

2 Samuel 11-12

'Sex, Lies, but No Videotape'

Introduction

I want to start this talk by getting you to remember the presidency of Bill Clinton.

The first thing that I'd like to do is to get you to remember from David's life.

What are the incidents or events in his presidency that stand out in your memory?

Okay, now I'd like you to put those incidents in the back of your mind.

Don't forget them, I'm going to ask you to bring them back into your mind later.

The Season when Kings go out to war

Well, its spring again.

The season of flowers.

The season for hayfever.

And the season when kings go out to war.

At least thats what 2 Samuel 11 makes of Spring.

The season when kings go out to war.

Well, most kings anyway.

There are some kings that don't .

Some kings who send their generals instead.

Who stay behind and spend their days in bed.

Sleeping, being lazy, playing the part of the despot.

These kings do occasionally rise from their beds in the late afternoon sun.

Wandering onto the rooves of their palaces to survey their kingdoms.
Perhaps like King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 they begin to soak up what they see.
Musing to themselves:
I have fought hard for this.
Now it's all within my grasp.
I deserve it, every last inch.
And now it's all mine.
All mine for the choosing.
But such thinking is dangerous.
It can get you into heaps of trouble.
And so king David found out.
In a few deft strokes the picture is painted for us in the first few verse of 2 Samuel 11.
For it happened in the late sunlight of a spring evening when he should have been on
the battlefield that David got up from his bed.
In the cool of the evening he took a casual stroll around the rooftop.
And before you know it, it had happened.
His eyes lighted upon a beautiful woman - Naked and bathing.
He wants to find out more.
He asks.
She's married.
But it's too late now.
He sends for her.
He returns to bed.
But not alone this time.
And so while one of his most trusted warriors labours in what should have been
David's battle, David sleeps in the place where his warrior should be sleeping.

David commits adultery.

Nothing is told of Bathsheba or her thoughts in the matter.

The blame is David's alone.

And Bathsheba returns home.

The Cover up

The weeks pass by.

Unlike the king, Bathsheba knows the risks.

The text lets us know that her period had been finished for a week or two when it happened.

She is confused.

Ashamed.

And then panic wells up within her.

She is frightened.

And then she knows for certain.

David must be told.

The short message goes.

"I am pregnant".

And now it's David's turn.

He too panics.

His mind rushes.

"How can I get out of it?"

"How can I cover up?"

"It's not too late,

"I'll send for her husband"

The orders go out.

“Get Uriah the Hittite for me!”

And Uriah arrives.

His King asks him lovingly of affairs at the front.

But he is not really interested in what would interest a good king.

“Go down to your house.”

“Wash your feet.”

“Take leave with all its pleasures.”

And Uriah goes.

But not to his house.

For Uriah is a good soldier.

A loyal servant.

A man of God.

“How can I go home to eat, drink and sleep with my wife?”

“The Ark of the Covenant and the people of God are living in tents”

“My commander and my friends are out in the open field”

“It is unthinkable that I should go home”

The contrast with David is marked.

This is Uriah.

A pious believer, a loyal subject, a soldier of courage and refinement.

But surely this is too good to be true.

Maybe a bit of the varnish will come off with a bit of the fruit of the vine.

Maybe alcohol will peel of an inhibition or two.

So David makes him drunk.

But there is no way here.

This man's values are ingrained.

Alcohol cannot shift them.

They are part of his makeup.

And yet again Uriah does not sleep with his wife.

Now David is really worried.

Things are getting worse.

But he will have to save his neck somehow.

There is only one thing left.

“Take a letter to Joab.

Verse 15 records its content:

“Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest.

Then withdraw from him so that he will be struck down and die”.

And so Uriah carries his own death warrant and delivers it to Joab.

Joab obeys.

He puts Uriah where he knows that the enemy’s best warriors will be.

He loses a few good men.

He loses an excellent man.

One of David’s elite 30 fighting men.

One of the men who had fought side by side with him for years in the wilderness.

Uriah the Hittite is dead.

And Joab sends the news to David.

He is a bit uptight.

He is a good general, who doesn’t like losing battles.

Who doesn’t like losing good men.

He expects that the king will be angry.

