

Do what I say, not as I do. David's Hypocrisy and ours too.
2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:10, 13a
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Last week we heard the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah told in a different way as we looked at the idea of temptation and sin and our need for God.

This week we hear the second part of the story. God was displeased at how David acted and covered up his sins, without making amends to God or to the people.

God sends Nathan to talk to David. The events that led to Uriah's death and Bathsheba's pregnancy broke at least three of the commandments that God had given the people during Moses' time. How do you approach the leader of the nation to tell him that what he has done was wrong without angering him? It was a delicate situation.

Nathan did what Jesus is so well known for. He told a story. Nathan tells a story about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man has everything that he could possibly want. Many sheep, many herds. The poor man only has one sheep. He bought this sheep with what little he had, and raised it with his children. It says it was like a daughter to him.

When the rich man goes to serve a guest dinner, instead of choosing one of his sheep to kill and eat, he takes the poor man's sheep.

Nathan does not have to tell David how awful the rich man behaved. David is so angry he demands that the poor man is repaid four times for what the rich man did.

David thinks that this story is about two men from the kingdom that Nathan is sharing with him. He adds that not only he should pay for the loss of something so precious, but also because he had no pity, he had no idea what he did was wrong, no desire to make it right.

What Nathan says next is enough to make any of our stomach's turn when we are faced with something we have done wrong.

"You are the man."

Nathan begins to speak as if from God.

I have given you everything God wants David to know. I saved you from Saul when Saul wanted you dead! I gave you wives and land and power! You are the rich man in the story. You took something precious that did not belong to you. You broke my laws; you broke our relationship by doing these things and you have shown no pity! You are the man.

And so Nathan lists the consequences that will come from David's mistakes.

And afterwards like a convicted felon who cannot run anymore from what they have done, he submits to God and to Nathan and says, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*"

Because of his humility and facing what he has done. Nathan passes on the message of God's forgiveness and the passage ends:

'Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.'"

Wow. What an emotional part of David's journey.

There are a couple of things we would do well to learn from what David did and how God through Nathan responded.

The first is - We all sin. We all make mistakes.

A hypocrite is a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess, especially a person whose actions belie stated beliefs. Being a hypocrite is living into the well-known phrase, "Do as I say, not as I do." People who claim to follow Christ or be Christians are seemingly held under a magnifying glass when it comes to what we say and what we do. One of the leading

reasons people fall out of faith, or choose not to enter into it, is because there are so many people that have a hard time living into their beliefs, but have an easy time talking about them. The key for me that helps me with my challenges of not doing what I should is to have a group of people in my life who can hold me accountable for when I mess up. My husband is a truth teller. He lets me know a different perspective than I have. My friends and colleagues will question my actions and motives. And my church will hold me accountable too.

The truth is sometimes we see and know when we sin, and sometimes in the world that we live in our sins are hidden or covered up by what others say is okay. How many people knew of what David did and tried to help him cover it up, or reassured him that what he was doing was okay because he was King? David F Payne comments on this chapter and the previous saying, "The previous chapter ended with an unrepentant David enjoying the results of his abuse of royal power. All too often kings and national leaders are able to get away with their misdeeds. Even when rumour is rife, there may be no machinery for bringing a king to trial. This was certainly the case in Israel, where David himself was the chief judge, and perhaps only judge. Was David then above the law? Adultery may often be very difficult to prove; such sins as envy, pride and covetness

are all in the mind and so are quite beyond the range of human laws, for all their grim effects on human conduct. But no such misdeed is hidden from God's eye." We need people in our life like Nathan was to David. Truth tellers who will give us the truth in a way we can hear it.

But here is another thing I believe about being a Christian. We do not claim to be perfect. We know that only God is perfect and that we are doing our best to live the way Jesus did. Our faith tells us that we will mess up and that it is important for us to go to God when we do. I came across this quote from a prophet in the Church of Latterday Saints. Joseph B Wirthlin said, "The church is not a place where perfect people gather to say perfect things or have perfect thoughts or have perfect feelings. The Church is a place where imperfect people gather to provide encouragement, support, and service to each other as we press on in our journey to return to our Heavenly Father." We should do our best to hold up our promises and know that our actions speak louder than our words.

Which leads to the second thing we should remember from David and Nathan today. After Nathan told the story of the rich man and the poor man, David said the rich man should be punished 4-fold for what he did and because he had no pity.

David never seems to state that what he did was wrong until the end of this passage. He says: "*I have sinned against God.*"

It reminds me a lot of the system we have in our home. When we do something wrong and lie about it, our punishment is worse than if we confess to what we did. God desires us to want to make things right. God wants us to admit when we mess up. God wants us to confess that we are human, that we need God in our lives to help make things right and better. Perhaps this is what you need to hear. Perhaps you have been holding onto something that you need to tell someone about. A mistake, an error, a lack of self-control.

It is easy for us to remember this second thing when we have the third. God forgives. Nathan tells David, "*God has put away your sin.*" God will not hold our sins against us. The greatest image of this idea is Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross was a sign to us that we will never be able to pay God back for the blessings we receive or the forgiveness that we do not deserve. But God gives it to us anyway. God does not want us to carry the burden of our mistakes forever. God wants us to learn from them, and to do better. Perhaps this is the message you need today. Perhaps you have confessed something you have done wrong, but you cannot

forgive yourself. Or perhaps you cannot forgive someone else.

We are going to mess up. We are. It is going to happen. Sometimes it will be because we cannot handle the temptation of whatever it is, and we will justify what we do that is wrong by comparing ourselves to others who do worse.

Sometimes we will mess up and not know it. Maybe we will support a political candidate who ends up doing more harm than good. Perhaps we will be like the people in the story of the good Samaritan who passed by on the other side of the road from someone who needed help. Maybe we will say something and not intend to do harm, but when we are faced with how it did hurt someone, we do not ask for forgiveness, instead we get defensive and blame the other person for how they were hurt. The list goes on and on about how we are likely to make big mistakes knowingly and little mistakes unknowingly.

It is our role as people who follow Christ, in the tradition of the descendants of faithful, but human leaders like David to confess what we do wrong and try to make amends.

We know that nothing will ever separate us from the love of God, but when we hurt others, we hurt the relationship between God and ourselves. When we do not ask for forgiveness, when we cover up our mistakes, mistakes that God sees no matter to what ends we go to hide our wrongdoings, we show God that we do not care about God, God's desire for all people to be well and taken care of.

Kids, sometimes your parents are not going to do what they say is good to do. Maybe they will mess up. Parents, your kids are growing and learning, and they may not learn every life lesson the first time. Forgive one another.

Let's try our best to do what we say, to ask forgiveness when we fail to forgive ourselves and others. God help us. Amen.