

Intro:

- Today is Palm Sunday... a day of rejoicing, because the people of Jerusalem were acknowledging their king, coming to them
 - Gentle, and riding on a donkey
- Yet this day is not only a day of rejoicing – it's also a day of profound sorrow, because the very people who rush into the streets in order to throw down their coats before him and to wave their palm branches... those very people are the ones who within five days will be shouting "crucify him!"
 - It demonstrates the fickleness of the human heart
 - It also demonstrates our incredible capacity for self-deception
 - Jeremiah the prophet said it best in 17:9
 - The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
- Today we are going to look at King David in his darkest hour – a time when he had so deceived himself, that he could commit the basest of crimes and yet excuse himself for it / to feel that he could get away with it / to feel, somehow, that the law of God didn't apply to him
- David's darkest hour began with sexual temptation / one of the strongest forces in our lives /
 - Our sexuality is an incredible force for good – it binds a married couple together in an intimate relationship that cements the bond of friendship, loyalty, caring & tenderness
 - it's also a force that can seem to overwhelm us / we get to a stage in life as teenagers when our hormones start to rage and it can feel like sex is an irrepressible hunger that wants to rule our lives / sometimes it feels like we think about sex more than anything else – later in the story we'll read about Amnon, David's oldest son and the natural heir to the throne / but he becomes so obsessed with his half-sister, Tamar, that he becomes literally sick inside with desire for her
- you see, the Bible is very straightforward about the issue of sex / it doesn't hide the failures, even of its heroes

- as the subtitle of this month's sermons expresses: "Flawed people, flawless God"
- This story expresses that truth like few others
- Today we're going to look at the failure of one of the bible's greatest heroes, King David, and the ramifications it left in his life
 - As we look at the story, we'll look at some of the principles that the Bible lays out for us in relationship to sexual sin
 - In doing so, we'll prepare ourselves to better deal with the sexual temptations that come our way
- But even more importantly, we will also see that the reason Jesus needed to go through his darkest hour (as we will remember on Good Friday) is because we, like David, need deliverance from **our** darkest hour

Steps that led to David's self-deception and his darkest hour:

1. He allowed himself to become separated from his **work** and from his **brothers**
 - a. David is a man of incredibly deep spiritual sensitivity / he loves God and expresses that love in deep ways / he longs for God's presence
 - b. he makes the right choice time and time again / he refuses to seek retribution against Saul, even though Saul overtly tries to kill him / he show loyalty to his friend Jonathan / he is humble in the eyes of the people and his friends
 - c. he is politically astute / a superb leader
 - d. And yet he gets caught in the web of sexual temptation / you'd think that if anyone would avoid that trap, it would have been David
 - e. Why did this happen?
 - f. A key is found in the opening verse of 2 Samuel 11

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

- g. David finds himself in a place that's unusual for him / an experienced warrior and man of action, not afraid of the heat of battle, intensely loyal to his men, but now at the time when kings go off to war (the end of the first planting season in Spring), he sits idly in the palace
- h. There are at least two things that are going on here
 - a. One is that very fact that he's **idle** –
 - a. Old proverb: An idle mind is the devil's workshop – certainly truth to that
 - b. When I was a young man, my roommates and I used to joke about how, when sexual temptation became strong, we needed to go out to the woodpile and split some logs
 - c. We were joking, but there was also truth in it – Sigmund Freud called it sublimation / mankind intuitively gets it: one way to deal with sexual temptation is to focus our attention on something else
 - d. David found himself in a place with no focus
 - b. But just as importantly, he's **isolated**
 - a. His brothers who could have held him accountable – or could have kept his focus pure – they are miles away
 - c. These twin factors of idleness and isolation are a devastating combination when it comes to sexual sin

2. He took a **second** look

² One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³ and David sent someone to find out about her.

- a. Job said "I have made a covenant with my eyes, not to look lustfully at a woman"
- b. Interesting – there's an old film, David and Bathsheba, starring Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward – the scene where David sees

Bathsheba bathing just basically shows David staring wistfully – a long, drawn out look.

- c. I think the film captures the heart of the matter – it’s allowing ourselves to dwell upon the possibilities – to drink in the image
- d. Of course, we have more opportunities today for drinking in the image than has ever been afforded to us
- e. There’s an old saying attributed to Martin Luther: “You can’t stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from building a nest in your hair.”
 - i. Sexual images and sexual temptation are birds flying over our head... more than ever before in our history
 - ii. We must face the reality of that temptation... but we can keep them from building a nest in our hair
 - iii. If you’re struggling with pornography – whether with pornographic images, or pornographic literature (more typically where women are drawn in) – make sure you enlist the help of a trusted brother or sister
 - iv. Pornography actually changes our brain chemistry and is deeply addicting / more than ever we need to build a defense for ourselves
 - 1. The covenant with our eyes must be a covenant with others in order to give it power / like Bonhoeffer so masterfully observed, when I speak of my temptation to a brother, I break its power / sin desires to have me alone with my own thoughts

3. He blew right through the stop signs

The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

- a. Fascinating, the first thing David learns about this beautiful woman that he has seen on the roof is that she’s the wife of one of his best

friends – the list of 30 valiant warriors who bonded with David in the desert while he was running from King Saul

