

How Not to be King

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[0 : 00] This evening's reading can be found in the Bibles in front of you on page 314. It's 2 Samuel chapter 11.

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 Amorites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem.

One evening, David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof, he saw a woman washing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her.

The man said, she is Bathsheba, the daughter of Elam, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. 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. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, I am pregnant.

[1 : 15] So David sent this word to Joab. Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were, and how the war was going.

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. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants, and did not go down to his house.

David was told, Uriah did not go home. So he asked, Uriah, haven't you come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?

Uriah said to David, the ark in 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. Then David said to him, stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.

[2 : 27] So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 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. In the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.

In it, he wrote, put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw him from him so that he will be struck down and die.

So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at the place where he knew the strongest defenders were. And when the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell moreover.

And Uriah the Hittite died. Joab sent David a full account of the battle. He instructed the messenger, when you have finished giving the king this account of battle, the king's anger may flare up and he may ask you, why did you get so close to the city to fight?

[3 : 39] Didn't you know that what they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abnelech, son of Jeroboam? Didn't a woman drop under an upper milestone on him from the wall so that he died in Thezob?

Why did you get so close to the wall? If he asked you this, then say to him, moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead. The messenger set out and when he arrived, he told David everything Joab had sent him to say.

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 gates. Then the archers saw arrows at your servants

from the wall and some of your king's men died.

Moreover, Uriah the Hittite is dead. 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. When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

[4 : 50] After the time of mourning was over, David had brought her to his house and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

Good evening. Thanks Martin for leading and Craig for reading. My name's James. I'm on staff team here at St. Silas and Lemmy. Allow me to add my big welcome to everyone else that's welcomed you or not welcomed you this evening.

Now, before I start, I've got the opening line in my notes here. Let's picture it. It's the late 90s and I've realized that the only people you can picture it here are Derek, Andy, Martin and myself.

So that's slightly awkward. Let me pray as we start. Father, we thank you for your Bible. We thank you for the tough bits and we thank you for the glorious bits and we pray that we would accept your correction, that we would learn to love you better and that we would learn to see Jesus and more clearly through the story tonight.

In Jesus' name. Amen. So anyway, it's the late 90s and South African cricket, I don't know if you're a cricket fan, but I love cricket, is at its absolute peak.

[6 : 11] You've got Donald bowling from the one end, he's zipping it in. You've got Pollock from the other end, he's absolutely smashing all the batsmen. And the whole cricket game is centered around this one man, this champion, Hansi Cronier.

He is the golden boy of South African cricket. A strategic genius, a devoted family man, an outspoken Christian. And then towards the end of his career, literally months before his retirement, the whole pack of cards came tumbling down in on itself.

And what had happened was, you might not know the story, but Hansi Cronier had been taking bribes of Indian bookies to fix matches. An absolute no-no in cricket.

And so he went through this massive palaver of interviews, of what's going on here, and Hansi's statement that he made throughout this, that he became infamous for, was the devil made me do it. And when we hear stories like that, when we hear of these great people who do these great things and who collapse and fail in absolutely spectacular fashions, the question that comes to our mind is, why?

[7 : 33] Why has this happened? And so it's hard, isn't it? Because we see people like this and we respect them for their values, both on the pitch and off them.

And when we see them fail, we think, well, if they can fail, then anyone can fail. You see, they were the best and they failed.

And if they can fail, then I can fail. And when I see them do wrong, at the same time, I realize that I'm exactly like them. And so we're stuck with this problem.

We want to live with integrity and we want to be honest people, upright people, but at the same time, we see this great capacity within us to sin and fail in absolutely spectacular ways.

And history is littered with these figures, isn't it? These tragic, epic fails. And tonight's story is perhaps one of the big ones.

[8 : 35] And that is the story of great King David's epic failure. And we remember the story, King David, he's known for his humility and kindness, as we've seen in the earlier weeks on Sunday evenings, that we've heard God's promises, that God would make him a king whose name is great, like the names of the greatest on the earth.

We heard how Martin reminded us of what David's reign in his kingdom was like. He was known for doing what was just and right for all his people.

And by way of context, early in Samuel, God has promised that from David, a king from his house would come, whose kingdom will endure forever before me, and whose throne will be established forever.

And so when we come to this passage tonight, when we enter it, the context is, we've seen all that God has done for David, and the question that is on the tip of our tongue as we come into this passage, is David going to be this great king that God has promised, who will reign over his people forever?

And our passage tonight, well, this evening, answers that question emphatically, doesn't it? it says, no, David was the best, worst king who shows us our need for God's true king.

