

## 2. David: Crimes and Repentance

### *Questions to begin*

- What kind of work or projects do you do in the Spring?
- Did you have any pets in your home when you were growing up? If not, did you want to? If you did, which was your favourite?

***The Reading: 2 Samuel 11:1-18, 26-27; 12:1-7, 9, 13; Psalm 51:1-12***

### ***David Commits Adultery with Bathsheba***

1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. <sup>3</sup>David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' <sup>4</sup>So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her... Then she returned to her house. <sup>5</sup>The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.'

6 So David sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' and Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup>When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup>Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. <sup>9</sup>But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

<sup>10</sup>When they told David, 'Uriah did not go down to his house', David said to Uriah, 'You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?' <sup>11</sup>Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.' <sup>12</sup>Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, <sup>13</sup>David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

### *David Has Uriah Killed*

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

<sup>15</sup>In the letter he wrote, ‘Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.’

<sup>16</sup>As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. <sup>17</sup>The men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. <sup>18</sup>Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting...

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. <sup>27</sup>When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

### *Nathan Condemns David*

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, <sup>12</sup>and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, ‘There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had very many flocks and herds; <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.’

<sup>5</sup>Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, ‘As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; <sup>6</sup>he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.’

7 Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel... <sup>9</sup>Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites... <sup>13</sup>David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’

### *Psalm 51 A Prayer of Repentance*

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
 according to your steadfast love;  
 according to your abundant mercy  
 blot out my transgressions.  
<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
 and cleanse me from my sin.  
<sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
 and my sin is ever before me.  
<sup>4</sup> Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
 and done what is evil in your sight...  
<sup>6</sup> You desire truth in the inward being;  
 therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
 wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...  
<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
 and put a new and right spirit within me.  
<sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence,  
 and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
 and sustain in me a willing spirit.

### *First Impression*

Was there anything that surprised, impressed, delighted or challenged you in this reading?

### *Questions for Reflection*

- Which of David's crimes receives more attention by the narrator of 2 Samuel? Which is emphasised by Nathan (12:9)?
- David tells Uriah he is going to send him back to his army unit the next day (11:12) but doesn't (11:13). What's going on here?
- The narrator leaves open the possibility that Uriah learns about David's adultery with Bathsheba. Some people in Jerusalem know about it (11:3-5),

and Uriah might have picked up gossip about it on his return to Jerusalem. Assume that Uriah knew. Why, then, would he refuse to go home? Why would he say to David what he does in 11:11? Why would he deliver David's instructions to Joab?

- Uriah, a Hittite, does not share in God's covenant with the people of Israel, yet he gives a better demonstration of the covenant loyalty that God teaches his people than David, who is the official leader of the covenant people. How can this be?
- David abuses his power as king. What other kinds of power are people tempted to misuse? How can a person deal with the temptation to use power for selfish purposes?
- Think of a situation in which someone corrected you. Was the correction well-founded? Was it easy to take? Why or why not?
- Think of a situation in which you came to see that you needed to repent in some way. What helped you recognise this? How did you pray? How did you experience God's forgiveness? What effect has this had on you? How should this experience guide you today?
- As a reader it's easy to be angry at David for his sins, just as it was easy for David to be angry at the rich man in the parable. Why is it easier to see other people's sins than our own? What can be done about this problem?

### *Closing Prayer*

Pray Psalm 51, either in the shortened version here or in its entirety, or one of the other psalms of repentance (6; 32; 38; 102; 130; 143).

Glory be.....