

# “YOU Are The Man”

## 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:10, 13-15

June 16, 2013

4th Sunday After Pentecost

“You da man!” Remember that corny cheer at sporting events back in the 80’s and 90’s? I remember hearing it shouted by a gallery of fans at a golf tournament after someone hit the ball, but I’m sure it was at other sporting events, too. It was supposed to be a compliment. Everyone wanted to be “da man”, the competitor who was superior to all others. I’m sure that athletes liked to hear it (at least until it became overused and corny). After all, who doesn’t want to feel superior? In our Old Testament reading for today, the prophet Nathan, uses essentially the same phrase in addressing King David, but with the exact opposite meaning.

Some people say that the Bible is a dull and boring book. Nothing could be further from the truth with regard to the story that leads up to our text for today. It has all the elements of a modern day soap opera - sex, conspiracy, and murder.

One spring evening, King David looked down from the top of his palace where he was walking to where a young woman was bathing on the roof top of her house. Bathing on the roof was not unusual. It was probably very warm and houses did not have formal bathrooms at that time. One would not usually be seen doing this, either. However, since the palace stood above all the houses in Jerusalem, King David had a perfect view. And the sight of a beautiful woman bathing in the nude aroused feelings of lust within him.

Rather than walk away from these sinful feelings, King David took action. He used his authority as king to have this woman, Bathsheba, brought to him. He had sex with her because he was the king and could do anything he wanted. No woman would dare refuse him. Later, Bathsheba sent word to David that she was pregnant from their tryst.

Naturally, as we in America know, the illicit sex life of a nation's leader can cause quite a scandal, especially when it involves a king who rules under the direct choosing and authority of God. Yet, rather than confess his sin, David tried to cover it up. Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, was a soldier in Israel's army which was at war. David immediately had Uriah sent home on leave and tried to encourage him to enjoy a little "R& R" with his wife so that people would think the child she was carrying was her husband's. However, Uriah spoiled the plan by refusing to do that. He felt it was unfair for him to be comfortable at home with his wife when his fellow soldiers were camping out in the fields. David even got Uriah drunk in hopes of lowering his inhibitions and increasing his libido, but Uriah still refused to go and be with his wife.

Since Uriah refused to be part of the cover up, David had to come up with another way to deal with his sin. So, he conspired with Joab, the commander of Israel's army, to get Uriah killed. When Uriah returned to the front, David sent a message for Joab back with him. The message said, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." (2 Sam. 11:15). Joab followed orders and Uriah was killed in the fighting.

When David heard of Uriah's death, he must have felt relief. He was going to get away with this. After the period of mourning was over, David brought Bathsheba to his home and she became his wife. She gave birth to a baby which everyone assumed was Uriah's son. How nice David must have appeared to his people: taking care of the widow of one of his fallen soldiers. David not only thought he got away with his sin, but had gained some political points, as well, for being such a kind and caring leader.

Does all of this sound familiar (other than sounding like a plot from a modern soap opera or movie)? Isn't this how we all behave? Aren't we all like King David? We get thoughts and desires in our minds which we KNOW are contrary to God's will. They may not be thoughts of adultery, but thoughts about something we may say, how we use our money, what we look at on TV, movies, and the internet, or what we do on a Sunday morning.

Instead of dismissing these thoughts or walking away from these desires, we take action on them, like David did. We not only *think* of the sinful behavior, but we engage in it. We do it even though we know that it is wrong and we enjoy it.

When there is the danger of being exposed, we do just what King David did. We cover it up by lying, pushing off the responsibility for our actions on someone else, or doing whatever it takes to divert attention away from ourselves.

Then, we reach a state where we are perhaps most of the time. We think we've gotten away with it. We get this false sense of security when we are no longer in danger of being exposed. Time has passed. No one has noticed – not my parents, not my teacher, not my boss, not my friends, and not even my pastor. The blame for our actions has been given to another. We breathe a great sigh of relief.

But the Lord always notices, even when others don't or can't. He sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan told a story about "someone's" sin. A rich man had many sheep and a poor man had only one ewe lamb. Yet when the rich man desired sheep to feed his guest, he took the poor man's ewe lamb. David is livid with anger over "someone else's" sin and pronounces a harsh judgment, "As the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (2 Sam 12: 5-6)

We are the same way. When we hear about sin, we tend to get very angry. We are upset over the terrible things that are done and with the people who do them. And, when it comes to "them", we are very quick to judge and very harsh in our judgments against them...until the tables are turned.

After David experienced his self-righteous anger and issued his sanctimonious judgment against some man who had done wrong, Nathan turned to him and said, "YOU are the man!" You, David, are the sinner! God gave you everything. He anointed you king, helped you defeat Saul, gave you his

palace and wives, and if that wasn't enough, he would have given you more. But, no, you despised the Lord's commands, stole Uriah's wife, and killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."