[10:01] And the reason for that is that we might confess our sins and turn in repentance and trust God's true king. So I thought the best way that we might look at this passage is to simply look at the different interactions that David has with different people in this passage.

So firstly, I've highlighted there verse 1 to 5, when good kings go bad, and we're looking at David and his interaction with Bathsheba there. So if you put down your Bibles, it would be a great encouragement if you could open them up for me.

And we're in verse 1 of our passage, and I'll just read it for us. And the story of David's great fall here is bookended by the wars with the Ammonites that we see in this verse and right at the end of chapter 12.

And I say wars, but it's less of a war and more of a slaughter. And we notice that, don't we? They destroyed the Ammonites. And so a mopping up operation commences and besieged Rabbah. You see, David is so successful that in his warfare and in his fighting and in his conquering that instead of going out to fight, well, he sits back and stays in the comfort of Jerusalem living at large.

[11:32] And what does he do? He sends out Joab. He doesn't just send Joab. He sends all his men and the whole Israelite army.

You see, at this point in David's reign, David is a king who is used to sending people out. He's used to sending others. And this chapter is dominated by David sending people off to do his will and his bidding.

And this is the heart of the problem in this chapter, that David has become proud. He's so used to sending others off. And what we see is that he might be in Jerusalem, but he is not safe from that enemy within, his own pride.

And so we read in verse 2, one evening, David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. And from the roof, he saw a woman bathing.

The woman was very beautiful. Well, you can picture the scene. A warm summer evening in Jerusalem. David can't sleep. So he goes for a walk and, well, he sees a beautiful woman.

[12:43] And it's like the fruit of the garden in Eden. She is literally very good to see. And what was an accidental glance suddenly becomes a lecherous leer. And David, rather than capturing his thoughts, capturing himself in this, he indulges it.

And David, rather than hating his sin, hating his leering, he feels his sin. And so what does he do? He seeks her. Verse 3, And David sent someone to find out about her.

The man said, she is Bathsheba, the daughter of Iliam, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. And the point here is that Bathsheba is the wife of Uriah and the granddaughter of his trusted advisor, Ahithophel, and the wife of one of his famous 30 men that he has all these adventures with in 1 Samuel, Uriah. Uriah is his good friend. And so she is quite literally forbidden fruit. Under penalty of death, for committing adultery and breaking one of God's commandments.

But David is so in love with his sin that what does he do? He takes her. And well, why? Because he can. He's David after all.

[14:02] So verse 4, Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him and he slept with her. He sees her, he seeks her, he takes her, he lies with her. And the language is brutal.

It's just verbs. It's stark. You see, David doesn't love Bathsheba. He lusts after her. He enjoys the power that he has, that he can send for her and take her despite being another man's wife.

He doesn't love her. He doesn't even speak to her. But he loves his sin. He loves himself. And you see, sin is never other person, sin is never other person centered.

No matter how you dress it up, it's never about the other person. It's always me centered. So I was shopping the other day and I saw this two year old girl and she basically picked up this chocolate in her hand and she was sitting in the trolley and she held it aloft and she said, mine!

It was hers. Me, me, me. And that's what sin does for us. It makes us all about us. What I can get. And it's the Garden of Eden all over again.

[15:19] See, rather than trust God's good word, God's commandments, what does David do? He blanks it. But sin is never without its consequences.

So turn with me and look down at the end of verse 4 and 5. Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness. Then she went back home and the woman she conceived and sent word to David saying, I am pregnant.

And David who is so used to sending others has a word sent to him and it's not one that he wants to hear. It's, I am pregnant.

And because she was purifying herself, we can absolutely, be absolutely certain that David is the father. And you can feel the tension in the story here, can't you?

You see, faced with the evidence of his adultery, the consequences of how is David going to respond? Is this the rude awakening that David is going to need to come to his senses and turn back before it's too late to repent and confess his sin?

[16:31] And the same might be asked of us, how do we respond when we are confronted with our sin? It might be our own consciences telling us or it might be a chat from a wise friend or maybe we've simply just been caught in the act.

How do we respond? How are we going to respond? And next, we're going to consider David's interaction with Uriah. So verses 16, 6 to 13, love and loyalty, loyalty and lies, David and Uriah. And David responds to this word that he is sent by sending a word to Joab. So verse 6 there, Send me Uriah the Hittite.

And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, and when we hear this, just for a second, we wonder, well, what is David going to say next?

Is David going to come clean? Others might not, but surely David would. He's David after all. Is David going to confess his sins here?

[17:39] No matter what the consequences, bear the shame for a moment and be done with it. And given the opportunity to confess our sin, how might you respond?

Well, tragically, rather than owning up to the fact and confessing what he has done, what does David do? He tries to hide his sin.

