

## Let's Hear it for the Whistleblower

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2 Samuel 11 & 12

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This is the era of the whistleblower. We have numerous situations of people in leadership being exposed for poor conduct and corruption. We see it in politics, in nations, in schools, in churches. Whistleblowers can make us uneasy – they expose the flaws in our institutions. They keep things from flowing along as they always have. But they also expose what is corrupt and evil – stripping institutions down to the studs and down to their foundations.

Quite often being a whistleblower is a true work of God. We are often sad when we hear of the corruption of a great church leader, and sad for the unraveling of large ministries. But our faith was never in those people or those ministries. Our faith is in Jesus Christ alone. He will build his church. And he will pull out by the roots that which is dishonorable, deceitful and predatory.

Whistleblowers are not the people who pile on to something after it's been exposed. That's easy. That's lazy. That's lame. They are not the people who bark online about politicians and leaders.

Whistleblowers are the ones who speak up when there is a genuine risk involved. When you are a whistleblower people may not believe you. Your actions may cost you future opportunities. Whistleblowers are those that tell the truth when it is unpopular and when it could cost them everything socially, professionally and personally.

In the passages we are reading this morning the prophet Nathan is that whistleblower. He needs to confront King David on his corruption. He does this at risk to his personal relationship with David, to his role of authority, to his job, to his very life.

In this situation, the prophet Nathan has nothing to gain and absolutely everything to lose.

Nathan is very shrewd in dealing with David. He doesn't just expose and confront David. He tells a story, and allows David to expose himself.

***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. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup> but 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.***

***"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." (2 Samuel 12:1-4)***

David takes the bait! He responds emotionally.

**<sup>5</sup> David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die!<sup>6</sup> He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.” (2 Samuel 12:5-6)**

This is just a story, David! Sit down! Take a deep breath! But stories and movies do this to us. They stress us out. They bring to the surface our sense of justice or our need for revenge. At David’s reaction, the prophet David lowers the boom.

***“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. <sup>8</sup> I 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.***

***<sup>9</sup> Why 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. <sup>10</sup> Now, 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.’***

***<sup>11</sup> “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. <sup>12</sup> You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’” (2 Samuel 11:7-12)***

A simple story becomes a massive expose. A basic story about right and wrong involving a poor man, his lamb and a corrupt and predatory rich man shakes the kingdom to its core. David is exposed for his sin and deceit and corruption. What he tried to cover up, God, through the prophet Nathan, has exposed. The consequences for David’s actions are heavy! The consequences affect his family and his kingdom. What did David do to warrant such a heavy rebuke and judgement?

***In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.***

***<sup>2</sup> One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup> and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” <sup>4</sup> Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.” (2 Samuel 12:1-5)***

David sleeps with another man’s wife, while that man is off serving David and David’s kingdom in the military. David does this, but he is now caught! Uriah, the woman’s husband, is away on a long campaign. There is no possible way Uriah could be the father. David is now scrambling to find a scheme to cover up what he has done.

**<sup>6</sup> So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.**

**<sup>10</sup> David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"**

**<sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" (2 Samuel 11:6-11)**

David hatches a plan – get Uriah to come home from battle – quickly! – so he can be with his wife and then the pregnancy can be credited to him! But his plan has a major flaw – Uriah is too darn honorable! Uriah refuses to go home. None of his comrades have this opportunity, so he won't accept it, either. The contrast between the honor of Uriah and the deceit of David is stunning.

So David adds some extra sauce to his scheme.

**<sup>12</sup> Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home. (2 Samuel 11:12-13)**

Even drunk Uriah has more honor than sober David. David is obsessed with covering up his sin and the results of his sin. His ploy takes a sinister turn.

**<sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."**

**<sup>16</sup> So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. <sup>17</sup> When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. (2 Samuel 11:14-17)**

David's final plan results in the death of an innocent, honorable man. His plan pulls a number of people in his kingdom into this deceit as well.

**<sup>18</sup> Joab sent David a full account of the battle. <sup>19</sup> He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, <sup>20</sup> the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?**

**<sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"**

<sup>22</sup> *The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say.*

<sup>23</sup> *The messenger said to David, “The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. <sup>24</sup> Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king’s men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.”*

<sup>25</sup> *David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Don’t let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.’ Say this to encourage Joab.” (2 Samuel 11:18-25)*

David’s generals and messengers have to scheme and strategize around David. Other soldiers die in the battle die, too, as a result of David’s plan. This is a full on disaster, but in the midst of this David seems relieved. He is so far gone in all of this: nothing matters except the cover up. He is given the message about the casualties of the people fighting for him. He responds with a shrug: “Meh. War happens.”

