



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

“David & Bathsheba: Ssssin”

June 22, 2008

By Dr. Matt Hook

2 Samuel 11:1—4

NIV 2 Samuel 11:1 *“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.”*

We’ve been preaching on the life of David, the greatest King Israel has ever known. And, clever as I was to preach on David’s friendship with Jonathan on the day of Pentecost, David’s legacy on the day we celebrated the legacy of our capital campaign, and David’s rebellious sons on Father’s day, I left us with David & Bathsheba on Vacation Bible School Sunday! ☺ Oops. It’d be really funny if it weren’t so serious. The story needs to be told. Surveys say that 60% of people in the room have been touched by an extra-marital affair: as a parent, a friend, a child, or in our own life personally. This is a big deal. It’s not an accident. The biblical writers could have said “Let’s leave this part out. He’s a hero. Nobody needs to know about that.” But it was considered very important to leave this story as a part of the text. It was left there for us. So our goal is to discern what is the word of God for our lives today. Let’s look...

We find David the King. He has finally arrived. His kingdom is secure; so secure, he can send his warriors off, and stay at the palace. His palace stands way above all the other buildings. One day, David is out walking on his rooftop porch. And as he’s walking, he’s quite smug, looking down at all of the houses of the city. No one could have a house as tall as the king’s house. He just happens to notice one rooftop where a woman is bathing. She would have had walls around her roof. It’s just that the palace was that tall. David sees her.

And being a righteous man, he hears the still, small voice of God saying “Now David, don’t be doing that.” So he turns away. But he saw her. And he finds a reason to be on that side of the palace roof again...And she’s still there, and she’s bathing, and she’s beautiful, she’s stunning, she’s so beautiful, and even though he can’t make out all of her features because of the distance, his imagination feeds that sense of her beauty. My guess is this might have taken place over a period of days or weeks, not just instantaneously. Maybe every two or three days he just happens to be there at the right time.

Now David lived in a day when a man could have multiple wives. David had the most beautiful women in all Israel. And he loved them deeply. But he *still* sent a servant out to find out who this bathing woman was. She was Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, who was off fighting in the war. Once David found out she was the wife of another man; that should have been the end. And yet the man after God’s heart found himself going back to his deck, day after day. Finally, he invited her to the palace, and the two of them wound up in each other’s arms, in the King’s bedroom. David had fallen. He made a mistake once, and it could have been minimized or brushed aside. Bathsheba went on her way. Uriah comes back, and everybody lives happily ever after, but you know what? It never really happens that way.

And as these things happen, so many times, other parties find out. Here's what happened in David's and Bathsheba's story: a couple weeks go by, and Bathsheba sends a note to the king and says, "My lord the King, I'm pregnant." And this posed a problem because Uriah had been at the battlefront for 3 months. It's difficult to become pregnant without a husband). David knows that they are going to be found out. But remember David's always been clever about ways to deal with problems. So he comes up with a plan. He sends a letter to the general Joab on the front lines against the Ammonites, and he says "I'm really interested in a report from the battlefront. Why don't you send Uriah back, and have him give me a report. So Uriah's sent back to the King's palace, gives the king a full report, and David says, "Uriah, you've been a valiant warrior, I think you should just take the night off. Why don't you go spend the night with your wife?" Perfect. Nobody would notice. Maybe Bathsheba would have the baby a few weeks early, but that wasn't uncommon. There's just a little problem. Uriah says to the king "How could I go and spend the night with my wife when my friends are risking their lives on the battlefront? I can't do that. I'm going to sleep here on your doorstep and I'm going to protect the King tonight." (Gee, thanks...)

And David's sin secret is in jeopardy. All night long, David's trying to figure this out. So the next day David says, "Uriah, before you go back to the frontlines, I'd like to have a special dinner, a banquet in your honor." And he does. Uriah sits at the king's table, and the king gets him good and drunk. If he's in a drunken stupor, maybe he'll at least *think* that he slept with his wife that night. But even drunk, Uriah said "Oh King, I couldn't be with my wife when my men are at the battlefront. I'll sleep here at your doorstep again." (sigh...)

Have you ever tried to come up with ways to get out of your problems and your sins, and when one after the other doesn't work, you begin to get really scared? David's desperate now. So David came up with one last plan. And here's where the story takes a more tragic turn. David writes a letter to Joab the general for Uriah to carry back to him at the battlefront. He says 'General Joab, when Uriah presents this letter, he's such a valiant warrior why don't you put him on the very front line against the Ammonites in the battle, and just to see what kind of warrior he really is, pull back all the other fighting men, and leave Uriah exposed all on his own.' And so the next day, Uriah delivers this letter, sealed with the King's seal, which he dare not open, and he carries his own death warrant to General Joab. Within a few days, Uriah is killed on the battlefront, just as David had wanted.