And so he shows the messenger how to close his message in a way that will pacify the king.

Say to him: "Uriah the Hittite is dead also".

[Excursus: I love this little story.

Look at how the messenger is instructed.

Look at how he carries out his commands

He knows that David is prone to be quick with the sword when there is bad news to be heard.

He doesn't allow the king to get angry.

As predicted the king is not angry.

He breathes a sigh of relief.

He is patronizing to Joab.

He gives him a pat on the head.

"OK, so the sword kills one now and another later

Get on with the battle.

Don't get uptight about all this".

The God who is not pleased

It all looks so neat doesn't it.

No publicity.

Not too ugly.

No loose strings.

So Bathsheba mourns.

She is married to David.

And everything looks alright.

Until the writer opens up heaven for us.

He lets us know that God is not pleased.

And so we wonder.....

What will happen now?.

It looks so tidy.....

Surely David has got away with it?.

But no!

For God is not pleased.

And when He is not pleased you can be sure that sooner or later you will find out about it.

The parable

And so the Lord sent Nathan the Prophet to David.

And Nathan comes bearing an innocuous story.

Two men were in a city, David

A rich man and a poor man.

The rich man had very many flocks and herds

The poor man had nothing except for one little ewe lamb which he had bought.

He raised it and it grew up with him and his sonsIt ate his bread.

Drank from his cupAnd slept in his lap.

It was a daughter to himA visitor came to the rich man.

He found it a pity to take any of his owns herd to prepare for his guest.

So he took the poor man's sheep away.

He prepared that sheep for the man who had come to him.

The King's Sentence

It is a masterpiece of a sermon.

David of course identifies himself with the poor man.

His anger rises.

He takes on his God appointed role as judge.

He pronounces sentence.

Two things must be done:

(1)The rich man must die.

(2)What was taken must be restored 4-fold.

And the reason: “because the man showed no pity”.

And the trap closes on the unsuspecting prey.

With one gentle tug Nathan removes the veil.

He holds a mirror up to David’s face.

“You are the man!”

And now comes the whole story.

What David tried to hide is proclaimed from the housetop.

His sin is made public.

His sin is to be punished in public.

The Prophet’s Indictment

Nathan hits David with it, speaking the words of God to him, he says:

David, I have been so generous to youI have given you the kingdom with all its benefits.

If this hadn’t been enough I would have given you moreAnd yet you have despised my generosity.

You have despised me

Most seriously you have despised me by committing theft.

In murdering Uriah you have stolen his wife

You have behaved like a common thief who kills to get his prize.

You have been a thief like the rich man in the parable You will be punished for these things.

And the punishment will fit the offence.

Since you took up the sword, the sword will never depart from your house.

Since you stole another mans wife then ...”Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you.

“And he will lie with your wives in broad daylight”

You did this thing in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.

And David is floored.

He repents.

The God who forgives

He deserves death.

But God forgives.

And another dies in David’s place.

The child of his adultery dies despite his mourning and pleading.

And by the time he gets to the end of his life four of his sons will have died in a manner linked with sexual sin.

David’s legal sentence upon the rich man has been carried out on himself.

The punishment of the law has been met.

For murder: a life for a life.

For theft: fourfold restitution.

And so we have the David of 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

A man who knows sin.

A man who will spend the rest of his life facing the consequences of that sin.

And yet a man who knows God’s forgiveness as Psalm 51.

Listen to Psalm 51.

It is the Psalm which David wrote after this event.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The God who is sovereign

It's a story we all know well.

In paraphrasing it I hope we have seen some things that have not previously been apparent.

But now I want to take an overview of the passage.

And to do this by looking at how the text closes the incident.

Take a look at verse 24 and 25.

Think of their background:.

Treachery.

Intrigue.

Adultery.

Murder.

Lies.

And yet David is forgiven.

He marries Bathsheba.

She becomes his wife.

They have a child.

A child who is loved by God.

A child born to be a great king.

The writer's point is apparent:.

Out of such deep sin the purpose of God has come.

Out of such human failing God's chosen king is born.

Now travel some centuries into the future.

Go to some verses from Matthew 1.

In verse 6 we read:.

