

2 SAMUEL

IN SEARCH OF A KING PART II



Sermon 4 – 2 Samuel 11-12 “The woman was very beautiful”

Introduction

- i. Have you ever held to the opinion that most people are basically good?
 - ii. If everyone *was* basically good, what differences might we expect to see in the world today?
 - iii. OPTIONAL (*remembering of course that ALL questions are!!*) Read Romans 3:9-18 and discuss.
1. **Safe but not safe** – 11:1-5
 - a. Read James 1:14-15 and discuss how you can see the principle described there, at work in David’s situation.
 - b. What *ought* David to have done? (see for example Job 31:1, Numbers 15:39, Matthew 5:28).
 - c. Why is God so restrictive about sexual expression?
 - d. How would you help a Christian couple who are considering sleeping together – living together – prior to marriage? How would you counsel them?
 - e. We live in an over-sexualised society. What steps can we take to keep ourselves safe in the face of temptation? And how can we encourage one another in sexual purity?
 - f. Only one is good – Jesus Christ. You may enjoy reminding some of the following: Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:3, Philippians 2:8 and Romans 6:22-23.
 - g. Bathsheba is pregnant. What detail given in the text assures us David is the father. How do you think he may have reacted?
 2. **Deceived and deceiving** – 11:6-27 (See also Jeremiah 17:9)
 - a. On hearing of Bathsheba is pregnant, why didn’t David just come clean – both with Uriah and with God? (Why don’t WE come clean when we see our sin?)
 - b. David thinks this situation is no big deal and sets out to cover his tracks. Why do you think plans A and B failed?
 - c. Why such elaborate scheming for Plan C? (David could have just killed him!)
 - d. How do we typically delude ourselves into thinking that our sin is no big deal?
 - e. The last sentence in the chapter stands out. What did Mark and Ruth point out was a better translation? How did David not see this?
 3. **Confronted and confronting** – 12:1-25
 - a. Ever hurt someone and only found out later? How did you feel? Can you share the story?
 - b. What is so brilliant about Nathan’s use of the story to confront David with his sin?
 - c. Although there will be consequences for David and his family, once David confesses, we read that David’s sin is taken away and he’s not going to die. How is that fair!?
 - d. Read paragraph 1 in day 4 of the reading notes and discuss the ‘fury of grace’.
 - e. David deserved death, but received grace. Read Romans 3:23-24 and 6:23 and discuss how you feel about the reality of God’s grace to you.

What will be your personal take from this passage or study? Pray for one another that we will not be deluded by sin!

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Services: Peregrine
Passage: 2 Samuel 11-12
Preacher: Ruth Craven

“Line of Duty”

Have any of you seen this great BBC series?

It’s a drama about the investigations of a police anticorruption unit.

Phil and I were reflecting the other day on why we enjoy these types of dramas

Now of course being the BBC, it’s well scripted and well acted

But I think a lot of our enjoyment is that it’s all about justice being done

About those in authority catching the bad guys

And making sure they get what they deserve – that justice is done.

And this is the sort of world we want to live in, isn’t it

Where bad people are stopped

and where there’s a proper sense of justice.

Where people get what they deserve for their wrongdoing.

Well this morning as we consider chapters 11 and 12 in our Second Samuel series

Prepare to have your thoughts about justice turned on their head

And prepare to be confronted

Confronted by the evil actions of King David

Confronted by the dire consequences of his sin

And confronted by God’s amazing grace in response to David’s wickedness

So far in this series we’ve seen how David, a man after God’s own heart

Points us to the future King and the future kingdom,

To the fulfilment of all God’s promises to his people

And last week we heard God’s amazing promise

that his future kingdom plan will be brought about through David’s line, through David’s dynasty

So we expect great things of this King David don’t we?

Well, let me give you a précis of what’s just happened in chapter 11

The chapter just before our reading this morning

King David is standing on the roof of his palace, surveying his kingdom

And he spots on a nearby rooftop, a beautiful woman, bathing

He fancies her, so he sends a messenger to find out who she is

She's Bathsheba, the wife of one of King David's men

A man who is currently away fighting with David's army.

David sends for Bathsheba

and we're told, very starkly in vs 4 "she came to him and he slept with her"

We see a real ugliness in David here.

He can have whatever he wants.

He's at the culmination of his great power,

and he takes, simply because he can.

But - she gets pregnant.

Now this is incredibly serious for David, because the law was very clear

The penalty for adultery was death for both of them.

But David, in his arrogance thinks he can cover up his sin and control this whole situation

So he comes up with a plan

He sends for Uriah, Bathsheba's husband,

with the intent that Uriah will come back and sleep with his wife

Thus covering up David's adultery

Uriah arrives back in Jerusalem

and David puts plan A into action - he sends Uriah off to see his wife

vs 8 of Ch 11 "Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

(wash your feet was evidently a euphemism - you can guess for what)

But this plan fails because Uriah won't go off and enjoy himself while his men are still fighting.