And the sad thing of the story at this point is David seems to be the hero, because he proposes to Bathsheba while everyone is mourning Uriah. He says "I'll take care of you, as his widow, for the rest of my life. Come and be my queen." And all Israel was amazed at the gentleman David is in his kindness and compassion for this poor widow woman. And that's the story. Where is the significance for us?

First this: **How could this happen?** How could a good and righteous man, who wrote the most beautiful Psalm "The Lord is my shepherd", do something like this? Here's how: **Sin begins with a thought**. It begins with a thought. Not just for David, but for you as well. It starts that moment when he should have turned away, but instead there was the maybe..., the perhaps..., the coming back and looking again. It's not by accident Jesus says "*When you have lusted after a woman, you have already committed adultery with her in your heart*" Matthew 5:28. Not because you've actually physically done those things, but because all of those sins begin here, in your heart. And then eventually work themselves out into our lives. Walter Langren captured this very well. In a book *As For Me and My House* in which he describes the anatomy of an affair when it happens to good people, men and women alike. Listen: "When a desire is borne in us, we have a choice. When it exists, still in its infancy, we have a choice... We can name it straight away as a parasite that intends to do us no good. Or,... we can think about it. We can fantasize it into greater existence. We can feed it. We can feed our sexual thoughts with pictures and books, [internet], and a wandering eye at work. If we give it attention in our souls, soon we will be giving it our souls... The desire itself overpowers us, commanding action, demanding satisfaction, when the only choice left, since we've been enslaved by a passion, is how we might justify the sin, in the end." This is what happens in our lives.

Who are the most likely candidates for affairs? In 1 Corinthians 10:12 we read "*So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*" That was written to Christ followers – leaders! Modern research by Dr. Jan Halper documents that that men and women who are successful, business people, who

are professionals, sales, are the most likely people to have affairs. Sometimes the power goes to their heads, sometimes they work so hard that they step away from their family time, sometimes they begin to feel numb, and look for a sense of adventure, sometimes in the midst of burn out they look for things they know are wrong, sometimes their values become skewed and they forget what's really important in their lives, for whatever reason. **How do we avoid falling?** Stay plugged in. Put people around you who are trying to achieve similar goals in following God. That's why worship is important. That's why the spiritual disciplines are important. That's why being part of a small group is important. That's why we give you the study guide. So that *every day* you're stopping at some point during the day and saying "What's really important in my life? What's really true? What's really meaningful? What gives life, and what destroys life?" Here's the deal: Sin always destroys life. No matter how good it looks. No matter how frustrated you are. No matter how good the timing is. Sin always destroys life. To those considering and plotting out their next sin (which is all of us):

Sin has consequences. First of all, **God does judge sin.** There is a judgment that comes with all sin. God judgment on David was the baby died. God took that baby to heaven. Now, God doesn't work that way today. God doesn't take away *our* sons and daughters. Instead, God sent *His* Son. God says the punishment that *we* deserved was laid upon *Him*, and by his wounds we are healed. There *was* a judgment for the sins you and I commit, and that judgment was Jesus—who was wounded for us, who was hurt for us. We claim that. **Jesus died for YOU.** He paid a price for YOU. It cost His very *life* for those things that we have done, so you have to understand there is a judgment that takes place. And if you don't repent and cling to that, if you don't accept that forgiveness that God offers through Jesus, then you're going to have to pay for that judgment yourself. You can pay it, or you can let Jesus pay it. But somebody's going to pay the price for the things that we do. There is a price to be paid. But in addition to the price to be paid that Jesus paid for you, there's also **consequences to sin.**

When the Israelite people found out about it, the respect that they had for their king went from high to low. After this, who could believe this man? Uriah's family hated him, even though he sought to do the right thing *after* that point. And his own children learned from David and paid the price. Amnon, David's oldest son, learned from his father that if a man wants a woman, he takes her; even if it's his half-sister Tamar. Even if she says no. Absalom learned from David how you deal with your enemy, or when someone gets in your way when you have something you want. And Absalom wanted revenge against his older brother Amnon. So at a dinner party he cut his throat. One brother kills another brother. And David watches all this happen in his own family.

There are no secret sins. Someone knows. Even if it is God... and you. *You* know. *You* still bear those scars for the rest of your life. And while God's grace is there for you, and you've been forgiven 100 times over, you can never take away this thing that *diminished your spirit*. It's forgiven and the price is paid. God's redeemed you and given you new life and joy. You don't have to wear it as a cross the rest of your life. But it's still a part of who you are, forever.

