A Word A Week: “Bathsheba”
2 Samuel 11:1-5

We’re in a series called A Word A Week. It’s like being on a train, stopping each week at significant places in the Old Testament. We stopped on the word, Good, in the Creation account. We stopped on the word, Covenant with Abraham and Sarah. We stopped with Moses on the word, Wilderness, and then last week with Gideon on the word, Fleece.

Today we stop on King David. Israel is out of slavery, out of the wilderness, has entered the Promised Land, settled in tribes, but now they want a king. God has been their king, but they want to be like other nations. They want a human king!

Well, they get one! The first king is Saul, and Saul is followed by David. It was during David’s reign that Israel came into the full promise of the covenant made with Abraham. They had the land. Now they had the great nation. Jerusalem became the capital. They had great military strength and prosperity. They had arrived! These are the Golden Years! And then there was Bathsheba.

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. (rah'-buh)
But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful.

David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, (e-lie’-um) the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.
Well, I don’t think they were that thankful! If you were making the Bible up, you wouldn’t put this stuff in it. Human error. Human frailty. Human sin and deprivation. I’d make it lot prettier, but sometimes it’s not.

Israel wanted a king. They demanded a king. (1 Sam. 8:19-20) God gave them a king, yet the kings were not perfect. They were human. The kings were flawed. They always have been. They always will be.

The psalmist writes;

“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. (Ps. 146:3-4)

After all this history of striving to obtain the promises of the covenant, King David risks it all. Why is it, at our pinnacle of success we are most vulnerable to fail? It’s the Humpty Dumpty Principle.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men.
Couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty together again.

King David fell off a very great wall.

The greatest king Israel ever knew had an affair with Bathsheba, “the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” I use the word “affair” loosely because as king, David had the power to demand her affection. Bathsheba really had no choice in the matter. But that wasn’t the worst of it. They conceived a son out of wedlock and David brought her husband, Uriah, in from battle so that he might think the child was his. It reads like a soap opera.

When Uriah refuses to be with his wife, due to a soldier’s vow, David sends him back to the front lines with the guarantee that he will be killed, which he was. Adultery, murder, lies, and the child out of wedlock dies. It could be a Netflix series if it weren’t so painful and true.

This is the great king of Israel? This is the person everyone cherished and admired? These are the “Golden Years?”

In his remorse, David writes Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51:1-2)

Can you imagine even asking for such a thing? And can you imagine God granting such a thing? But God did. God restored David.

Not only did God blot out his foul transgressions, but David and Bathsheba were married and became the parents of King Solomon, who built the holy temple of God! Solomon’s parents were David and Bathsheba! How can that possibly be? How can you overlook such tragedy? Where is the justice in all this?

Surely this is not an endorsement of sin. What David did was horrific. Forgiveness of such magnitude does not provide a license to sin again. On the contrary, forgiveness of this magnitude seeks to redeem the one who is lost. It can change them. It can restore them for a new future.

The Bathsheba story makes it clear that King David was not Israel’s Savior. It was God’s covenant with Israel that saved King David. Why God tolerates all this human debauchery is beyond our comprehension. Every human leader in the Bible is flawed, and yet God uses them. In the process, they become someone else, someone of depth and character, faith and resolve. That’s not where they start, but that’s where they end up. God shapes them, as a potter shapes the clay. The story is about God’s grace, not our achievements.

Hundreds of years after David, when the angel Gabriel came to Mary to tell her she was chosen to give birth to the Messiah, here’s what Gabriel said;

‘He (Jesus) will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.’

(Luke 1:32)

Why would the angel mention David? Maybe because David was synonymous with the Golden Years of Israel. The Messiah would be the true fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham and Sarah. Not David, Christ.

Christ will speak of a “new covenant,” sealed in his blood for the forgiveness of sins. And he spoke those words in Jerusalem, in the City of David, on the night of his arrest. David’s tomb was just blocks from where the Last Supper was held. Do you think Jesus might have had David in mind when he spoke the words, “…for the forgiveness of sins?”
From cover to cover, the Bible is about a God who will not let us go. Not at any time, not in any place, not for any reason. David and Bathsheba were the parents of Solomon, and King Solomon built the Temple of God. Other than the resurrection, I can’t think of a more powerful story of grace.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Congregation: Amen!