
You may remember Paul Harvey’s “the rest of the story.” . . . tell a story with some surprising twist at the end that enlightened something you didn’t know. . . and he would close with, “and now you know, the rest of the story.”

Today sermons is “the rest of the story,” the second part of the David Bathsheba saga which we began way back on July 28. To recap the first part of the story for those who weren't here, and for those who don’t remember. . .

Our story began with the observation that it was the time of the year when kings go out to war,

And David,
victor in countless battles,
slayer of Goliath,
the greatest of all of biblical Israel’s kings,
kicking back and taking it easy. . . watching Netflix and chillin’ . .

In short order, David covets a beautiful woman bathing on the roof next to the palace
Thus breaking the **10th commandment**, “**thou shalt not covet your neighbors wife.**”
He sends his men to find out who she is,
and surely they are not truthful about the king’s desires for her,
Thus they **bear false witness** against her and he **breaks the 9th commandment**,
“Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
David then sends men to get Bathsheba, stealing her out of her own house,
And he breaks the **8th commandment**, **thou shalt not steal.**
David then brings her to the palace and has non-consensual sex with her,
breaking commandment **#7: thou shalt not commit adultery.**
And she becomes pregnant with David’s child, (we know because we are told about her monthly cycle).

And David endeavors to cover his track by bringing her husband, Uriah the Hittite, home from the battle trusting he will spend the night with his wife. Uriah won’t help cover David’s tracks, and out of loyalty to his fellow soldiers who are camping out in the fields, he sleeps on the doorstep of the palace.

David goes to plan B, getting Uriah drunk, but it doesn't work either because Uriah remains loyal to his troops, and, in another nice tidbit in the story, he says he is loyal to the Ark of the Covenant, which is also out on the battlefield, leading the troops. And you remember what's in the Ark, right? Some Manna, Aaron's rod, **AND the tablets with the 10 commandments written on them!** A subtle or not so subtle jab? A sincere effort to remind David that he's hurtling pell mell down the wrong path?

Either way, David is deaf to the possible correction, unwilling to think of anyone others than himself, his own selfish, self-centered search for own self-gratification and glory.

When plan B doesn't work, he moves on to plan C: murder by proxy, enlisting others to ensure the death of Uriah the Hittite, sending a note by Uriah's very own hand, the message that will result in his death.

And Uriah has no plan B or C,
only plan A: faithfulness to God and the law of God.

Who among us might not have been tempted, realizing what was going on, save our own life? To just lose the message, make up some story, or just never deliver a message that General Joab was not expecting? I mean what would David do if Uriah returned from battle?

I'm sure he'd pull Joab aside and say, "Did you get my message?"

"What message?" Joab would ask.

And would David say, "you know, the one where I asked you to kill Uriah?"

LOL/haha.

But Uriah will not act **complicity** in the face of David's **duplicity**.

When it would be easy to take the low road,

– And who would blame him?! –

Uriah is faithful and takes the high road, even as it costs him his life.

And by orchestrating the killing of Uriah, David breaks the **6th commandments**, : **thou shalt not murder**.

As the story continues, we see a perplexing "**what if**" by David's Commander, Joab, who instructs the messenger how to tell the news of the death of Uriah the Hittite to King David. He first gives straightforward instructions to tell David about the death of Uriah in battle, but then, he interjects a lengthy and complex hypothetical about what David *might* say in response to the news of Uriah's death.

Since David doesn't respond with the comments that Joab speculates he might, what is going on? It's a strange

There is way more than I can unpack here so I will just cut to the chase and say that he tells the story of Jerubbabal, also known as Gideon, a judge on the days of the judges, and his

son, Abimelech. Abimelech is power hungry son, so much so that he killed 68 of his 69 brothers so that he could seize his father's ruling power all for himself.

He sought power ruthlessly, killing 1000s who rose up against him. It was in one besiegement of a city that a woman dropped a millstone on his head, mortally wounding him. (He didn't want to die at the hands of a woman, so he had his armour bearer run him through with a sword.)

So why this story, and why here? One plausible answer is that the writer injects this story first of all because it is as story of a son behaving badly, and as such, he dishonors his father and mother. Raw, murderous, self-serving exploitative abuse of others for his own gain. This dishonors any parent who tries to raise a child up right. And it seems an apt detail that it was a woman who brought him low and caused his demise? Just like David. . .

