

Fallen Heroes Sermon Series  
David - 2 Sam. 12:1-15  
July 18, 2021  
Rev. Kory Wilcoxson

We're not big on kings in this country. In fact, we're a country specifically because we didn't like having a king. The only kings we worship now are Elvis and Burger King. But in the Bible, kings were a staple in Israelite history. And the king of all kings in the Hebrew scriptures was King David. Israel's best days were under David's rule, and we're told in Matthew's gospel that Jesus is a direct descendant of David. So, King David occupies a lofty space in the pantheon of biblical heroes.

It's a title he's earned. Plucked from the fields as a shepherd and anointed by God as Israel's next king, David makes a name for himself by confronting and killing the Philistine giant Goliath. That earns David quite a reputation among the people, but also a lot of resentment from the current king, Saul, who doesn't take too kindly to David's popularity and career trajectory. As you can imagine, knowing the identity of the next king doesn't sit too well with the current king.

So, Saul tries to kill David, but is not successful, and eventually David does indeed ascend to the throne. He's an immensely popular king, ushering in a time of prosperity for Israel and all its inhabitants. Gas prices were at an all-time low, unemployment was down, and the Israelites swept the medals and the summer Olympics. All hail King David! A skilled musician, he even wowed the judges on "Israel's Got Talent" with his lute-playing and psalm-writing. If ever there was a hero in the Bible, it was David. And yet, David is also known for committing one of the best-known sins in all of scripture.

Aside from the original sin of Adam and Eve, probably no sin in the Bible is more well-known than David and Bathsheba. That's not necessarily something you want to be well-known for. That's like getting on TV – in an episode of "Cops." This doesn't make David any worse of a person than you and me; we're talking about one of the greatest kings in history, not some wild man or social deviant. The only difference between our sins and his is that his were published in the best-selling book of all time. Really, he's no different than us.

David has been incredibly successful, but it wasn't enough for him. How could a man who had everything possibly want more? David would be about 50 now, so maybe he was hitting a mid-life crisis. He's started using Rogaine, had a treadmill installed in the royal workout room, eating a lot more bran. Maybe he needed something to help him feel young again. When we stop being happy with what God gave us, we become vulnerable to thinking we need something more.

One night while his army is off to war, David is walking around on his roof and sees a woman bathing herself. Now, David was a passionate man – passionate about serving God, passionate about leading the kingdom, and passionate about his passions. David is the king, he can have anything he wants, and at this moment, staring right into the face of temptation, David decides to not look away. Just because David was a faithful man of God doesn't make him immune to temptation. When we make the decision to not turn away, we have to be prepared to face whatever comes of it.

So he asks a servant about this woman, and the servant says, “This is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah.” You hear what the servant is doing, right? He knows that David is thinking about more than baking a loaf of bread for this neighbor, so he tactfully tries to snap David back to reality. “Yes, King David, that’s Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife. Uriah is her husband. She’s married. To Uriah. He’s her husband.” But David doesn’t hear him. He’s already decided to not turn away.

So David brings Bathsheba to the palace and sleeps with her, and she conceives. Now some guys in this situation might panic. But not David. David is a man of action, a problem-solver. He didn’t get to where he was without dealing with a few messes. And this situation, this matter of adultery and an unborn child, was merely another problem to be solved. So the cover-up begins.

That’s usually our first reaction when we do something wrong; we try to cover it up and hope that no one will notice. I once ran my dad’s car off the road because I was driving fast to impress my date, and I damaged the car’s front end. I spent the next three days trying to keep my dad from looking at the front of his car; he was amazed at how much help I needed putting things in the trunk. Then one morning when I woke up my dad said, “Boy, what did you do to my car?” And in a moment of panic I said, “Uh, I hit a bucket!” As if there are buckets just lying around the roads of Southern Indiana. To this day, I think Dad still believes I hit a bucket.

