

## **2 Sam 11:1-15**

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.' So David sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, 'Uriah did not go down to his house', David said to Uriah, 'You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?' Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.' Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'

### **“It was Springtime”**

It was springtime. A time of the year when it nature tells us the world should be filled with new life. The harshness of winter has passed, crops are planted, and animals are giving birth. Creation had begun to bud and bloom!

This vision of spring is a stark contrast to the springtime narrative of 2 Samuel 11. “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah, but David remained at Jerusalem.” (v. 1)

We know in the first lines David is up to something. It must have been common fact in ancient Israel that springtime is the time for kings to go with their army off to war! Every spring, war; whose vision of spring, of blossoming life, is this? Anyways, instead of leading the people in the war he sent them out to, he is lounging around his palace, in search of something young, fresh and budding to amuse him—it was spring after all. He found his amusement in a married woman who was unprotected when the squad of palace messengers came to collect her for David. Her husband was off serving David in the war. The powerful King David takes for himself Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Were there ethnic tensions heaped into this abuse of kingly power? On a whim of self indulgence David saw Bathsheba, sent for her and lay with her. Then he dismissed her to her house. Bathsheba’s only words end up being through a messenger who tells David, “I am pregnant.”

This is the turning point in David’s life as narrated by the books of Samuel. He commits adultery, and then becomes a desperate, irrational man after learning he

impregnated Bathsheba. There are limits to David's royal power; he cannot control Uriah's steadfast loyalty. Something's gotta give! David decides not to come clean about his actions. Instead he continues down a path that takes him further from righteousness, further from God's will, further from Torah commandments and his anointing to be a righteous leader for Israel. David's act of lust led him to kill Uriah, a man who lived up to his name, "Yahweh is my light" through his faithfulness to David, Israel and God. Not only did Uriah die by David's command, but other men of Israel who were sent into a compromised situation in battle with Uriah also died as a result of David's sin.

David's sin drips like a thick residue throughout the story, sticking to everyone it touches. Today's story, King David's greatest recorded sequence of sins, makes us face our own complicity, our impulses to use others for the fulfillment of our desires.

We too betray those we know will honor us till the end. We have our own Uriahs, Bathshebas, Joabs... "The dramas of our lives are not always on the grand scale David's was, but we should not imagine that because we have stopped short of murder that this narrative is not our story. We have acted to exploit others for our own self-interest. We know how easily a lie to cover our tracks can involve us in additional acts that compound our original complicity."<sup>1</sup>

We've even tried to cover David's tracks for him throughout the history of scriptural interpretation so that the anointed King won't be culpable as we are. One commentator suggested, "Perhaps we need to preach this bleak side of David's story more often, not simply to point fingers at the sins of the mighty but to acknowledge how often we excuse and emulate them."<sup>2</sup> In the past, and in some places even today, Bathsheba got blamed for the sin of seducing an innocent David. Somehow the story of David and Bathsheba became known as one of the 10 greatest love stories—at least in popular society and Hollywood's eyes.

A great love story? Bathsheba was compelled to go to the palace by David's messengers. She didn't see him across the way and skip on over through the security into his open arms. The story as told by its narrator is pretty simple: David took, David lay, David sinned. When David was done with Bathsheba, he sent her home. Why have we the urge to protect David when the original narrators didn't?

One reason we might run scared from such a story of sin is that we forget we are to be rooted and grounded first in the story of God's steadfast love and forgiveness. God gave the Torah commandments, God sent Jesus, while we were estranged from God... while we still sinned. One preacher and teacher stated, "Sin can be known only when our stories are exposed by more truthful stories." God's story with us "makes our actions comprehensible not as minor slipups, mistakes of judgment, or even as our inappropriate response to the facts of the human condition but as sin, as our determined effort to live our lives as if God were not the author of our lives."<sup>3</sup>

"The church's notion of sin, like that of Israel's before it, is peculiar. It is derived ... from a peculiar, quite specific account of what God is up to in the world. What God is up to is named as covenant, Torah, or, for Christians, Jesus. Only by getting the story straight, God's story of redemption, are we able to understand our sin with appropriate seriousness and without despair because only then will we know of a God who manages to be both gracious and truthful. ... We view our lives through a "heap of broken images," never getting an accurate picture of ourselves. Through the "lens" of the story of Jesus we are able to see ourselves truthfully."<sup>4</sup>

We don't have to live in arrogance or denial because we are fully aware and filled with God's love. We know the breath and the length and the height and the depth of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. We are a people filled with the fullness of God!

It was springtime, God's love was known, yet David lost sight of God's steadfast love and thought a quick fix gratification would meet his deepest needs. Next Sunday we'll hear of the prophet who called him into repentance and recognition of God's amazing love despite David's sin.

It is springtime for us today and everyday! Can we believe what David lost sight of? That God is our fullness. That we are new creations? That rooted and grounded in God's love we are set free from our sin, to serve and love God.

May this good news be known to each one of us. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce C. Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1998) 1288.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 1290.

<sup>3</sup> "[A Peculiarly Christian Account of Sin.](#)" William H. Willimon, Duke University. *Theology Today*, July 1993. p. 221 and following.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 227.