessfully tries to overthrow the kingdom in chapters 15-18 and loses his life in the process, there's more sexual sin and fighting and major disputes between David's kids, the Davidic lineage of kings in the generations that follow is totally unstable with some obedient to the Lord and others rebellious, the kingdom ends up divided in two so it's no longer unified, and then over time the two kingdoms are taken captive by Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and then Rome. These consequences are all laid out here.

But that doesn't mean David isn't forgiven. He is (verse 13). Nathan immediately replies to his confession with these words in verse 13, "The Lord has taken away your sin." Where David took for selfish gain in chapter 11 – took Bathsheba, took Uriah's life – the Lord takes away those sins. It doesn't mean they magically disappear like they never happened. But the Lord forgives him. His sin is not how God defines him.

And we see here that sin, at its root, is against God. Yes, there's sin against people here in this season of David's life. But all sin is actually first and foremost against God. That's something that's lost in the world today. The view of the world is that as long as something you do doesn't hurt others, then it's ok. All anyone cares about is sin against people. God has been left out of the equation by so much of the world. But he's the righteous

judge who holds eternity and you and me in the palms of his hands, and ultimately he's the one to whom we are accountable. So, God forgives him and spares his life, because He is gracious and because David humbly acknowledged his sin before God. And so, where sin had separated David and God, God is able to bring them back together. He graciously confronts David through Nathan, articulates the consequences, corrects him, and brings him back into communion, to relationship, with God through the confession of sin and God's forgiveness.

And still today God is gracious and merciful and seeks to bring us into relationship with him. But here's the thing: it has to start with confronting our sin. We may want to hide from it, to cover our faces or duck for cover like two people caught on the kissing cam trying to hide in a crowd of 50,000...but that's just trying to hide from God – and God sees us even better than the internet does. But one way or another God will confront us about our sin. In our consciences, through his Word, through another person like Nathan confronting David here...it starts with that kind of confrontation and call to accountability. Pride will try and hide, but if we are humble, our sin can be acknowledged, knowing that God is faithful and forgiving.

And much like the ewe lamb in the parable that Nathan told, God has given his one and only son, whom he loves, who John the Baptist calls “the lamb of God,” and he has gone all the way to death on the cross for the sins of the world. His name is Jesus. And get this, in case you didn't already know: David's family line eventually ends up leading to Jesus' earthly parents. God promised an everlasting kingdom through David, and God delivers, through Jesus, who stepped out of eternity into humanity to be King of kings and Lord of lords. And: **On the cross, the ultimate and eternal consequence for sin has been taken care of by Jesus.** Yes, there may be earthly consequences like losing a job, or shame, embarrassment, mocking, and so forth...and our bodies do eventually give out and we die...But when we've put our trust in Jesus, we need not also have eternal death and separation from God. Jesus has born that consequence and overcome it on our behalf. It's what separates the Christian faith from every other religion on the face of the planet. Jesus is the difference-maker.

So, this season of David’s life, while not pretty and not easy: it doesn’t end in disgrace — instead, it ends in grace. His sin was great, but God’s grace was greater. And now, on this side of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the cross of Jesus is the ultimate “Nathan moment,” where God says to the whole world, “You *are* the man” or “You *are* the woman” – we are sinners no different than David. That’s the truth, and the truth hurts. You might try and deny that and say, “Well, I think people are basically morally good.” Then why is there so much pain and heartache in the world? Why broken relationships, why hurt spouses, dysfunctional families, hostile work environments, warring countries, poverty, hunger and so much more? It’s very difficult to make a case that people are basically good.

Now: **This doesn’t mean we *always* live as the worst we are capable of, and it also doesn’t mean that those people who do live mostly in sin never do anything good.** Al Capone, the notorious Chicago mob boss in the 1920’s and 30’s, personally started and funded a Chicago foodbank during the Depression that fed 2,000 people a day. But that doesn’t make him a saint. We too, fall short of God’s glory, as Paul puts it in Romans, and we are in need of God’s grace and redemptive work that comes through Jesus. **Like David, our lives need not be defined by our sin end in disgrace, either. Rather, our lives can also end in grace and a right relationship with our Creator. And it happens when we confess like David does here, and trust in Jesus’ work on the cross.**

So, when the truth hurts as God confronts you — through Scripture, through a friend, through conviction in your heart — don’t run *from* Him. Run *to* Him. Run to Jesus. He welcomes you with open arms even as you acknowledge your sin. His goal then is not to shame you, but to save you, and transform you more and more into his likeness. And he can do it, because he is the resurrected King of kings and Lord of lords. Let’s pray...Amen.