That’s what sin does to us: the guilt of our wrongdoing causes us to try and cover it up, heaping lie on top of lie until we’ve dug a hole out of which we can’t escape. David’s cover-up is especially insidious. If he can get Uriah and Bathsheba to spend a romantic weekend together, Uriah might believe the child was his own. The only problem was that Uriah was out fighting a battle and was sworn to celibacy until the fight was over. David orders him back to Jerusalem and tells him two different times to go show his wife how much he has missed her, but Uriah, being a loyal soldier, refuses to sleep with her. Finally, David resorts to killing Uriah. He sends him back to the battlefield with a note for his general to put Uriah on the front lines and then draw away from him, assuring his death.

You see what has happened here? David didn’t start out to be a murderer. But his unwillingness to turn away led to temptation which led to adultery which led to deceit which led to murder. James 1:14-15 says, “One is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.” Most problems don’t start all at once; they start a little at a time, and each time we choose not to turn away, they grow to be much more deadly.

Once, at a committee meeting, someone had provided some snacks, including a big bowl of grapes, which was placed very close to me. This is not a good thing. I love grapes. As the meeting started, I ate one, then another, then another. And about halfway through the meeting, I reached for a grape, and they were gone! I had sat there and ate the whole bowl. So I took my napkin and placed it over the bowl – my own version of a cover-up. Someone asked, “What happened to all the grapes?” And I said, “Someone must have eaten them all!” I didn’t plan on eating the whole bowl; I thought I could just eat a few and then stop.

The problem with little sins is that we think they are manageable; we think we can rationalize our way through them. “This is such a little thing, it won’t hurt anyone, no one

will know, it will only be this once.” But the reality is that every time we choose not to be honest with God about a sin, every time we choose not to turn away, we commit more sins to try and cover it up, furthering our dishonesty, until before we know it, we’ve sat there and at the whole bowl of grapes. We didn’t plan on it, it just happened that way, and we couldn’t stop it.

David finally does break his cycle of sin, thanks to the brave actions of the prophet Nathan, who realizes that for this deception to end, David has to be held accountable. Nathan holds up a mirror to David in the form of a parable, which I will read for you now from Samuel 12 (read scripture). David falls for it hook, line, and sinker. David sticks his head right into the noose and Nathan gives it a pull: “You are the man!” I wonder what went through David’s mind at that point. I guess the weight of what he had done finally hit him, and he responds with the words that I believe save his life: “I have sinned against the Lord.”

Those are not easy words to say. It’s a lot easier to make excuses, to deflect the blame, to write it off by saying, “It just happened.” But you can’t un-ring a bell. To say these words means admitting that we’re wrong. It means admitting that we’ve messed up and fallen short. It means swallowing our pride and acknowledging that we have hurt someone else and hurt God. And yet the only way we accept the forgiveness offered by God is by acknowledging our need for it. No words can bring more healing and reconciliation than those words. “I have sinned against the Lord.”

One of the most powerful psalms is the one read earlier, Psalm 51. It was written by David after his encounter with Nathan. You can hear the anguish in his voice as he pleads, “Create in my a clean heart, O Lord!” David knows that true forgiveness comes from God, the one who is able to wash us clean and restore us. No matter what we’ve done, from eating all the grapes to committing adultery and murder, forgiveness is found in God. If we are willing to humble ourselves and ask for it.

Is David a hero? You could make an argument either way. Yes, because of his accomplishments. No, because of his sin. But I would argue that David is a hero, not for his successes, but for how he handled his failure. I think this is the greatest reason of all. David was a hero because of this moment of honesty, when he stopped covering up and instead uncovered his heart, when he acknowledged who he was and what he had done, when he turned away from his sins and turned toward God. We need more people in this world who aren’t afraid to hold up their hand and say, “My bad. I did that. That’s my fault. How can I make it right?” Being a hero isn’t just about strength; it’s also about vulnerability. So, I lift David up to you today as a hero, albeit it a fallen one. May we learn from David what being a hero really means.