- i. Not only is Bathsheba the wife of one of the thirty, she's also the daughter of Eliam, one of the thirty
- ii. And to go even further, her grandfather is Ahithophel, the David's most trusted political advisor / a man so renowned for his wisdom that his word was considered to be like the word of God
- b. He goes ahead and invites her to the palace, in spite of the fact that to do so is betraying his loyal companions
- c. Self-deception is a strange animal – I can imagine that at the beginning he's even able to fool himself into thinking that he can bring her in to talk about Uriah and his welfare, or about the welfare of her father who is undoubtedly also with General Joab and his men
- d. Interesting fact that most affairs take place with people who we know / many times people who we know well enough that the spouses are mutual friends
- e. There is a necessity of guarding ourselves from inappropriate closeness to the spouse of one of our friends

4. He convinced himself that he could **cover** his sin

So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." (*on screen*)

And Joab sent him to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

¹⁰ David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

¹¹ Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

- a. In this case, David calls Uriah in from the battlefield in order to disguise the paternity of the child / it’s an idea that actually may have worked, had Uriah not been such an honorable and loyal servant of the king
- b. Even when drunk, he has the moral fortitude to stand by his convictions and not sleep with his wife when his fellow soldiers were deprived
- c. So in a brutal disregard for friendship, let alone the abuse of power that David undertakes, David send Uriah’s death notice to the General, Joab, by Uriah’s own hand
- d. Covering the sin ultimately leads David into even deeper sin / that is the way sin works / it loves to stay undercover... in fact it manipulates most effectively exactly then
- e. The best way to deal with sin is to come out with it / quickly, painfully, but ultimately healingly
- f. The reality is, we can never hide from God
 - i. A passage that seems to be the understatement of the century

2 Sam 11:27 After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

- g. In this case, David, the one who was so concerned with being in God’s presence, somehow convinced himself that all was well. Bathsheba mourns the death of her husband, he takes her into his palace to be his wife, a rather quick pregnancy supposedly results and he hoped that none of the servants who were in the know would

talk and that the rest of the people weren't very good at counting to nine

- i. It's really quite something how easy it is for us to convince ourselves that God really didn't see something / or that if he did see something, he really doesn't care / or that if he does care, that he will let it slide
- ii. That's dangerous territory

Steps that led David to restoration:

1. David had loving, **courageous, confrontational** friends

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

- a. Fortunately, David had a friend who was willing to take his life into his hands
- b. But note how carefully constructed Nathan's rebuke was – it tells a masterful story that he was fairly certain would raise David's ire / his timing is perfect / Thou art the man
- c. This particular moment is actually a favorite of many great artists – Here Peter Frederick Rothermel (Thou are the man) and the second from Rembrandt – note the look of surprise in David's eyes – startled at being found out
- d. The best thing that could have happened to David was that Nathan confronted him and that he listened
- e. But the sentence is tough – extremely tough: (2 Sam 12)

¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' ¹¹ "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. ¹⁴ But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die.”

- f. We’ll read about the fallout beginning on Wednesday this week when the narrative turns to the rebellion of David’s sons
 - i. 4 of his sons suffer premature deaths:
 - ii. first Bathsheba’s newborn son,
 - iii. then David’s firstborn son, Amnon, at the hand of his brother, Absalom because he raped Absalom’s sister, his half-sister, Tamar;
 - iv. then Absalom, at the hand of David’s general Joab, because Absalom tried to steal the throne from David;
 - v. and finally, after David’s death, his son Adonijah at the hand of Solomon (because he aspired to the throne that had been assigned by David to Solomon)’
- g. One principle: God forgives sin, but the repercussions of sin in a family are often like ripples in a pond – when you throw in the rock, they just keep moving outward / God in his mercy can bring healing and grace, but the natural motion of the ripples is going to be there
- h. If you’re in a precarious place in regard to sexual sin, think about your kids!

- 2. He made no **excuses** for himself
 - a. In this passage, David simply says, “I have sinned against the Lord”

- 3. He turned to the only one who could truly help / this turning is called repentance / in fact, the word “repent” means “to turn”

1Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to your unfailing love;
 according to your great compassion
 blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

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

- He fully accepted his **guilt**.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

- He recognized **whom** he had offended.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place

- He admitted the deep **embeddedness** of his sin.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

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

- He desperately wanted to be **clean**.

Conclusion / personal application:

- On this Palm Sunday and as we anticipate the coming Good Friday, please remember that Jesus went through his darkest hour in order to deal with your darkest hour.
- The incredible, amazing, glorious, mind-rattling truth is that God covers our sin... he washes us and makes us whiter than snow.
- Some say that in our post modern era, the message of forgiveness no longer touches people... that we got past guilt a long time ago.
- I don't think that's true: That's because God built a sense of guilt into our very nature... we might run from guilt, but we cannot hide / our sense of having wronged another (and even more deeply, the sense of having wronged the God who made us) will catch up to us

So our response:

- I fully accept my guilt.
- I recognize whom I have offended.
- I admit the deep embeddedness of my sin.
- I desperately want to be clean.