Informed of Uriah's death, David breezily observes that the sword devours first one and then another. Is he sad to have lost one of his "Mighty Men"? Seems like he's not bothered at all, and tells the messenger to encourage Joab.

As so David, like Abimelech breaks the **5th commandment** by dishonoring his father and mother with his murderous, lustful, and abusive behavior.

We are then told that Bathsheba mourns her husband, but when the prescribed time period is completed, David brings her to the palace and makes her his wife. And the reader is aware of the great duplicity of David. He observes the small legality of the appropriate mourning period at the same time he seems to be working his way through the 10 commandments.

He seems to be magnanimous by marrying a recently widowed woman, while he is the one that caused the death of her husband! Hollywood couldn't tell a more intriguing story of the human deceitfulness!

Back to the list of the commandments: we are up to **#4: remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy**. It might not seem like it applies, but here is the thing: the Deuteronomy 5 telling of the 10 Commandments ADDS something to the description of observing the Sabbath, namely: "*remember the sabbath to keep it holy because you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord God brought you out of slavery with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. . . !*"

In that description, the longest description of any of the 10 commandments, you see a profound principle, a commitment from God's own heart: **protect the weak**. Who is weaker than a slave? And what does David do? He not only *doesn't* protect the weak—Uriah, and ESPECIALLY Bathsheba, **he takes advantage of them. . . !** He is as inverted and upsidedown as you can get on the Sabbath principle of protecting the weak.

And then, the lightning bolt in the story:

"But the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

David has broken seven of the commandments with shocking ease. It's only when confronted by the Prophet Nathan that he sees that he has sinned against the Lord in sinning against Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah, and all the others along the way.

When Nathan tells a quaint little story about a poor man losing his one and only pet sheep to the whims of what a rich man wanted for dinner, David is outraged!

It's almost comical that he is enraged by a story, while he blithely has broken 7 commandments without a second thought. And so David vows, in the name of the LORD (!), to avenge this injustice four-fold, an exceeding rash and excessive pledge that doubled the usual repayment for stealing one of the flock from someone.

And in the vow to the Lord, **he breaks the 3rd Commandment:**
thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain.

And then, the prophet Nathan calls out David saying, "***You are that man!***" and lists all the ways he has dishonored the Lord. Most significantly, he specifies that it was by using the ***sword***, to his own personal ends.

David created an idol out of the sword. He trusts it to make things the way he wants things to be, he doesn't trust God. And so he breaks the **2nd commandment**, "**Do not make for yourself an idol.**"

And when there is no longer anywhere to hide, David realizes his horrifically wicked moral failure and confesses: "**I have sinned against the Lord.**" Yes, David, in breaking the other 9 commandments, you have broken the **1st commandment, the one about not having any other Gods, but God.** You made yourself a god, you disregarded the word of the lord, you went your own selfish way.

It's a realization that few, if any, narcissists and abusers of power are able to make.

Nevertheless, ***David repents.*** He writes Psalm 51, that classic penitential Psalm of Ash Wednesday, is his lament and petition to God for mercy. There is no more famous passage of contrition in the entire Bible.

¹ **Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;**

according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

³ **For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.**

⁴ **Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,**

so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.

¹⁰ **Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**

¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

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I began this two-sermon series with the observation that for some folks, David is an example for us to see how God can use a broken and flawed commandment breaker. That's only part of the story. Yes, David remains "beloved of God" the meaning of his name, but his glory days are *before* he goes on his callous, destructive, wicked, commandment-breaking rampage.

And the rest of the David story is a sad story of suffering, loss, and the tragic and painful consequences of David's 10-commandment-breaking behavior. As Nathan promised, the sword did not depart from David's house. David's child by Bathsheba dies. As does three other sons of David. A daughter of David is raped by her step brother. Sin has its consequences.

If we want hold up David as an example, we should honor him for his *repentance*. You want to hold up someone as a bright light of God's integrity? Then hold up the hero of the story, Uriah the Hittite.

He's the wrong kind of person,
but he has the right kind of character,
the right moral compass,
he has integrity, his light is YHWH,
and he shines the light of YHWH.
Uriah won't back down from doing what is right.
Uriah's way is God's way.

May we too live with the integrity of Uriah, the faithfulness to God,
And with the repentant spirit of David.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.