

# Sermon

## Sunday, August 11, 2019

Charleston, SC

8:00 am & 10:30 am Sermon ~ 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17, 12:1-7, Psalm 51; Luke 22:1-6

*The Cure for Betrayal*

The Rev. Al Zadig Jr.

It's one of the saddest words in the English language – betrayal. I wonder if in your life, you've ever been betrayed. It's one of the most devastating forms of pain a human can endure, because true betrayal never comes from your enemies, but your friends.

Maybe that's the saddest thing about betrayal, it always comes from those who first were friends.

The most hideous icon in American History of betrayal was Benedict Arnold, who in 1776 became the American Revolutionary War Hero for defeating the English in key battles! Yet Arnold never felt he received the recognition he deserved and so unbelievably, and just three years later, Arnold would enter secret negotiations with the British, essentially switching sides to join the ranks of Judas as a traitor. Justice would be served when, on January 14, 1801 at the age of 60, Benedict Arnold would die a pain-filled death from gout.

Betrayal is what 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 11 is all about. But before we go into that tempest, let's review of where we are in Samuel and Gospel Project. To this point, King David is on a roll. David with humility defeated Goliath. David served King Saul with grace, and honor. David successfully defended against the jealousy of Saul. Out of love for David, a group forms called "The Mighty Men of David," consisting of 30 chiefs who loved David and would fight for him against Saul. One of them is Uriah, who would do anything for David. Remember that name. Saul dies. David becomes King. David then shows radical grace to Saul's grandson Mephibosheth by granting him a permanent place at his table!

David you are in the zone! Which makes what I'm about to say so painful. I wish it was a chapter never written. Chapter 11 of second Samuel. No coincidence here -

Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The gut-wrenching story of the spiritual bankruptcy of David in the form of total betrayal.

Let me take you there. It was a cool evening in May, and David is on his penthouse rooftop apartment. Life is good. By the way, the highest temptation to sin in our life often comes when things are going well in our lives. David is flying high. If you've been to Jerusalem, you know how the houses are built nearly on top of each other. For that reason, David can see many other tiered rooftops. That's when David, who is married, spots on one rooftop the beautiful Bathsheba, who is married. The rest of the story is all too familiar. David calls for her. They have relations. Bathsheba gets pregnant. And then David does everything he can to get out of it.

Sin is like quicksand, the more we try to cover it up, the deeper we get trapped in it. First David lies to cover up his sin. Then he sends Bathsheba's husband to the front line in warfare to have him killed in battle. My friends, just one visual of Bathsheba on a rooftop leads to the breaking of five commandments! David covets the wife of another, commits adultery, steals Bathsheba from her husband, murders the husband, and lies about it repeatedly. But it is the betrayals that kill, literally. David in one fell swoop betrays God, who appointed him king! He betrays his nation. He betrays his very own wife Abigail, lest we forget her. He betrays Eliam. Eliam was the father of Bathsheba and one of the members of David's own personal secret service. Chiefly it was a betrayal of Uriah, the faithful husband of Bathsheba. Uriah was one of the 30 chiefs of David's Mighty Men! Uriah risked his life for David over and over in battle when David was fighting for his life against Saul. In return, David

betrays Uriah twice. David steals his wife and orders his death. All that from a friend, not an enemy. Oh, had chapter 11 never happened.

One of the eternal truths of the Bible is that it is so transparent. The Bible never covers up the pain of life. Bible characters are never made out to be perfect and rosy. But back to David. David how could you do it? You led from your knees in humility, and had such periods of faithfulness. You who wrote most of the Psalms, including Psalm 55, where we read, "For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; but it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together, within God's house we walked in the house of God...." David, you wrote this. How could you?

What does this tell us about us? God? One of the pillars of our faith that makes Christianity different from all world religions is our fundamental belief in original sin.

Thanks to Adam and Eve, all of us have the ability, the capability, to sin. When we read Scripture, look at all the characters who fell on their face in sin. Abraham. Moses. Solomon. Ironically Solomon's fall is told in another Chapter 11, 1 Kings Chapter 11... -another spiritual bankruptcy! We think of Peter who denied Jesus. It's why Jesus Himself, in Mark 10 says, "We can't be good because we aren't good." Yes, all have sinned.

I remember when we first got our puppy named Jazz. We bring him home to the Rectory and the first thing he does is to sprint across the yard through our iron fence into the street to start barking at a horse and carriage; in fact, he gets under the carriage and barks at the horse from behind. We were all terrified. Just then, one of our basket-weaving dear friends

said, "Father Al, is that your dog?" "Yes ma'am." "Oh, he got a lot of bad in him!" And so do we. Original Sin.

Gilbert Anchondo shocked the world this week. Gilbert's son died in the El Paso shooting. Twenty-four hours after the evil tragedy, Gilbert said this, "The aggressor, he could have been my son. I forgive him because he had the devil inside him." The aggressor could have been my son. The betrayer could have been me. Original sin means we are all capable. The moment we say I could never do 'it,' whatever that "it" is, is the moment we take a step toward doing it. The power of sin is like gravity, always there, pulling us into its web. None of us has the power to resist it on our own. King David, the man after God's own heart, betrays God, his wife, his nation, and two mighty defenders and friends.

