

## Even the best make mistakes

A Sermon in the Perfectly Imperfect Series by Pastor Rob Hamilton  
Delivered on February 20, 2022

### 2 Samuel 11:1-15, 26-27 NRSV

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. 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. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. 5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." 6 So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." 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,[a] 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!" 12 Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home. 14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. 15 In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." 26 When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 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.

## Preamble

What happened? For those just joining in the tail end of this sermon series we've been following David from his youth as one God had called and anointed to lead the nation of Israel because he was a person after God's own heart. While David was never perfect -and God doesn't require perfection to be used by God- David practiced mercy and worship and devotion to God throughout his life. But now as we have heard from Cheryl's courageous reading of a dark Scripture David doesn't seem like the same person we've been following these past 5 weeks.

Today, we are going to explore what happens when we move God from the center of our lives and replace God with ourselves. We will also see how even when we make such a mistake that through repentance **God forgives our sin to free us from shame so that we can live faithfully** even in the midst of the consequences of our sin.

By the way, if this is your first time joining us, I am Rob Hamilton, Senior Pastor here and whether you are joining us online or onsite and you can checkout our worship archive page of [genevaumc.org](http://genevaumc.org) or our [YouTube channel](#) to see where this series has been and brought us to today.

I can't go any further today without your prayers. Will you please join with me in prayer and pray for me? Thank you.

## Prayer of Illumination

Jesus, we humbly gather today, nervous that our sin will be found out. Our sin might not hold a candle to David, but that crimson stain is no less upon us. Help us to remember that you are slow to anger, full of compassion and abounding in steadfast love. Speak to us through your servant David and use the words you have put in me to bring us all to greater faithfulness and greater love with you. Amen.

## Sermon

I think it is impressive that such a negative story of the greatest King of Israel has persisted. Perhaps that because both David and the author know that there is no place God's light can't reach; there is no dark corner or cavern of our lives or souls that God's light can't shine. Living in the dark is not really living, its hiding and what was in the dark comes to light, life can really begin. But maybe I am getting ahead of my self.

Let's start at the beginning. Up until this point David has been nothing but successful. He might not have always been squeaky clean, but the Bible suggests he always been faithful. He's sought to act honorable and justly with friends and enemies alike. But here, at the beginning of what historians call the Throne Succession Narrative, David is going to change drastically. We are going to see how adultery and deceit, lead to murder and how all the violence stains David in his present moment and next week we will see how it spreads into David's future.

Let me suggest that the major shift that has occurred in the David story from God being at the center and now David is at the center. Remember, when we first met David that story began with God sending Samuel to anoint David. David didn't have a single line in that story. But now we have a story that begins not with God, but with David and God barely gets a line in the story. Cheryl, read that it was was the spring of the year, when kings go out to war, but David the mightily warrior and victor king isn't going out. He's gonna send his favorite general, Joab in his place. This is David's first misstep.

David is called and anointed by God to lead God's people. And now, with no explanation, David isn't going to lead. David was successful because God was at the center of his life and leading him to the throne, through every threat and battle and now David decides he doesn't have lead. He doesn't have to be God's anointed. He can just be the king. With his royal court and the men who look up to him off to battle, David can just take a break. Do what he wants. Pretend that God doesn't have a call upon his life. We don't know what David was thinking or why he choose to not go into battle, but its gonna set him up for his second misstep.

But before we get the that one, do we think that God doesn't have a claim on us? Do we think God isn't interested in our lives? Last week, we saw how much God desires our hearts to be a heart full of worship, but if our hearts are full of our own concerns, our own desires, our own sense of importance, there isn't much room for God, right? Maybe we can relate a bit to David?

As we read, one night David is up late and in his idleness, he heads up to the roof of this palace and he happens to notice a woman bathing on her roof. Instead of treating Bathsheba with dignity and giving her some privacy for her ritual cleansing, David violates her dignity by not only watching her, but then becoming infatuated with her. He gets all creepy and sends one of his house servants to find out about her. David's married. He's a king and kings tend to take what they want, but David is God's anointed and he has resisted temptation to take for his advantage many times before. Maybe he's tired, bored, depressed, lonely but instead of turning to things that honor God and express love of neighbor.



Instead of asking for help. Instead of taking time to pray or worship or turn to God, David's gonna make a series of missteps that are going to bring such agony.