So verse 7, the second half, verse 7 and verse 8, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were, how the war was going on. And then David said to Uriah, Go home and wash your feet.

So Uriah left the palace and a gift from the king was sent after him. You see, to go home and wash your feet is kind of the Bible's way of saying to have sexual relations with your wife.

That's what he's saying. And to move things along, David sends a lavish gift. So we can see exactly what David is trying to do here. He's trying to get Uriah to sleep with his wife so that he is off the hook for the pregnancy.

[18:48] He's trying to hide his sin. And our hearts sink at this. It is absolutely tragic. David, oh David, what are you doing?

You see, to us it's so obvious what needs to be done. David needs to come clean and confess his sin. But David is totally self-deluded. He thinks he can get away with it.

And sin always does this. It deludes us like nothing else in life. You see, sinners like that kid eating a crisp packet in the cinema. He thinks no one can hear, but everyone can hear the crisp packet rustling.

And at first, it seems as though David's scheme is working. So what do we read? But Uriah slept. Where did Uriah sleep? At the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants.

And so we see David's plan and scheme unraveling. And he did not go down to his house. You see, David was told Uriah, David was told Uriah did not go home.

[19:58] And so he asked Uriah, haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why don't you go home? And Uriah said to him, 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 home 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. And it's a picture of astounding above and beyond loyalty.

And it's in complete contrast to David's scheming and lies. You see, Uriah, although he's a non-Israelite, he's a Hittite by descent.

He shows his loyalty to God, to God's people, and to God's king. He is a Hittite. He's an alien. He's a complete outsider. But he is the only true man of God in this chapter.

[21:01] As surely as you live, King David, I will not do such a thing. I will not go home and sleep with my wife, Uriah says. And the irony is not lost on us.

Uriah says, on David's life, he will not sleep with his wife. Well, as David has done. And in God's graciousness, it's a reply that should shame David, that should humble even the hardest of hearts.

But what does David do? Rather than come and clean, he tries to hide his sin once again. So join me and look down at verse 12 and 13. 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. 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 the mat amongst his master's servants.

He did not go home. And again, Uriah shows his loyalty. You see, at this point, Uriah is a better man drunk than David was sober.

[22 : 15] And the depths that David has sunk to, to protect his honor and to honor himself becomes clear in verses 14 and 15. So verse 14 and 15.

In the morning, David wrote a letter to Job and sent it with Uriah. In it, he wrote, put Uriah on the front where the fighting is the fiercest. Then withdraw from him so that he will be struck down and die.

And it leaves us absolutely cold. This is God's king over God's people. What's he doing? So next we see David's interaction with Job.

Leave it to Job, verses 16 to 25. And what we see is with Job, with ruthless efficiency, in classic Job fashion, never needing to be told twice, he fixes what David couldn't do.

He's the fixer. He's like Trump's lawyer or something like that. So we read in verse 17, when the men of the city came out and fought against Job, some of the men in David's army fell.

[23 : 21] Moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. And as callous as this sounds, consider how David responds at this news.

In verse 25, don't let this upset you. The sword devours one as well as the other. Press the attack against the city and destroy it. Say this to encourage Job.

You see, if this doesn't upset you, murdering an innocent man, then what will? The sword devours one as well as the other. Uriah is simply collateral damage.

And you might expect this kind of response in other places, like places over there, but not here. And not in God's kingdom, surely.

Surely not in the West End. And surely not from God's chosen king. He's got a 2-1 from Glasgow Uni. He's a good guy.

[24 : 19] He's not like that. He's respectable. But this is what sin does. It corrupts the best of us. And it destroys the worst of us.

It makes us see others simply as collateral damages, as pawns in my game for my wants and my desires. So when I watch pornography, I'm watching someone's daughter or someone's son or someone's father or someone's mother.

And when I'm greedy and I'm collecting my money and I'm earning the big bucks, it's at the expense of someone else's poverty. And when I gossip and build myself up, well, what am I doing?

I'm tearing others down. And when I plagiarize and cheat on my papers, I'm pushing myself up while pushing those who've worked hard on their papers down.

And simply because God is silent in these chapters doesn't mean that God is indifferent. different. So how do you think God would respond? How do you think God would respond to this?

[25 : 25] God who has promised to oppose the proud and exalt the humble in the start of Samuel. How do you think God will respond to his chosen king abusing his people?

And this is what we turn to look at in the final verses of this chapter. So verse 26, 27, the end of the affair, David and Yahweh. And Yahweh is the Bible name for God.

