

October 21, 2018
Many Tears Left to Cry
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II Samuel 11:27b-12:15

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord,

12¹ 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.

¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. ¹¹ Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. ¹² For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." ¹³ David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan said to David, "Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die." ¹⁵ Then Nathan went to his house.

The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill.

Once upon a time there was a preacher named Nathan. He was the personal preacher to a king. It was the worst preacher job ever, because the preacher sourced his advice from

God and it was never the advice the king wanted to hear. Which meant that every time the king called for the preacher, the preacher risked his cushy job and his neck. But he did it anyway, because that's what brave preachers do.

The first time the king called for him, the king said, *"I have no enemies left to fight, so I'm thinking I will build an enormous temple to show everyone how good God has been to me in all my wars."*

"Yes," said the preacher, before he checked with God. "No," he said after. And the king seemed to take it pretty well. He prayed as if he thought God was right to tell him, "wait."

But then, instead of building a building – and in spite of having no enemies – the king went back to war. He killed a zillion people and took all their gold and bronze, and the people thought him wonderful, as people are prone to do when their king is winning all the time. In all that war and conquest, the preacher isn't mentioned. But the king got tired of fighting wars himself, so he outsourced that dirty business to a man named Joab. Today we'd call him a *fixer*.

The king stayed home and gazed upon the city he had built with that stolen gold and bronze and upon all the people he believed loved him for it. The king was so rich and powerful he no longer knew the difference between wealth and power, between what he wanted and deserved, between what could be stolen and devoured – and what God meant for him to have. He lost all sense of being king and he didn't even know it. Until the preacher came back uninvited and told a simple story about a farmer and his lamb. Having forgotten altogether the point of being king, this pretend king was outraged. And ordered his own death.

The preacher stood his ground while the fake king raged. Then in his bravest preacher voice told him, *"God says, 'It is you. I gave you everything and would have given more. And this is how you treated me? You raped and murdered the ones who trusted you. That you might die by your own hand is too small a sentence for the evil that you've done. The sword you have wielded without regard for justice shall dangle over your house forevermore. Everything you have done in secret shall be done to you in public before the eyes of everyone who now thinks you great. Your contempt for me will be paid for by generations of your sons and begin this very night with the youngest one of all.'"*

Friends, everyone is someone's son or daughter. There is no such thing as selfish, when we are choosing how to live. Every move moves every life around us for better and for worse. The richest and most powerful move more lives than we ever will admit, pretending to ourselves we didn't mean it or that we didn't know. God knows and calls the ones who claim him to tell each other what we know about ourselves and others. We are each other's preachers. And there are sons and daughters dying just for being born in a world in love with whatever gold and bronze will buy, in love with winning wars against enemies invented because their gold would look better on our walls.

The weeping king prayed again and did his best to say “I’m sorry.” But what was done was done was done. He rose from prayer having no idea how many tears he had left to cry. There was to be another baby. The Lord named him Jedidiah, a name almost no one remembers – that ancient love of money forever on our minds.

The king’s fixer, meanwhile, was busy at the front. He called the king back to battle and, naturally, he went. Went and took yet another crown from yet another head and put it on his own. Enslaved another town to pick and ax and saw. For after all, he was the king.

For his part, that preacher, Nathan, outlived the king and advised him to the end. And then Jedidiah after that, whose other name was Solomon.

But Nathan always did his best, remembering he did not speak for kings, but for God.

Would you pray with me?