Jesus knew the sin of betrayal. Jesus suffered betrayal from Judas, a friend and a disciple. Look at Luke, Chapter 22. Judas was in the cabinet of Jesus for 3 years. Judas sees the greatest life ever lived up close and personal. Judas witnesses the miracles. He witnesses Jesus raise dead Lazarus, for God's sake! Judas hears the Sermon on the Mount from the preacher! Judas hears the warnings of the narrow road teaching. Yes, with Judas' own eyes, he sees the clearest evidence. With his ears, he hears the finest teaching. With his feet, he follows the greatest example. Yet Judas betrays Jesus, teaching us that with original sin in our heart, we could be the betrayer as well as the betrayed.

If you've been betrayed, please know Jesus knows betrayal. A betrayal that would lead him to the cross. On the cross before He dies, Jesus says those words, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." After the betrayal, when Jesus died on the cross, he took every weight of sin and betrayal and crucified it there on the cross, meaning the betrayal is not ours to carry anymore. Jesus loves us so much he gave us the power of the Holy Spirit to be our sustainer, to help us forgive the Davids and the Judas. Remember that line: failing to forgive is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. If we've been the Davids and the Judas', the Holy Spirit exists to help us see our sin, to give us the strength to repent. Jesus loves us so much he gave us the Holy Spirit to convict us, to help us feel the weight of our sin, not for condemnation, but so we can see the beauty of God's

forgiveness. The more we understand our sinfulness, the bad in here, the more we see and grasp the greatness of God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus! Jesus didn't die to condemn us, but to save us.

I think of those amazing words from the Westminster Presbyterian Confession. I know it's like a Gamecock taking a page out of a Clemson Tiger playbook, but this is too good not to share. "As there is no sin too small but deserves damnation, yet there is no sin too great that it can bring damnation on those who repent." All because of what Jesus has done for us through the Holy Spirit.

And this is what led that old English Reformer John Owen to say, "Be killing sin or Sin will be killing you." Yes, even unforgiveness is a sin. Crucify the sin that on small hinges can take us out.

Okay, so how does this work out in real time? I want to close with the Nathan Method. Back to David one last time. It's now a year later. God does something he often does, he puts a physical person into our life to help us see our sin. God puts Nathan into David's life to help him see his own blind spot of betrayal. Nathan was one of David's inner circle who had the freedom to speak truth into David's life. He was one of those guys who felt as comfortable giving David a NO as well as a YES. David's Nathan sees the betrayal unfold like a slow-motion train wreck. But notice what Nathan doesn't do. Nathan doesn't confront David with condemnation. Nathan tells David a parable of justice in chapter 12. The parable of a rich man with many sheep, and a poor man with just one ewe lamb. That poor man's lamb was part of his family, the bible says the lamb was like a daughter to the poor man. That daughter lamb shared his food, drank from his cup, and slept in his arms. Nathan continues, "But then the rich man takes that wee lamb of the poor man and kills it to be eaten." David's heart is enraged, "Nathan, whoever did that should be damned." Silence. Nathan looks at David and says four words that should shake us to our core, "David, you are that man."

David's heart is convicted. But notice, those four words were the end, not the beginning.

Nathan went for grace first, not condemnation. Nathan wants David to identify his sin within. Nathan's strategy is conviction and conversion, not condemnation. We know this works because David would go on to write Psalm 51 in response to his sin: "Create in me a Clean Heart O God, renew a right spirit within me." Those are words from a man converted, not condemned.

My friends, if you've been the Davids, the Judas, know that the Holy Spirit will often bring Nathans into your everyday life, don't be offended. Don't reject them. Repent! That voice could very well be the voice of the Holy Spirit saving you from condemnation. If you've been Uriah, Eliam, or Abigail, through the Holy Spirit it's time to heal, it's time to forgive. And as part of your healing, be willing to be a Nathan to others, show the grace, go for conversion and not condemnation.

Finally, the story of a man named Wes. Wes owned a small agency that handled speaking engagements and literary rights for Christian authors. Long story short, he found through an audit that his own business partners had betrayed him financially. It was devastating, and crushing. By God's grace Wes made it through financially, but not relationally. One day as he was coming home from dropping his daughter off in college and, in his word, "never feeling emptier," a prayer formed on his lips. Lord, fill my emptiness with your presence. As he prayed this simple prayer, he said, "A film immediately lifted from my eyes. The Lord convicted me that not only was forgiveness possible, it was required. It was the only way to fill the emptiness and stop the anger."

Betrayal. We are all capable of the most heinous sins. Only Jesus through the Holy Spirit can fill the emptiness, and help us repent, forgive, and heal. My friends, be open to the Nathans. Be a Nathan.