See, having sorted out the minor hurdle of Uriah, the rest for David is simply formalities. So picking up in verse 26, when Uriah's wife had heard her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

And after the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. You see, from David's perspective, the issue is resolved.

But from God's perspective, it is anything but. And so we read in verse 27, but the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

[26 : 31] You see, literally, the thing was evil in the Lord's eyes. David had said to Job, don't let this thing be evil in your eyes. But the thing that David has done is evil in the Lord's eyes.

See, David might deceive himself and play down as sin, but God is not deceived. Sin is sin, and God is not mocked. Well, how should we respond to what we've heard?

How should we respond to the story? It's not a great story, is it? There's not many redeeming qualities in it. And it might be that you're sitting here tonight as one who is painfully aware of your failings, and you feel condemned and crushed by the story.

You hear it, and you think, is there any hope for me? It's like salt being rubbed in an open wound. Or maybe you're sitting here tonight and what do you do?

You hear the story, and well, you look down on David. You say, I'd never commit adultery. I will never murder anyone. I'll never be like David. I'm better than that.

[27 : 43] And what do you do? You look down on those who struggle with sexual sin and who are murderers. But might I challenge you tonight that we are all exactly like David.

We are all prone to pride. We are all prone to sin. We are all broken sexually. It might look different for us, but we all struggle with this in different ways.

There's none of us who is sexually absolutely perfect. Similarly, we are all capable of murdering our good friends.

We're all capable of wishing them dead. See, the Christian gospel doesn't tell us to be perfect and then I will save you. That's not what the Christian gospel says that God says to us.

The Christian gospel says rather than know, it's because you are broken, broken people that I have sent Jesus to save you, that Jesus will come and save you.

[28 : 49] See, David's fall is tragic, not simply because he fell. Anyone can fall. David's fall is tragic because he was the best of us and he fell.

He was one of the greatest and best people who ever lived. He loved the Lord. He had a heart. That wanted to be for God above all things and yet he still fell in such a spectacular fashion.

And because of this, he could not be the king that God promised. And in his brokenness, we are all exactly like David, even the best of us.

See, David was the best, worst king who shows us that we need God's true king. king. And that king is king Jesus. You see, Jesus will never steal your wife and kill you to satisfy himself.

Rather than you serving him, Jesus serves you. He died for you. He took the death and penalty that David and all of us deserve for our sexual brokenness and adultery and murder.

[29 : 58] Thank God for Jesus. What's it going to look like to come to Jesus in confession and repentance as dull brokenness?

Well, I've got a letter. I received a letter here last week from a mate of mine called Lunchtime. And I'll just read a couple of notes from it. He goes, we welcomed Lunchtime Junior into this world on the 13th of May 2018.

He arrived at 41 weeks, 4 kilos, 53 centimeters. That means he's a big boy. And then he goes on to chat about the twins that he's had.

And he says, well, one of the advantages of having twins is you can speak about them both in one paragraph. But one of the disadvantages, when they hit the why stage, you get it both barrels.

Why this? Why that? And then he goes on, talks about his birthday. Lunchtime turns the big 40. And the highlights was climbing this mountain in Taiwan. And then he goes on to speak about all the great Christian things that he's done in Taiwan as a missionary over there.

[31 : 05] But it's not the first letter that I've had from lunchtime. 15 years ago, I had a letter from lunchtime saying, lads, I'm absolutely broken. This is how I've treated God and I cannot go on doing that.

Won't you help me? Won't you join with me in praying for me? Won't you recognize that I'm a sinner in need of a savior? I've also, I've got a quote here of what it might look like from a lady called Rosario Butterfield.

I don't know if you've ever read any of Rosario Butterfield's works. She was basically, she's a radical feminist who came to Christ. And she lived in America and she ended up marrying a pastor over in America.

And she writes this paragraph on what repentance looked like. And she says, I learned the first rule of repentance, that repentance requires greater intimacy with God than with our sin.

How much greater? Well, about the size of a mustard seed. Repentance requires that we draw near to Jesus no matter what. And sometimes we'll have to crawl there on our hands and knees.

[32 : 19] Repentance is an intimate affair. And for many of us, intimacy with anything is a terrifying prospect. So what's it going to look like to come to Jesus in repentance, to accept him as that king, God's true king forever?

Well, it's going to look like admitting your sin and brokenness, looking to God's grace afresh every day, trusting in him and in his word with your future, that we might confess our sins and turn in repentance and trust to God's true king.

Let me pray for us as we close. Father, we recognize that we are broken people. We're broken in many and profound ways, Father, and we need your rescue.

We recognize that even the greatest of us, even great King David, was broken and failed. And so, Father, we look to your great king, Jesus.

We look to him for our rescue and our salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.