So onto Plan B - David tries to get Uriah drunk and then again sends him home to his wife

same outcome.

Uriah, in contrast to David, shows incredible discipline and loyalty.

He will not visit his wife while his men are facing the enemy.

So finally David's horrific Plan C -

send Uriah back to the war and get him killed

Cold premeditated murder

The plan works, and Uriah is killed

David is off the hook. He gets what he wants, he marries Bathsheba and they have a son.

Wow, this is King David

The man after God's own heart

The man who has been made king, by the grace of God,

Given a wonderful kingdom by the grace of God

Yet, even with all this, David allows his own selfish desires to conquer him.

He's ignored God and done his own thing

In fact God has been completely sidelined, without a mention throughout chapter 11

Right up until the very last words;

Look with me at Chapter 11, Vs 27

But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

In fact this is quite a soft translation.

David himself in Psalm 51 says about this sin

"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;"

David has done evil in the eyes of the Lord

Even in this horror we can learn from David here.

David doesn't talk about how badly he's wronged Bathsheba and Uriah

Surely David sinned against **them**?

Of course he did.

His selfish pursuit of sexual pleasure with another man's wife,

was clearly a sin against them both as of course was his murder of Uriah.

But when David says he has sinned 'only' against God,

he means that by far the greatest offense has been against God;

Charles Spurgeon saw this clearly: when he said

'The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God'

When we see sin merely in how it affects others,

we focus only on morals and what our society or our peers expect

And so our benchmark for sin moves with the times.

But when we understand that all sin is primarily sin against God,

we understand its true seriousness;

the black and white nature of sin

That all sin is evil in the eyes of the Lord

So, what about these sins that David commits here

Adultery

Sadly it's all too common an occurrence in our society today.

In fact, if the statistics are to be believed,

it's likely that some members of our church family are in, or have been in adulterous affairs.

And the bible couldn't be more clear in showing us that this is evil in the eyes of the Lord

If this is you, now or in the past,

then, as we'll see for David later, be confronted by God for this sin

Take it to the foot of the cross and ask for forgiveness,

Confident that because of Jesus, your sin will be wiped away before God.

But I'm guessing that many of you listening to me right now are beginning to switch off

That's not me, I have never done and would never cheat. So this doesn't apply to me

Let me give you Jesus' take on this

In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus says

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Likewise with Murder.

I'm sure the statistics would suggest that it's highly **unlikely** that any of our church family have committed murder

But Jesus also says

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment."

In fact, as we read in other parts of scripture, many of our day-to-day behaviours are evil in the eyes of God.

Now I can hear you saying – "well I do make mistakes sometimes,

or do little things that are wrong, that aren't particularly kind,

but no, I would never do anything as serious as David has done

I'd never do anything that you would call evil"

So we pretend, we diminish, we rationalise

We talk about mistakes, weaknesses, errors of judgement, but never evil

The Prophet Jeremiah said *"the heart is deceitful above all things and is desperately sick"*

And we deceive ourselves if we think these things we do are not also evil in the eyes of the Lord

And like David, when we put God out of our minds

We're on a slippery slope and we sin

That's why it's so dangerous to live with God at the back of our minds

We can see what happened with David when he sidelined God

And that's the danger for us too

We need God to be right at the front of our minds

So that we are confronted by our own sinful nature

Confronted by the fact that we do do evil, whether or not we like to call it this

Confronted but not destroyed.

Because of God's amazing Grace.

And be in no doubt, when it comes to God's grace,

It's all about what God does and not what we do,

just as it's about what God does here and not about what David does.

David had plenty of time to turn to God and repent

But he doesn't.

He thinks he's got away with his sins and life is now back on track for him

But God has different ideas

And this is where, in the face of these awful sins, God's grace to David starts

It starts when God sends Nathan to David

To confront David with his sins

God doesn't leave his chosen king to his sinful life

He brings him to a point where he is confronted by his sin

Because it's only when we face up to our sin that we can receive grace

As Tim Keller says

God sees us as we are, loves us as we are, and accepts us as we are. But by His grace, He does not leave us as we are.

So the prophet Nathan comes to David

With what looks like a case for David, as king, to consider

A case about a rich man, a poor man and a lamb, as we heard read to us earlier.

And here we see the dazzling hypocrisy of David

Look with me at verses 5 and 6 of chapter 12

David burns with anger

He says the man who did this must die

A death sentence?

It's only a lamb for heavens sake

Then, when David's arrogance and hypocrisy are at their peak,

Nathan delivers the most devastating words David will ever hear

"You are the man"

Nathan holds up a mirror to reveal David's wickedness.

God gave and gave and gave to David

And yet David followed his own selfish desires

And his ultimate crime

Vs 9 He despised the word of the Lord

In the face of God's great promise to him

He committed such evil acts

And now it is God who is burning with anger

Look at verses 7-9

I anointed, I delivered, I gave, I gave, I would have given more

God has clearly treated David well beyond what he deserved.

But David didn't respond in kind.