Finally, grace. Grace, Amazing Grace. Greater than all our sin! This is what the point of the story is in the end. After all the judgment and the consequences, do you know that God was willing to forgive David? David got on his knees, flat on his face before God. He cried out to God. He didn't say one of those little prayers we pray after we sin. We say "God please forgive me" and go on. But David cried, "God, I deserve to die. Take me, because I don't deserve to live anymore. And he cried out in anguish. He was hurting before God. And he wrote those beautiful words we find in Psalm 51 "*Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, or take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.*" And he meant them. And God gave him grace.

Listen: God's mercy is available to you, new every morning. No matter where you've been, what awful things you've done, there's not one of you in this room that is beyond the reach of God, beyond the salvation that Jesus offers. He can be your Savior too. He loves you, and he's willing to forgive you. But he does require that you take seriously what you've done, and that you acknowledge the price that was paid. And you repent, and you let Him help you start again.

You know what I love about this story? We've been there. Maybe not adultery. At least not with your body. But you've thought about it a few times. I've never killed somebody. But I've hated some people. And I've wished that they'd be out of my way. And I've done a thousand other things that I'm embarrassed of. To you they may be nothing. Or you might be shocked. I don't know. But what this story teaches me, is that **if God could forgive, and redeem and restore David, then God can show mercy to me...and you.** And that is the word of God from the story of David & Bathsheba.

Sermon Notes & Study Guide **David & Bathsheba: Ssssin** **2 Samuel 11:1—4**

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.

The Story—David's Sin with Bathsheba

How Sin Takes Root in Our Lives

- How does sin begin? _____
- Walter Wangerin's description: _____
- The most likely candidates for "taking a fall": _____
- How do we avoid falling? _____

Judgment and Consequences

- Mercy & Grace
- The difference between judgment and consequences: _____
- The judgment upon David: _____
- The consequences: Amnon, Tamar, & Absalom

The Depth of God's Mercy

- David's initial response to his sin was to: _____
- David's response when confronted by Nathan was: _____
- God's mercy comes at a price: _____

Study Guide:

This is designed to help you dig deeper. Study with a friend or on your own. Ask: what do learn about people, David, God, and myself as I read? Enjoy!

Monday—Difficulties David Faces Late in Life. 2 Samuel 21 & 22.

Read 2 Samuel 21:1—14. Notice there was famine for 3 years. This was very serious and frightening. Have you sought the face of the Lord recently? David prayed for over 2 years, yet God did not respond—a good reminder that God's timing is different from ours. We usually expect God to "fix" the bad in our lives instantly. In the end, the famine didn't stop until Israel made right a serious sin they committed years before. Interesting that God remembered their sin against the Gibeonites all those years later. What does that teach us about God? This seems a crude method of justice—but not for the times these people lived in. Read 21:15-22. David feels exhausted in this battle. Do you ever feel this way in your daily life? We are nearing the end of David's life. He is old, but still fighting the Philistines. Pray for God to help you see what you need to make right before God can bless you. Read 2 Samuel 22. Notice that this Psalm is also in Psalm 18, in the book of Psalms. What does this Psalm teach you about yourself? About God? About people? Notice

even when David is facing exhaustion, he praises God.

Tuesday—David’s Mighty Warriors. 2 Samuel 23. Read 23:1-7. These are David’s “last words” but this is likely his last Psalm he composed, not his last words. Note that promises, principles, and stability are a part of this Psalm. Read verses 8-39. Here the stories of David’s most heroic fighters are told. They were remembered because of their courage and valor, hundreds of years after their death. How would you like to be remembered? What character traits do you want to shine through?

Wednesday—David Sins by Counting His Fighting Men. 2 Samuel 24. Read chapter 24. This is another weird, fascinating chapter. God considered this census a sin because it was taken as a way of gaining control and not having to trust in God. Why did God use such a harsh punishment on the Israelites? Notice v.17. What does this tell you about David’s heart, as king?

Thursday—Adonijah’s Revolt and David’s Last Words. 1 Kings 1-2:4.

Read the section. The events with Adonijah were hinted at on Father’s Day in the sermon. Adonijah, like his half-brother Absalom, tries to take David’s throne by force. Notice v.1:6. Another reference to David’s lack of disciplining as a father. Notice the political maneuvering in order to get Solomon, who is not the oldest surviving son, named as David’s successor. Notice David’s last words to his son. (2:1-4). Do people know what your final words are yet? What is most important for you to pass along today?

Friday—David’s Planned Gift, the Temple. 1 Chronicles 29. Read 1 Chronicles 29. We looked at this when we celebrated the 3 year mark of “Giving God Room to Work.” Chronicles provides details of stories that complement what we read in Samuel and Kings. Here David makes a planned gift to help build the Temple, even though he knows he will not see the Temple built in his lifetime. This will be a part of his legacy. Note what David says about wealth here.