4-10 August 2024 God confronts who we are

2 Samuel 11: 26- 12:13a

**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.

### Nathan Rebukes David

12 The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. 2The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, 3but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

4“Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

5David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! 6He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

7Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10Now, 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.”

**Bible notes**God’s silence is broken. The death of Uriah did not solicit mourning or regret from King David; nor did Uriah receive any military honours. However, it was a time of lament and despair for Bathsheba and possibly Uriah’s family (v.26). Fasting might typically accompany the mourning period (2 Samuel 1:11-12), but a pregnant Bathsheba would risk herself and her baby to honour her husband this way. The king, still with control over events, made Bathsheba his wife.

God, from whom no sin is hidden, now challenges the king’s sense of justice and righteousness. Through the prophet Nathan, God’s displeasure is pronounced. The shepherd king has strong convictions about the actions of the rich man. He was once the poor shepherd in a rich man’s household (that of King Saul). The profound injustice and perverse hospitality that cost the host nothing, and the poor man everything, rightly kindled deep anger in David. Using his royal prerogative, he pronounced restitution and death to the offender, which is consistent with Israelite laws (Exodus 22:1; 21:12-14).

It was self-condemnation! David was the unreasonable, rich and perverse man who showed no pity (v.7). A generous God testifies to his faithfulness (vv.7-8) and willingness to have doubled his gifts if David wanted more. To despise God is to be dissatisfied with his provision and to use unscrupulous ways to gain more (vv. 9-10). Therefore, God considered David’s indiscretions evil, which must always be rejected. Further, they must not be trivialised with ‘but for the grace of God go I’. In verse 9, there are two mentions of Uriah’s murder that bookend David’s marriage to Bathsheba. The ‘word of the Lord’ here indicates the Law of God. When the king breaks God’s laws, it sets a precedent for the nation to do the same. Yet God’s confrontation with David dispenses both justice and mercy (vv.11-13).

### ****Reflection****

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the most powerful voices calling for the truth about how decisions were made – and who in power had broken the pandemic rules – came from those who had lost family members to the virus. Individuals would interrupt politicians on a walkabout or publicity-shoot and outline their experience, their sacrifices and their suffering. Political rhetoric faltered in the face of these accounts. God confronts David with his mistakes; we should not underestimate the power of our own stories when God speaks through them.

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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Questions

* Who is allowed to see the real you?
* Are there aspects of your life and personality you try to hide from God?
* What helps us to accept ourselves as we are?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

### A prayer of praise

Thank you, Father, for stopping us in our tracks  
when we are stubbornly plunging into darkness.  
You shine your light on our sins, and we are revealed  
in all our foulness and foolishness.  
Thank you for forgiving us when we truly repent.  
We praise you for your love and understanding,  
which are beyond our limited comprehension,  
and for the generosity of your forgiveness,  
so powerful we can hardly take it in.  
All praise and thanks be to you, now and forever.  
**Amen**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Holy Lord, you are just and true.    
We receive your forgiveness and carry it with us this week.    
Give us courage to confront those in power who have forgotten to act with your love and care. Inspire us to speak in a way that will help them to hear your voice and live according to your love.