

The Thing That Displeased the Lord

2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26-27; 12:1-9

11 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. 3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. 27 When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord,

12 and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds; 3 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 meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler 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." 5 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; 6 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, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; 8 I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. 9 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."

Psalm 51

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- ⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;^[a]
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Good morning, church. We are going to **begin** talking about trauma today. As people on high alert for any number of reasons – personal, historical, generational, we need to understand trauma...and the Bible offers us a number of stories that **can** be opportunities for healing our stuff. Each one of us carries trauma in our bodies. Trauma simply means wound, and it is anything that happens too often, too soon, or too much without enough of something to repair it, heal it. I am grateful to my teacher, NYT best-selling author Resmaa Menakem, who is helping me bring his wisdom on racialized trauma to my work in the church.

We all carry the cuts, visible and invisible, of people and events that have harmed us too much, too soon, too often...without enough of something to repair. The text we will walk with this morning is traumatic. In the telling, you may find

your body gripping, bracing, tightening up. I want to encourage you, and I will remind you, to keep coming back to your deep breathing. Also, pay special attention to your body. There is evidence to support that the aches and pains we feel in our bodies come from lifetimes of bracing, gripping, and resisting the harm of racism, sexism, trans and homophobia but also from dealing with a serious illness, the death of someone close, the breakup of a significant relationship, losing a job or leaving a community that's very important to you. This harm impacts those who experience it and also those who witness it. Trauma lives in the body and trauma gets healed in the body.

So, I invite you to look over your shoulder behind you, we are both stretching to create some space and also saying to our body, "There's nothing back there; we're safe." As we turn and look over our other shoulder we are saying, danger has often

come for people from behind for African descended people, indigenous people, marginalized people, women...but here in this space, in this moment as we look and stretch...we are signaling to our mind and our body, that we are safe. We look down to create space and look up and around to remind ourselves that all is well. As we go, tend to your body. Put your hands on body wherever you need some support.

Let's pray church: God of life, your word is a life giving word, even when these stories challenge us. We've created some room this morning, a little extra space for your spirit to come through and do her good and healing work in us. We believe you can do it and in the name of Jesus we pray that you will. Amen.

I need to confess from the top, that I struggle with David!
I'm not really a fan, in fact, if I'm honest, I don't trust him.

[HEAD TO THE FLOOR] I know, following the reign of judges, that David is selected...from among all of Jesse's sons to be king. I know David slays the giant Goliath with a slingshot and a handful of smooth stones, I know... that he dances before the Lord with all his might...but this man also sees a woman named Bathsheba bathing in her home and sends other men to **get** her. [SLOW WALK TO LABYRINTH]

Some of us were taught that this was a love story.

Some of us were taught that **she** seduced him.

Some of us were taught that this was adultery or a mutually consensual relationship. But the text says...

“David sent messengers to **get** her...”

Take a deep breath and notice what you experiencing in your body.

[GO TO PULPIT]

What if that were your house, church?

Your partner?

Your mama?

Your child?

David sent messengers to **get** her...

My heart is racing right now, so let's all take another deep breath...

David lay with Bathsheba, and had her husband murdered after impregnating her.

Does one horrible, despicable act wipe out all the good David has done...at the very least, it complicates things! I don't trust this character, his story, or his repentance. After Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford and all the unnamed women...it is challenging to trust this character. I know the tradition teaches us that David recognizes his sin and repents...good for him. But what about Bathsheba? Because I also know that the tradition favors men. The tradition favors whiteness. The tradition favors wealth, the tradition protects those with power, and quite frankly, the tradition has given us a world that continues to prop up attitudes and behaviors that are death dealing to women and girls, to indigenous siblings, to the LGBTQ+ community, to folks of color and culture. Ancient stories like this one, unexamined and un-interrogated, give cover to men who send messengers to **get** women.

And why does David get to be the **only** one called a man after God's own heart?! What does **that** say to women and girls?! What does that say to other men and boys?! And the question I really **don't** want to ask...what does that say about God?!!

Take a deep breath, church, and notice what you are experiencing in your body. I don't have clean answers to my own questions, but still it is important to name these ugly truths, and to say to women and girls and justice loving people everywhere that David's behavior breaks God's heart and breaks something between God and the man after God's own heart. The tradition tries to clean it up but things are never the same after this.

David seems to have forgotten the covenant God made with the people – the privileges extended to those formerly enslaved in Egypt. Permission to honor the lives and relationships of others because my children want for nothing. God said, “You shall long for nothing because, “indeed, the whole earth is mine.” Now, a broken hearted, broke down God says at verse 9, “Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in [my] 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.” Take a deep breath, church.

And yes, I too want a God who will forgive me when I like David have done the unspeakable...but this morning my spirit and the spirit of the women and girls in my life said don't get in that pulpit and center anyone but Bathsheba.

Because while Nathan helps David to see the horror of what he has done, we only imagine what this did to Bathsheba. She doesn't get a psalm in which to pour out her lament. The bible doesn't lift up **her** interior world. Ugly truths.

This king should have been with his men in battle... and don't miss this, while David's army was ravaging the Ammonites, and besieging Rabbah, David was ravaging and besieging Bathsheba. Breathe church. It's not easy to retell this story in a way that centers the woman, nor, I imagine, is it easy to hear, but we tell this story because we live in a culture that is **entirely** too comfortable with abusing women and girls...and the church... with its tradition...too often loses its moral compass and protects those who hold the power.

I'm sure you read about the National Women's Soccer League this week and if you didn't, listen to this from reporter, Kurt Streeter: "As a society, we've done a terrible job supporting women's sports... Players were left vulnerable in practically every way. [We] found a troubling history of abuse in the sport, from youth leagues [youth leagues, church] to the professional ranks. The voices of powerful female athletes were either cast aside or diminished...It is hard to go against authority and power when you are just trying to survive and keep playing the game you love." This whole ugly story is about power."

This whole ugly story is about power too. David, despite being given every advantage, every privilege, every extra benefit...David took more.

Stories like Bathsheba's underpin the violent attacks on female athletes, and abused women, and children trafficked for sex and labor. And I don't know what to do with that violence except to name it as ugly truth and to pray. To name it as ugly truth and to send love to the generations of women who have endured and to those who continue to endure abuse at the hands of those in power.

Let's send love in this prayer from Carrie Newcomer and may it bring us all into greater spaciousness as we imagine a world healed and whole especially for the most vulnerable among us. Let's pray:

Somewhere someone needs help.

Send love.

It matters.

If you can't get there yourself,

Then take a deep breath.

Breathe in the weight of their troubles,

Breathe out and send all those burdens

into the Light

Where sorrows can be held

With the most tender and infinite grace.

Breathe in what you can do.

Breathe out what you can't change.

Spool out a thread of connection.

Send courage and calm.

For the nights can be long

And filled with shadows

And sometimes terrible

Unexpected waters will rise.

Somewhere someone needs help.

Send love.

It matters.

To God be the glory.