The word of God's law and judgment comes to each of us, either through the written Word of God or the voice of a pastor speaking God's Word, and says the same thing, "YOU are the man! YOU are the woman! YOU are the sinner! Don't condemn and judge others! God has given you so many good things, yet you have despised the word of the Lord, done what was wrong, tried to cover it up, and think that you have gotten away with it. YOU are the ones who are guilty!"

And how do we react to that kind of condemnation? Usually, we don't like it. As a pastor, I've had people get angry with me for speaking God's Word which condemned their actions even when they admitted I was right. We tend to blame others for our actions so that the blame doesn't rest on us. We make excuses to show that the behavior was not our fault. Someone "made us do it." We are genetically predisposed to certain behavior. We have a disease or an addiction. Anything to shift the blame from us to something else. We make rationalizations. We try to argue with the Bible, with the pastor, or with God that we were right and they were wrong. Premarital sex is okay, people say, and the Bible is outdated. Homosexuality is good and the Bible has been misinterpreted. Cheating on our school work or our income tax is ok because everyone else is doing it.

King David handled it differently though. When confronted by his sin, David did not get angry, make excuses, spread blame, or make rationalizations. He simply said, "I have sinned against the LORD." Notice -- he takes full responsibility by saying "I" sinned, not "they" made me. He admits his guilt by saying "I *sinned*", not "I made a bad decision" or "I made an inappropriate choice". And he recognizes to whom he is responsible, "I have sinned *against the Lord*." While he certainly hurt Uriah and Bathsheba and his own family, his ultimate guilt was against the Lord Himself.

When we think of all the evil David did and because we are conditioned to living in a society where we have to defend ourselves or blame someone or something else, we may think that David was foolish for what he did by so openly admitting his sin. Surely, the Lord is going to come down

hard on him. But he doesn't. After simply and completely confessing his sin without blame, rationalization or justification, Nathan responds to David by saying, "The LORD also has put away your sin. You shall not die." The Lord immediately and unconditionally forgives David and takes away the eternal consequences of his sin. Yes, there would be disciplinary action -- consequences for his action. The baby son who had just been born would die. That would be a terrible loss for David. Yet His guilt was taken away and His sin was completely forgiven.

The Lord does the same for you and me. When we realize our sinfulness and simply confess our sins without trying to justify them, make rationalizations for what we have done, or blaming others, the Lord immediately and unconditionally forgives us because of the death of another Son – God's own Son. It doesn't matter how bad the sin is which you have committed, either in the eyes of God or the eyes of the world. It is forgiven...NOW! It doesn't matter how often you have committed that particular sin - one time or a thousand times. It is forgiven...NOW!

The blood of Jesus Christ covers any and all sins that we commit. We are forgiven because of God's mercy and not because of our ability to sidestep responsibility for our sins, make excuses for our sins, or do better the next time. That is what Simon the Pharisee could not understand in our Gospel reading today. He thought the route to justification with God was based on his ability to keep the Law. He had done his best and probably had done good, but the woman who had led a sinful life came before Jesus, having failed miserably. Yet she recognized her sin and repented. And Jesus forgave her, immediately and completely.

When you are confronted by sin in your lives, don't deny it or become angry with the one who confronts you. Don't waste your time justifying your actions or making excuses for them. You'll never find peace that way. The guilt will always be there. Rather, like David, simply say, "I have sinned against the Lord," and leave it at that.

Hear the pastor, like Nathan, say to you, "The LORD also has put away your sin. You shall not die." Your sins, whether many or few, great or small, will be forgiven immediately and completely

because Jesus Christ died and has already paid the price for them. You don't have to do a thing. Your best efforts at being a modern day Pharisee and trying to "make up" for your sins or do better the next time are unnecessary and will fail anyway. Rather, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, given to you at your baptism, covers you completely when you stand before God's judgment.

Does it mean you will "live happily ever after" in this life? No. You will still suffer the consequences of your sin like David did. If you break the rules at home, you may still get grounded. If you cheat in school, you may still fail or be suspended. If you break a civil law, you may still go to jail. But, before God, no matter WHAT people think, you will be fully forgiven and completely restored to His presence. All guilt and eternal consequences will be done away with.

"You da man!" was a corny sports saying that once indicated superiority. In this context, it's a saying which indicates guilt and responsibility. With regard to all situations where you have done wrong or failed to do right, it is not your parents' fault and how they raised you; it is not the fault of your genetic make up; it is not the fault of someone who made you do wrong; it is not the fault of ancient laws and moral standards which need to be updated. With regard to sin, "you are the man!" It's your fault. Yet remember Jesus Christ. HE is the man -- the man who lived perfectly for you; the man who died in place of you; the man who has risen and lives eternally with you. You are forgiven before God because of Him. You are restored to God because of Him. You are declared to be righteous and holy in the sight of God because of his perfect righteousness and holiness which covers you. You are the man! You are the woman! You are the forgiven sinner! That's no corny sports' jargon. That's the truth. Amen.