And to David was born Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.

And now follow the genealogy through to verse 16.

And to Jacob (ie. David's ancestor), was born Joseph, the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

And so we see that Matthew makes the same point as the writer of 2 Samuel.

That is why he speaks of "the wife of Uriah".

He reminds us that God's purpose for his world is fulfilled through men and women, and sinful men and women at that.

Our God is a God who involves sinful men and women in accomplishing his will.

He does not sit in heaven rolling cosmic dice determining peoples fate.

He is a God of providence.

On one side we have the freewill of mankind.

And in this story it has been in full flight.

A human will asserts itself.

A human will sins.

A human will leaves its wounds upon human affairs.

A human will displeases his God.

Such a human will is totally responsible for its sin.

Such a human will deserves all the punishment it gets.

And yet there is the other side.

It too runs through this story.

For in this story we see God.

A God who is present.

A God who is interested.

A God who is involved.

And above all a God who is in control.

A God who through such wilful sinfulness works out his purpose.

David is sinful.

David is responsible.

And yet God is in control.

His will is accomplished.

David commits adultery.

David murders.

Solomon becomes king.

And Jesus is born to be Christ.

Sin and Sovereignty

And this is the beauty of 2 Samuel.

It is a book of snapshots.

Snapshots of a king.

Snapshots of a father.

Snapshots of an adulterer and murderer.

And above all, snapshots of a man.

For this David is like us.

Human .

Sinful.

Imperfect.

Not a cardboard cutout of a man.

But a human being like us.

And 2 Samuel tells us that God loves such people.

That God uses such people.

That he does not use plastic saints or cardboard cutouts.

God uses us.

And he does so without restricting his purposes.

God and his kingdom are not dependent on our failings, blunders or mistakes.

God's purpose marches on despite them.

For our God is a sovereign God.

Now as you and I look at our lives in the past and present we are aware of sin.

We are only too acutely aware of our imperfection.

Of our constant failure to meet our own standards, let alone those of God.

Of our many blunders and parts of our lives we would rather forget.

But we cannot forget, for daily we face the consequences of our sin.

And to such people 2 Samuel speaks.

The words are clear.

Our God is a sovereign God.

Our God has a purpose.

Our God takes us up into his purpose.

For our God is here.

He is in, with, and under everything that happens.

Implications for Christian leadership and ministry

Friends, I thought that I'd like to close today by reflecting on what implications this has for ministry.

And the first way I'd like to do this is to talk about sin and its consequences.

The first thing that I'd like to do is to get you to remember from David's life.

What are the main incidents?

Which incidents stand out in your memory?

Which incidents have you heard sermons on?

[Get feedback]

Now I think that it would be safe to say that one of the main things that people remember about David is the incident in this story.

Now I want you to drag out of your memory the things I asked you to reflect on regarding Bill Clinton.

Now my guess is that for many of you the thing that you will remember about Bill Clinton is his affair with Monica Lewinsky.

Now let me say that both the lives of Bill Clinton and David were full of good things.

They are full of great deeds.

They are full of good and noble things.

But what a tragedy if when people remember you they remember you sin.

Friends, let me tell you that sin deeply affects life and ministry.

The sin of David here had incredibly deep consequences.

It had consequences on his family life.

It had deep impact on the politics of his family life.

It had deep impact on the manner of life of his children.

His children fell into sexual sin just like their father.

They shared some of the brunt of his sinfulness.

Please understand what I'm saying.

Sin is not committed in a vacuum.

Sin is sin.

And God hates sin.

Christian ministry can be crippled by sin.

If you are a Christian then purity and holiness is a must.

But if you are going into Christian ministry then purity and holiness are a particular issue.

Please, please, don't go into ministry if you are weak in this area.

There is nothing so crippling to ministry than public sin.

However, there is another side to this story.

Look

1. This sin by David deeply affects the rest of his life (e.g. the life of his children, the deaths of his children, etc.). Sin is sin. Sin has consequences. Christian ministry is affected by sin (both that before ministry and that after ministry). You must have a life that is pure (c.f. the Pastoral Epistles).
2. However, God can use sinful people. Cf. 1 Cor 15; 1 Timothy 1.