David "despised ... did what was evil ... struck down ... took ... killed."

How can God forgive sin like this.

Well, it's what God is like and it's what God's grace is like.

Finally, David is broken by God's judgement.

And whilst his acknowledgement in verse 13 is brief

The whole of Psalm 51, written by David,

is a humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing.

David acknowledges his sin and opens himself up to punishment for his crimes

And the punishment due – well - death twice over

Because both adultery and murder carried death sentences

But instead we hear the most astonishing, confronting thing

Vs 13 “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.”

This is God’s shocking, confronting grace to David

A murderer, an adulterer, deserving of death

Yet his sins are wiped away, His punishment is dismissed.

How do you feel about this?

The fact that this adulterer, this murderer has been forgiven

How do you feel when you hear about mass-murderers and rapists who turn to Jesus

How do you feel knowing that they will one day stand before God

as clean and as holy as you will one day stand before Him

Our thoughts here are uncomfortable aren’t they

Because this is the confronting truth about grace

God’s grace is open to all who turn to him

No matter what they’ve done

We don’t get to judge who deserves grace and who doesn’t

And we must not compare what we perceive as someone else’s huge sin, against our little mistakes.

Because we must not see any sin as small or inconsequential

When we see our sins as small, our repentance will be small and we’ll see grace as small

Let me say that again

When we see our sins as small, our repentance will be small and we’ll see grace as small

But no sin is small

any sin is a huge problem

Because when we sin, we commit **evil** in the eyes of God

Sin is sin. There is no scale for it

and thankfully there is no scale for grace

And when God grants his grace to us

We should see this as being as shocking and as confronting as it was when he granted his grace to David

Because it’s as undeserved for us as it was for David

Praise God for his amazing, shocking and confronting grace.

But notice that God's forgiveness of David doesn't mean that **everything** is wiped clean.

God doesn't remove all the consequences of David's sin.

We heard about some of the future consequences in vs 10 and 11

That the sword will never leave David's house

And that someone close to David will openly commit adultery with his wives.

Awful consequences and we'll hear more about these in coming weeks

But the consequence of David's sins that hits us hard in this chapter

Is the fate of David and Bathsheba's son.

In our reading this morning we heard David begging God to spare his child's life.

But God did not.

It doesn't feel fair does it?

That a child should die because of the father's sin.

Well, it isn't fair.

But that is the reality of sin.

Our sinful actions wound ourselves and wound others.

In fact much of the time, it's the people around us who end up suffering with the consequences of our selfish behaviour.

But we must not take this to mean

that the struggles, the pains, the sufferings and the tragedies we've experienced

are a result of God punishing us for our sin.

Biblically speaking, that kind of a direct connection is far and away the exception rather than the rule.

But it is true that sin always has consequences.

Our world is broken. Life hurts.

We repent and we are forgiven and our sins are in effect whitewashed away.

But the consequences of sin remain,

And the ultimate consequence of sin can be seen at the cross

When another son died because of the sins of others

Do you know, the lyrics that pierce my heart most come from the song "How deep the Father's love for us"

It's the line "it was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished"

And that's the truth of the matter

It was my sin and your sin and David's sin that put Jesus on the cross

But then we also sing those wonderful words

*Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom*

This is the shocking reality of grace – of God’s grace to David

And God’s grace to us.

It wasn’t without cost; there was a price to pay

And that price was the life of God’s only son.

His wounds have paid my ransom, spared me from the penalty I deserve

Just as God spared David from the penalty he deserved.

God’s grace is so much greater than David’s sin.

and, again as Tim Keller says,

There is no evil that the father's love cannot pardon and cover, there is no sin that is a match for his grace.

Yet, as I’ve said, David has to face up to the consequences of his sin

And when his son falls ill, David seeks God with all his heart

To plead for mercy for his child

But, the child dies.

We want to question God here don’t we

But God is sovereign and works for his purposes not ours

When he says in vs 22

“who knows, The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.”

David is showing that he understands and accepts what God said to Moses back in Exodus

“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

David knows not to question God’s sovereign will

So instead of anger, we see from David the amazing, transforming result of grace

Instead of ranting and raging about his son’s death,

David goes to worship God,

Fully accepting of God’s will and trusting in God’s goodness.

Pray that God’s grace to us makes us as accepting and as trusting of God’s ways

And still God’s grace to David has not finished

His marriage to Bathsheba is blessed with another child

And by the end of the chapter (the bit we didn't read)

we see David leading his army to victory.

This is the complete restoration of the kingly figure of David

The Lord really has put away his sins completely

And in the same way that God acts to restore David,

God restores all who turn to him

As he will one day restore his kingdom

That promised kingdom that we've heard about in the last few weeks.

But for this final restoration there is still a need for a greater king.

One who always trusts God,

one who is without blemish,

one who denies sin and temptation

One who freely offers up his own perfect life

One who pays the penalty for David's sin, for yours and for mine

Amazing grace

Astonishing, shocking, confronting amazing grace

Amen