

Nathan: God's Word No Matter What

2 Samuel 12:1-10
Luke 3:7-20

August 5, 2018
Faith Community

It was an astonishing story. It was a scandalous thing. Someone in a position of power and respect initiating an extramarital affair, followed by an attempt to cover it up that resulted in two deaths. It would shake the nation if news got out, and of course news would get out.

This could very well have been last week's headline. Instead, it's ancient Israel. The guilty party is none other than King David, the one who loved God so very passionately, whose story we looked at last week.

In today's passage, Nathan enters the picture. He was a prophet. Now a prophet in the biblical understanding is not someone who predicts the future. First and foremost, a prophet proclaims God's word and lets the proverbial chips fall where they may. For Nathan it was addressing this horrific scandal. How would he do it?

Keep in mind that as king, David was the highest authority, the court of final appeal. He just might have Nathan executed for bringing this up. And Nathan knew it.

So into David's presence he goes. And he tells a story. He tells a story about a rich guy who cheated a poor person out of his most precious possession. In moral outrage, the king says whoever did this deserves to die! So the trap is set, David takes the bait, and with a cold, icy glare Nathan lays him out: "You are the man."

Now what?

David, to his credit, has the courage to face reality.

He confesses.
He repents.
He's forgiven.

You can read all about it in Psalm 51.

But there are still terrible consequences, and Nathan tells him what those will be.

This story marks the turning point of the book of 2 Samuel as well as David's life. The successes of the first

ten chapters are countered by the heartaches of the last twelve.

But we're looking at Nathan today and how he was able to stand up to the king. Where'd he get courage like that? He was a tireless advocate of fairness and justice. He was an intense guy. But more than that, the source of Nathan's courage: he was in love with God.

Nothing was more important to Nathan than living as a child of God.

His vision was clear.

His focus was laser sharp.

He knew who God had called him to be and what God had called him to do.

And when crunch time came, it was a no brainer. And it was because he loved God. God was his vision, his courage, his life. All of life found its source and focus in God. It's where you'll find all that too.

So here's what I want you to do: take what's most important in your life.

Family

Friendships

Career

The things you've worked so hard for to provide
for others

Country

Whatever it might be.

Spend a few minutes and write them all down. Next, make the liberating discovery that even the top thing on the list is really no higher than second place.

Throughout history many people who followed great dreams, met human need, spoke to issues of justice, gave people hope, and molded healthy lives did so precisely because God was number one in their lives, and all those other things found their focus that way. It was how they could keep going even when there seemed to be little hope.

Some of the great hospitals, foundations, causes and campaigns were God inspired and God focused. They weren't ends in themselves, but pathways to a greater good. And that's how it works.

Nathan risked his life in confronting the king because God had spoken. He would not be intimidated because God was his refuge and strength. There are times when I struggle with that. That's why I love Nathan, and John the Baptist.

John the Baptist had the diplomacy of a train wreck. He was a walking flamethrower. But he was also

Passionate
Driven
Consumed

He was also fulfilled, thrilled, and energized. Just like Nathan, John was in love with God.

And he laid people out with all the force of Nathan. And people couldn't get enough of him.

First he spoke to the whole crowd that came to see him. He told them to not even think that just because they were Presbyterians they'd be front row center at the pearly gates. He said 'out of these stones God can raise up Presbyterians,' and who knows, maybe that's how some of us got here. When they asked him what to do about it John said if they were filled with the Spirit of God it would show in how they live, what they do, how they make decisions and what their values were. They'd become amazingly generous, even with their food as they reach out to the poor.

Oh, my, this wasn't pretty, but people were eating it up.

Next he picked off the high profile wheeler dealers like ducks in a shooting gallery. 'Keep it honest,' he said. Just like that. Everyone knew what he meant.

He told members of the military to clean up their acts, quit complaining, treat people fairly, and learn to be content with life as it was. And they listened to him.

Where'd he get such clarity and courage? The same place Nathan got his and the same place you'll find yours. He loved God above and beyond anyone and anything.

And with that connection made, everything falls into place. Remember the list I asked you to come up with? When everything on that list is no higher than number two, and Jesus Christ is on top, it all comes back to you. You love the people in your life all the more deeply. You know you don't really own anything; you're just taking care of it for

a while. Your work takes on new meaning. And your community and country become so important that you're willing to stand up and be counted.

And you also learn something about yourself. Loving God gives you the freedom to be the person God's calling you to be.

Imagine. You don't have to impress anyone. Neither do you have to be impressed by anyone. You don't have to pretend you're someone you're not. You can be the person God's calling you to be, and you can do what God's calling you to do. All that when Jesus Christ is number one in your life.

Friends, we can be as busy as we want. We can get involved in worthy projects. We can build our careers or homes. We can join causes that we believe in. We can wear ourselves out for the people we love. We can even lose ourselves in church work. But there must be something deeper.

Watch Nathan.
Watch John.

Let your universe revolve around Jesus Christ.