

Rev. Zach Moffatt  
Adams UMC  
20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

***First Taste: David and Bathsheba***

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13

*Focus: We all need a Nathan—and we are all called to be like David.*

*Function: The function of this sermon is to invite the congregation to follow the example of Nathan and of David.*

Will you pray with me and for me: God of mercy and grace, we know that we have fallen before you. We know we are filled with sin. We know we are broken. We are in need of your amazing grace which heals and restores things to your original plan. Open our eyes to the brokenness of our world and move us to work with your healing and Holy Spirit. May the meditations of our hearts and the words of my lips be acceptable and pleasing in thy sight, oh God, our strength and our redeemer. Speak, Lord Jesus, for your servants are listening.

IN THE NAME OF THE CREATOR, AND OF THE REDEEMER, AND OF THE SUSTAINER, AMEN.

**While many of us know about King David, many of us may not know this particular story.** We all know about King David, though. The young boy who was the youngest and smallest of his family who was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next King of Israel. David, the young boy who fought and killed a giant with nothing but a sling and a stone. David who had to run from King Saul because Saul went mad with fear and paranoia. David who expanded Israel's territory through military conquest. David who God promised to be with forever—even using his house lineage to bring about restoration and healing throughout the whole world. David, whose great-great-grandmother was a Moabite woman. We know King David.

**And, while Scripture paints David in a powerful and kind light—we also have this powerful story about David.** This story that shows that even the most loveable and even those who chase after God's own heart fail in a major and painful way.

**You see, our story really begins a few chapters back.** David is at his palace looking at his kingdom when something catches his eye. A woman, a beautiful woman, is bathing. And, David sees her. He wants her. He asks his advisors about this woman. He wants to know all about her. Come to find out her name is Bathsheba. She's married. She's married to a man named Uriah, who is in David's own army. David is consumed with the thought of having Bathsheba—he doesn't see her as a human being, but as an object that must be owned. He lusts after her. He is jealous he doesn't have her. So, he devises a plan. He will go to war with the Ammonites, send Uriah to the front line where most the action will be. There Uriah will most certainly be killed, and Bathsheba will be David's to own. And, David's plan works

perfectly. Uriah is killed in combat, no suspicions are raised—as that’s what happens in war...people are killed. David takes Bathsheba as one of his wives and she bears him a son. No one thinks anything differently of it. No one knows. Except...well God. The text is clear—and I think we can all agree—what David has done was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Yes, David, the man after God’s own heart, did something horrendous and awful. Something none of us would ever dream of doing—all because he could—because he was the king. And, well, a long time ago the prophet Samuel warned Israel that all kings do is take—they take what they want when they want because they want it. And, all the kings proved that to be true—including David.

God knew. God knew the harm that David caused. God knew the pain that David inflicted. That’s what sin is—sin is anything that harms, that divides, the shames, that dehumanizes us and others. **And God called Nathan, a prophet, friend, and advisor to David to confront David about what he had done.** And, the powerful thing I think we all need to notice is the way in which Nathan confronted David. He tells him a parable. A parable about a rich man with a huge flock and a poor man with a ewe lamb. Nathan could have went in guns blazing, shaming David for what David did. Nathan could have began blaming David and chewing up one side and down the other. Nathan could have shamed David and reduced David to the actions that he has made up to this point. I think the church and Christians can learn a lot from Nathan’s response. Instead of beating David with the Bible, Nathan loved David and still held him accountable. He told pointed out to David the hypocrisy in his own heart. He showed David how he had done evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not skate around the fact that sin has consequences. But, not once did he degrade, belittle, or shame. Friends, I think the Church has done a lot of shaming and too little loving. I think the Church has done a lot of belittling and not enough showing grace. I think Christians have done a lot of judging and not enough work for reconciliation and peace. In the midst of hardship and pain, we are called to reflect resurrection not more death and pain and harm. And, Nathan gives us a prime example to do just that.

**I’ve been doing some work in demographic research for a project for a friend.** The information I’ve gathered is from the surrounding counties of Metro Nashville, including our own Robertson County. The information has been compiled by folks who answered the surveys and is from 2017. They compiled a list of folks who are regular church attenders and those who are not. Of those who are not church attenders 46% of those who responded said they don’t go to church because they see the church and Christians as too judgmental, hateful, too caught up in rules. Of those who are regular church attenders, 38% said they think about leaving because they don’t feel they can vulnerable in their church out of fear of being judged and ridiculed. This breaks my heart. It breaks my heart because we all sin and we all fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, none of us have any room to judge another person or belittle another person because of the ways in which they have fallen. We are all broken people who cannot save ourselves—but who are in desperate need of a holy savior who never belittles or shames, but offers grace and healing and compassion and mercy. All of us are sinners—and instead of being afraid of coming to sisters and brothers for help—we should be able to feel like we are talking to a Nathan—someone who will hold us accountable in a loving and grace filled way.

**We all need a Nathan in our lives—and we are all called to be a Nathan in the lives of others.** Instead of shaming the other, instead of belittling those in our midst, we are called to lovingly hold each other accountable. We are called to walk with each other and help carry each other's burden on this journey of faith. Yes, we are called to call out sin and injustice and evil. They are in our baptismal vows. But, in our calling out and resisting that evil, we must not lump the human beings caught up in those injustices as part of the injustice itself. Sin, injustice, and evil harm and dehumanize us all. Those who inflict and those who are inflicted—all of us are harmed by sin and evil. As followers of Christ, we call out the injustice, we call out the sin, but we never call the person evil or shame them for what they've done. We offer grace just as we have been offered grace. We offer mercy just as we have been offered mercy. We love just as we are loved because we know that we too are just as broken and just as in much need of God's healing and holy grace.

**I also think there is something else at play in this often looked over story.** Not only are we called to be like Nathan—and call out the injustices of the world and hold each other accountable. We are also called to be like David—who when he knew, when he felt the pain he had caused—he repented. He confessed. He admitted what he had done. David said, "I have sinned against the Lord." While that sin still had consequences—David has to live the rest of his life knowing he took an innocent life simply because he lusted and wanted someone as his own—he confessed and God forgave. It's really as simple as that. But, it is also scandalous—that amazing, radical, freeing grace of God's. It's hard to do what David did. It goes against our nature. It goes against our nature of self-preservation to admit when we've done wrong. But, there's power in it. It's liberating. It's freeing. It's liberating and freeing to speak and say the words of our wrongdoings even though God already knows. And, in our speaking and confessing—God knows and God forgives. And, as God forgives us, God expects us to forgive others—even when it is difficult and hard.

**Friends, the Church has a powerful and prophetic mandate to name the sin in our world that dehumanizes and does evil in the eyes of the Lord, but we must also recognize when we do the same.** We are called to be like Nathan and like David. We are called to hold each other accountable in the way of mercy and love while knowing that we too will be in need of mercy and grace. What do we need to confess? What do we need to repent of? Maybe, just maybe, we all need to repent of our judgment that we carry—the judgment of ourselves or of others. Maybe we need to be reminded of the fact that we are all in just as much need of grace as our enemies, as those we disagree with, as those we dislike, as those we don't even know. Maybe we need to be reminded that we are all sinners—and while we were yet sinners Christ died not just for you or me or those who think exactly like you or me—but for the whole world. The whole world is embraced in the arms of the merciful savior whose commandment was love and whose life was, does, and will always lead to everlasting peace.

IN THE NAME OF THE CREATOR, AND OF THE REDEEMER, AND OF THE SUSTAINER, AMEN.

