

Sermon Text for August 22, 2021

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Luke 22:54-62, II Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17 ***“The story of David and Bathsheba”***

Two weeks ago we saw what many consider the original sin with Adam and Eve, and now this week we look at a sin that could potentially rival that sin not just the act itself, but the repercussions that would be felt as a result of that sin. It does feel like we are talking a lot about sin these days, and not just in church but we see it, and we always do, and no more now than before, in the papers with sins being played out on the national and international level.

When was the last time that we or you, even thought about Afghanistan? Out of sight and out of mind does not mean unimportant. The cost of the sin of war in Afghanistan has been over 2000 US soldiers since 2001 and over 100,000 Afghans have lost their life. Sin can be corporate, at the hands of a nation, at the hands of a church, but it can also be individualized. Both of our Scriptures this morning address a sin committed by leaders and we see the repercussions that spread beyond the individual act, and the individuals involved, to encompass and overwhelm those around them and even beyond.

Our task today is to address the sin our own lives, directly, so that whatever spiraling effect might take place can be mitigated. Forgiveness does not eliminate the cost of sin. The repercussions of sin do not disappear with a confession. But the spiraling effects are able to be dealt with directly when you deal with sin directly. Let's read.

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Throughout history Peter has always been considered the leader of the early 1st century church. When Jesus makes the statement in Matthew 16:18 and upon this rock I will build my church the Roman Catholic Church took that to mean that apostolic succession takes place through the first of many in Peter, the primate as he was called. Now, Protestants have loudly contested that this statement by Jesus in Matthew was less about Peter and more about the concept that Peter admitted to, that Jesus was the Messiah, the son of God, nay even God himself.

But there is no debate that Peter has been viewed and played the primary role in the early church and was the undisputed leader of that church. Which is a bit curious when you think about our first Scripture reading for today. He had quite an inauspicious start. The scene is the arrest of Jesus and the trial of Jesus and Peter is witnesses covertly what is taking place. He

obviously does not want to be discovered because it would put him in direct danger, and the lengths that he is willing to go to in order not to be discovered is quite shocking.

Three times he is asked or the statement is made that he is a disciple of Jesus and three times he denies it, with Matthew and Mark including some salty language so that he curses and says an oath in his denial. He is in a courtyard with no one who really cares about him or knows about him so what harm can a little self-preservation cause? This sin of denying Jesus among strangers, what harm can this cause.

Sometimes that is a justification that we use in order to continue a sin that we think no one will ever know. The fact that no one will ever know somehow eliminates in our minds the gravity and the seriousness of our sin. But in those cases we are also saying, I don't care what God thinks, because we know that God knows. When Peter denies Jesus three times, after the third time Jesus looks at him as if to say, I told you so. I see you, I know what you have done. So, what impact does his sin have if no one but Jesus knew it?

What impact does it have on the slave girl who potentially could have been open to the Gospel and hearing about who Jesus was? She went away thinking that Christians were hypocrites. We don't know what impact Peter's sin has on those around him. We know what impact it has on him, he breaks down and weeps realizing how he has just denied Jesus. Now, Peter gets a chance to redeem himself, at the end of the Gospel in John when Jesus comes back he asks Peter three times if he loves him. This rehabilitation of Peter where he is able to make up for the three time denial with a three time confession of love, does not excuse or make better or eliminate the damage that he did by denying Jesus.

It does equip him to lead the church, but his sin remained not in the eyes of God, but in the repercussions that were untold and that could have spiraled to a degree that no one knew.

The spiraling of the repercussion of sin is what this classic story of David and Bathsheba is really all about. There are some details in this story that we can easily avoid, and so I will gladly do it, but the repercussions of sin is not one of those details. Let's look at the story. David first and foremost is a king who loves to go into battle with his people. That is how he became famous and that is why the crowds would chant that Saul, his predecessor killed thousands and David killed tens of thousands. In just the chapter previous to this we have a list of those that David had killed. Look at 10:18 where we read that David killed 700 chariot teams, 40,000 horsemen, and wounded the commander to the point that he died. Not bad for a day's work.

So it is a little shocking and surprising to see him take a day off. It would be kind of like Aaron Rodgers taking the preseason off. But David does and the king would not only have the best of views in the city but it was a beautiful spring day and so he was roaming about checking out the land over which he was king and over which he had all the power that he could ever want. Power over the land, and as we shall see shortly, power over the people as well. Up to this point David has the Lord's heart.

But then we get to vs.2 where we read: "It happened". You know, when you read it happens, you know that something, that it, is going to be pretty big. We are not used to speaking in these terms about this story, and as I use this term for this story it just might ruin it for you, but this is not just the story of David and Bathsheba, this is the story of the rape of Bathsheba. Look at the verbs used in vs.4. David sent messengers to get her, (did she have a choice, who refuses the king and survives?), she came to him (again, because she had to), he lay with her (because he had the power to make that happen and there was nothing she could do about it).

No conversation takes place, no hint of intimacy, no caring and affection, no love, only rape and sin and power manifesting itself in an act of violation. We read that she goes off and tells no one, reaches out to him with the simple message that she was pregnant, but that is all we hear from her. Do you blame her, who was she going to tell? Do you blame those who don't jump up and down and report right away when power is in the mix? When you are in power rape carries with it another layer of protection for rapist. We see the headlines with Cuomo, we know the history of other politicians from Clinton to Trump. All people in power who sinned as David did, thinking their power would protect them, and then the sin spirals out of control to be hidden from no one.

We know from Scripture that this "it" displeased the Lord. Look at 11:27, but the thing that David had done, displeased the Lord. But what we don't know is the impact that it had on Bathsheba, as she struggled. It gets even worse as we read about the impact it had on her husband as David's sin was his death sentence, where David literally sends him to his death in order to cover up his own sin. Other soldiers die in that same battle so David's attempt to cover up his sin, to make his sin go away, involves the damage to Bathsheba that is unmentioned, and the death of a number of people planned and orchestrated by David.

Sin quickly spirals out of control and never stays unearthed. We know some of the price that David pays as a result of this sin. We read in vs. 10 of the following chapter that as a result of this sin the prophet Nathan tells David: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house." David confesses his sin, and is rehabilitated in a similar manner to Peter, but the

sin remains and the repercussion of that sin are seen through the generations in the family of David. The damage done as a result of that sin is irreversible.

Peter and David eventually both confronted their sin and without a doubt are forgiven of their sin. But their sin also, without a doubt, leaves a legacy that is difficult to shake. What are some of your legacy sins that you are having a hard time shaking? Maybe it is because you have not fully dealt with the repercussions of that sin. It is not unusual for me to talk to people in my office who have a hard time forgiving themselves for past sin. When I speak with them I ask them if they have approached those whom they have harmed and asked for forgiveness? Sometimes that is the barrier. Most of the time they will say, no, I just spoke to God about it and he forgave me.

That is true, but unless we address directly the person that we know we harmed, Peter and Jesus, David and Bathsheba and Uriah, then that sin and its repercussions may continue to be our legacy and it may continue to haunt us. What is your legacy? Will you be known more for your sin than how you have loved your neighbor? We are commanded to confront sin and the cost of sin is not eliminated by the forgiveness that we have in Jesus Christ. People are still hurt, people are still hurting.

In our lives we are confronted with both human desire and human power. Desire with all of its delight and power with all of its potential for death. May God bless us and keep us as we look to address our sin in a way that it does not become our legacy. Amen.