<sup>26</sup> *When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. <sup>27</sup> 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. (2 Samuel 11:26-27)*

David is able to carry on as if nothing has happened. He commits adultery with Bathsheba, which is not good. And then he goes on this continual path of deceit to cover all of this up. His plans get darker, his responses get more sinister. Much like watching Walter White on the TV show *Breaking Bad*, we see David’s decent from respectable leader into sinister villain.

The writer on 2 Samuel 11 and 12 holds David and David alone responsible for his actions. He is the most powerful man in the nation – does Bathsheba even really have a choice in sleeping with David? From start to finish all of David’s actions are very sinister and predatory.

*“Bathsheba is pictured as almost entirely passive in this episode; except for her first-person message to David (“I am pregnant”), she is always spoken of in the third person. The only hint that she might have cooperated willingly in her predicament is her initial act of bathing in a place she could be observed by the king walking on his roof (not an uncommon place to stroll in the middle East for the cool of the evening breeze). Still the text offers no judgement on her for that. . . . The narrative does not seem to hold her responsible for her actions with David, and the punishment that is meted out, that their child should die, is aimed by Yahweh and Nathan at David, not Bathsheba.” (Jo Ann Hackett, Women’s Bible Commentary)*

David protects himself above all else (something we’re also prone to do when we’re caught in a bad situation). He sets forward a plot that threatens the entire kingdom.

And just as God tends to do, God levels the mighty with a simple story about sheep.

David takes another man’s wife, without any thought of how his actions would affect other people. They do. His actions ruin his own family, another family, his soldiers and generals, his kingdom, and his legacy. One action pollutes everything. It makes everything around him stink.

Last week we made a discovery. A skunk was living in our backyard, under our shed. When the animal control specialist came over, we made a further discovery – this skunk had babies! Ryan, the specialist, picked up one of the babies, and of course it tried to defend itself. It sprayed Ryan on the arm – a direct hit! But in trying to protect itself against Ryan, its stink was far reaching.

I was not sprayed at all, but the scent dissipated into the air and got into my shoes. It got into the rubber of my phone case. In driving to work with my shoes on and my phone in my pocket it got the stink in my van. There was a slight scent on my shirt. It got into the office, where at noon I was commanded to go home by Kathryn to clean up and start over.

This little skunk was simply defending himself. Little did he know that what he did in our small back yard would cause a stink several kilometers away, with consequences that affected the lives of others.

David's actions did the same thing. His actions, and the fallout of those actions, ruined his life in ways he never imagined. His actions cost other people significantly. His actions led to a hardened heart.

Yet when the prophet Nathan exposes him, David is able to respond **"I have sinned against the Lord."** (1 Samuel 12:13) He stops running. He stops covering up. He realizes he has been found out.

David realizes that God is not to be trifled with. He also knows that God forgives, and God forgives much. In Psalm 51, David writes about this incident in his life. Asking God's forgiveness he writes:

***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.***

He knows what God is capable of. David knows and has seen the sin and deceit he is capable of! And he knows that God is capable of forgiveness that is greater than all his sin.

**Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. <sup>14</sup> But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die."**

Nathan responds with, "God has forgiven you already!" There are great consequences for David's sin that are inescapable. But the forgiveness of God is there and ready to be released. Knowing this, David can write in expectation:

***Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.***

David's behavior is awful. It's rotten. If there's a list of things that should not be forgiven, David has checked off many of those things in this story. And yet God forgives. God doesn't forgive David because David is a great King. God forgives David because God restores and God forgives.

**The things we do have far-reaching consequences . . .** I'm sure we can think of things we have done that cause us great guilt and shame. We may have done things, and the consequences of those things got beyond our control and hurt other people. The pain and the shame and the guilt are very real.

**. . . but we are never out of reach of the love and forgiveness of God.** Even the predator King David was forgiven and restored by God. You can never go too far from the forgiveness and grace of God. That is never a blank cheque to behave badly. But whatever you have done, God will forgive and restore!

Jesus is the Light of the World. He exposes what is wicked and corrupt in this world. Even more than his, he restores what has been broken and ruined. And he forgives. You can never go too far from the grace of God.