I almost want to shout.. don't do it David! Have you been to that moment? It seemed like everything was gonna be fine. No one will find out? Your desires were driving you and somewhere inside of you there is something telling you don't do it... but then you do it anyway.

This is probably where some would start scapegoating Bathsheba. If she hadn't been bathing when David was on his roof in the middle of the night when he should have been out to war or at least asleep then David wouldn't have done what happens next. Let me be clear. Bathsheba is a victim here. David is 100% in the wrong.

David's next misstep is that he sends messengers to get Bathsheba, knowing very well his probably going to violate her. He might lie to himself that he just wants to meet her or get to know her, but he's already violated her dignity through his voyeurism and now he's going to violate her body and send her away knowing that his abuse of power will cover up his transgression against her, against her husband, against his nation, against his God. Except that while David can control a great deal with his kingly power, he cannot control Bathsheba's body. She's pregnant from the assault and there is no question that it is his.

One would think this would be enough and that David would make things right. He's God's anointed right. Instead of fixing this situation by taking responsibility and repenting, he's

going to abuse his power some more and with a conniving plan to cover this up. Bringing home Bathsheba's husband from battle with hopes that Uriah will unwitting help David cover up his sin with marital relations. Except we learn that Uriah is more like that younger David. He's a man of honor and loyalty and despite David's multiple attempts to cover up the rape, Uriah seeks to live by honor and so David has to make things worse with a series of more missteps.



David decides to have Uriah murdered. David writes up an order to set Uriah in a position of battle that will kill him and others. David seals it and cruelly makes Uriah carry his own death sentence back to the front lines.

It can be pretty amazing how crafty and cruel we can be when we are threatened with being found out. We can lay waste to the innocent. We can be so laser focused on doing what we can to stay in the dark that we have no concern for any collateral damage our decisions have on others.

Sure enough, David's plan works. Uriah and his fellow troops were killed in battle and when Bathsheba was done mourning Uriah, David does the 'noble'

thing by bringing Bathsheba into his household and raising what most will assume as Uriah's son as his own... except we know the truth... and so does God and God is displeased... and Nathan, the trusted prophet, knows the truth too.

It can feel nice to know that you're gotten away with something. That sense of relief and self-justification. We all do it. We might not be rapists or murders. We might just hold an opinion that has hurt someone and instead of reconciliation we seek justification. We might have done what it takes to get ahead and the cost of other's dignity or well-being and use our success as justification of the collateral damage. We just sweep that dirty stuff in our lives under the rug or set our indiscretions in dark closet and lock the door and move on.

That's what David did. He was feeling pretty good and kept moving on. Until the prophet Nathan exposes the entirety of David sin. Nathan uses a beautiful but tragic story about a rich man stealing a poor man's only beautiful sheep to help David self-convict and fortunately David doesn't dig in. Remember how I said there is no place that God's light can't reach. David could have scurried and had Nathan silenced or killed but David realized his sin. God's now back at the center. David confesses, he steps into the light, he mourns his sin, he repents. God forgives David. God will not hold this sin against David, but because he has truly sinned, forgiveness doesn't come with a get-out-of-consequences free card. Nathan tells David that all the indignity and violence that David carried out in the lives of Bathsheba and Uriah will be listed upon his own family and next week we



will see how the tragedy of his sin continues.

But I want close by inviting us to let God's light shine into the dark places of our lives. I want us to stop striving to not be found out, to stop hiding in the dark corners, to stop covering up our indiscretions, to stop taking what does belong to us, to stop pushing God to the edges and to remind us that God is slow to anger, compassionate and abounds in steadfast love. We may not be free of consequences, but instead of making it worse by continuing the cover up we can be forgiven and set free if we repentant. If we grieve the mess we have made and the wrong we have committed against God and others. **God forgives our sin to free us from shame so that we can live faithfully** even in the midst of the consequences of our sin.

Yes, God forgives our sin. God can free us from our shame so that we can live faithfully. If you are ready - or even if you are not sure you are ready to come into the light - I invite you to pray with me:

*God, you already know what we have done or left undone. You already know what we're keeping in the dark. Give us the courage to stop the cover up and to let your light shine. Free us from our shame and forgive us our sin for we are truly sorry and want to live as your faithful people. Be merciful upon us and prepare our hearts to face what ever may come next that we might be faithful to the life and love of your son Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.*