

**August 4, 2024**

**2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13a**

**Sermon Title: Exposed**

*<sup>26</sup> When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. <sup>27</sup> When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son.*

*But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord,*

*<sup>12</sup> <sup>1</sup> and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare and drink from his cup and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; <sup>6</sup> he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity."*

*<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; <sup>8</sup> I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah, and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. <sup>11</sup> Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and in broad daylight." <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."*

Please pray with me: God be in our heads and in our understanding. God be in our eyes and in our looking. God be in our mouths and in our speaking. God be in our hearts and in our thinking. Amen.

February 19, 2010: Who made the following statement to the media:

“I knew my actions were wrong, but I convinced myself that normal rules didn't apply. I never thought about who I was hurting, instead I thought only about myself,” he said. “I ran straight through the boundaries a married couple should live by.

“I thought I could get away with whatever I wanted to. I felt that I had worked hard my entire life and deserved to enjoy all the temptations around me. I felt I was entitled, and thanks to money and fame, I didn't have to go far to find them.”<sup>1</sup>

Does anyone know who made this most public confession? It was 34-year-old Tiger Woods.

Tiger was the golden child of golf. His story, his talent, his succession of victories in junior championships and college golf made him the one to watch when he turned pro at just 20 years of age. “The first 13 years of his career were marked by unparalleled success. Woods won 70 PGA tournaments, including 14 major championships, and spent a record amount of time ranked as the world's No. 1 golfer. He signed endorsement deals with some of the world's biggest brands, including one with Nike that was the largest in pro sports history at the time.”<sup>2</sup>

For a brief period of my life, Tiger (and Happy Gilmore) made me care about golf.

He had a beautiful wife, two kids, a mansion in Florida, fame, fortune and all that comes with it. There were a few tabloid rumors about infidelity, but who believes the tabloids? And then one night, in a bizarre car accident in front of his home, Tiger's golden boy image was forever tarnished.

His wife left him. His sponsors dropped him. His game suffered.

I can remember watching this press conference, where he made his most thorough confession. His mother sitting stoically behind him as he said, “I stopped living by the core values I was taught to believe in.” He also said, “My failures have made me look at myself in a way I've never wanted to before. It's now up to me to make amends. And that starts by never repeating the mistakes I've made. It's up to me to start living a life of integrity. It's hard to admit that I need help, but I do.”

The most unbelievable part of this press conference is that when it was over I felt sorry for him. I could see he was in pain. His humbleness and contrite heart endeared me to him even more.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/golf/8521060.stm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.biography.com/athletes/tiger-woods-sex-scandal-facts>

Our scripture reading for today records the moment the great King David, the golden child of Israel, is exposed. If you missed the sordid details of David's egregious behavior, you could read last week's sermon. Let's just say it's bad. Worse than Tiger bad. At least Tiger didn't put out a hit on anyone.

It's possible David thought he got away with it. He was king after all. His servants were loyal, they weren't going to say what they knew, or what they saw. Bathsheba didn't have a say as she was added to his harem, already well along in her pregnancy. It seemed for a moment; he was home free.

In walks the prophet, Nathan. Nathan was David's connection to God. Nathan was there, in David's court, to be that voice, that moral compass, that one fearless truth teller, that speaks for God.

We should all be so fortunate as to have someone in our lives that will tell us the truth and call us back to our senses when we lose our way.

God is not happy. God sends Nathan to David with a story. As Nathan tells the story, David gets sucked into it, so much so, that when the story ends with a terrible injustice, David is outraged. "That man deserves death," declares David. "You're the man," says Nathan. And before David can utter a word, Nathan starts in on a laundry list of things God gave David, and yet, David took from someone else.

Nathan is wise to engage David with a story. It takes great courage to speak truth to someone who can kill you. He is able to disarm David with the details, before he delivers the bombshell, "You're the man!"

David is awakened to his own transgression. "*I have sinned against the Lord,*" is all he can say.

The Book of Psalms attributes Psalm 51 to this moment in David's life. It is David's repentant plea to God. A broken man, David prays:

- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12)

He goes on to say:

<sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.

<sup>16</sup> For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

<sup>17</sup> The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:15-17)

The most striking thing about this story is that David has the capacity to be humbled. He is able to confess that he lost his moral compass. He lived in the delusion that he was above the law and could live without limits or accountability and one powerful story, told by a courageous prophet, shatters his delusion.

That's the story...but it leaves us at a crossroads. Where do we go from here?

We can, I suppose, enjoy the moment. There is something very satisfying in seeing the mighty fall from their thrones. But if delight in David's, or anyone's downfall, what does that say about us?

We can feel sorry for David and empathize with his shame and humiliation. The poor guy is broken. He's learned his lesson. Forgive and forget. Cut him some slack. Yet if we rush to forgive, we risk minimizing the pain of those who were victimized and we risk glossing over the gravity of his actions. While God's grace is as much for David as it is for us, David will still have to deal with the consequences of his actions.

We can, as many have done with this passage, appreciate the humanness of David, and God's love for deeply flawed people. There is some comfort in that, I suppose. Our sins and flaws do not define us or exempt us from being bearers of God's light and love. People are complicated and scripture lets us wrestle with their complexity. Because of this we can recognize our own human condition in the stories of scripture.

We could, with this passage, talk about the power of stories to engage our imaginations and to get past our intellectual defenses. When we listen to Nathan's story, it stabs us in the heart, it evokes an emotional response. It certainly did for David.

Jesus was a master storyteller. When he stood in to teach, he often used parables that his listeners could relate to. The parables Jesus told often had a twist. They invite conversation and engagement with the stories, which is how we grow. They also have a timeless quality.

Jesus once told a story about a rich man. It is in Luke 16. It starts off like this:

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.” (Luke 16:19-22)

The story goes on...but with just this much of it you get sucked in. Jesus used stories to speak to people’s hearts and to engage their brains. Rather than telling us the seven things we need to know, Jesus invites us to a journey of discovery and transformation. Stories are powerful and we see the power of Nathan’s story to impact David.

You can see that there are many things we can appreciate about our scripture reading for today.

My takeaway from Nathan’s story is the importance of having people in our lives that are not afraid to confront us about the impact of our actions. And equally important is having the capacity to be humble enough to grow and change. We may not have the power and privilege of Tiger or David, but we are capable of hurting others whether we intend to or not. We may not have taken the poor man’s lamb, but we have eaten it. We may not intend to cause anyone harm, but we participate in systemic injustice and actions that harm others. Any one of us can lose our way and get caught up in things that are destructive to ourselves and others.

We may not have a personal prophet, like David, but we do have each other. We have a safe and gracious space to examine ourselves and our actions. We have scripture, and our own stories, and the stories of those who too often are silenced that engage our hearts and minds. We come together because we want to grow and become more Christlike. We want to be more loving, more just, more giving – we want to be more.

We may not have as far to fall as David and Tiger, but we all fall short of perfection. We all have room to grow. May we be for each other, both prophets and priests, both truth tellers and comforters...may we be a community of love and grace.

