

## David and Bathsheba

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on the 9th Sunday after Pentecost, July 21, 1991. Scripture Lessons: 2 Samuel 11:1-15; Psalm 53; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34.

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

"In a surprise announcement," Jay Leno said a couple of weeks ago on the Tonight show, "Donald Trump said he and Marla Maples will be getting married. They've been talking all week about breaking up. Now it was just the other day Marla Maples said, If Trump finds God he'll come back to her." Then with his puckish, boyish smile, he continued, "She's pretty lucky he didn't find God earlier or else he wouldn't have left his wife and kids to play around with her."

Dr. Earl D. Wilson, professor of clinical and counseling psychology, writes, "When people say yes to what they know is wrong, they begin to lose contact with reality". The truth of that observation is played out in the newspapers and on the TV every day.

In an article in Together magazine, Maureen Grant writes: "Our next door neighbors were separating. Elaine had been having an affair with a business acquaintance. Two homes were broken- four lives would never be the same.

"'Well,' I told my husband smugly, 'at least you'll never have to worry about your wife being unfaithful.'

"Infidelity was the furthest thing from my mind. I naively thought that as a Christian I was safe from temptation. Nothing like that could ever

happen to me! Little did I know that a few months later I would face one of the strongest temptations I had ever encountered in my 10 years as a Christian.

"A co-worker at the office, Doug, and I began to have an occasional cup of coffee together. I assured myself that there was nothing wrong with these 'dates' - Doug was just a friend whose company I enjoyed. Yet I began to realize how much I looked forward to these meetings. The many compliments Doug gave me bolstered my ego. And soon I was telling him my personal problems and revealing confidences that should have been shared with my husband alone.

"Before I knew it, a fantasy developed in my mind. At first it happened occasionally, but it reached a point where my thought-life centered on this man. I began mentally to rehearse details of an affair with Doug. Fidelity toward my husband looked colorless in comparison to the inviting relationship I could be having. To add to the temptation, Doug was suggesting meetings outside working hours."

When people say yes to what they know is wrong, they begin to lose contact with reality. Maureen was losing contact with reality. Fortunately, she confided in a friend who advised her to run from the source of temptation. She changed jobs. She attempted to change her thought life.

She writes, "I thought of the trashy novels I read, the soap operas I watched where characters hopped from one lover to another, apparently

suffering no ill consequences. I examine my relationship with my husband. All too often we'd been taking each other for granted! I reminded myself that my husband was a gift from the Lord, and I chose to make our marriage the most important relationship in my life."

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, King David remained in Jerusalem, in safety, in luxury, while his army was at war. It happened, late one afternoon. David rose from his couch. He was walking about on the roof listlessly, not really looking for trouble. The leisure and luxury he enjoyed had led only to boredom, idleness and temptation.

He saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful so David sent someone to inquire about her. "She's Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, wife of Uriah the Hittite." She's married. Her husband, Uriah, is a loyal, conscientious soldier; a Hittite, not even a Jew, risking his life for David's kingdom while David is dallying with his wife.

David sent someone to get her. Kings, or anyone with great power, often get what they want. So "she came to him, and he lay with her.... Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent a told David, 'I'm pregnant'".

So David recalls Uriah from the front lines hoping he'll go home and spend the night with his wife. But Uriah refuses to enjoy marital bliss while his comrades are facing death on the battlefield. So David writes

Uriah's death warrant and sends it, by Uriah, to Joab, the commander of his forces. "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."

When people say yes to what they know is wrong, they begin to lose contact with reality. David had lost contact with reality.

Peter Marshall, the dynamic preacher of Washington D.C., New York Avenue Presbyterian Church back in the Forties, once said, "One of the devil's tricks is this: When we choose evil, usually we get what we want at once and pay for it afterward." David got what he wanted at once but at what a price. "The bills always come due," Marshall wrote. "And what's more, they're not all presented to you. Payments must also be made by those close to you, bound to you through all eternity by ties of blood and bonds of love." David was to find this out for the rest of his life.

Like David, we live in a time in which temptation confronts us, often when we're not even looking for it.

The Earl Wilson family arrived in their hotel room at about nine o'clock, tired from a long day's travel. They decided to relax and watch a little TV in hopes that it would help them unwind. Mike, thirteen, took the responsibility for finding the best show. "We're lucky", they thought. "This place has cable TV. We'll have lots of choices." In less than ten seconds, Mike found himself looking directly at a woman's bare breast as she crawled into bed with her lover. He quickly turned the channel as his older sister

taunted him. 'I'll bet you liked that,' she teased.

We live in an age in which it's nearly impossible to avoid the entertainment and advertising industry's exploitation of human sexual arousal. Only a few minutes of watching television or browsing at the newsstand makes a teenager or adult aware that sex is a powerful force. Mike, like King David, will have to personally decide how to deal with this kind of sexual stimulation. So will his older sister and brother, and so will his younger sisters. We can close our eyes temporarily, but the media's emphasis on sex won't go away.

As an adult male and a parent, I'm aware that sexual temptations are not limited to youth. In God's providence God chose to give us sexuality for a lifetime. As long as we are sexually alive, we're sexually vulnerable. (The above is from Earl White, Sexual Sanity).

King David wasn't the last person to have his world shattered by a woman saying, "I'm pregnant." Steven Lee, a retired minister and a family counselor in the United Church of Canada sat across the desk from an anguished mother who had come for counseling. Her high school daughter went to Sunday School and worship and was active in the youth group. She got good grades in school and yet she came home night and announced to her parents, "I'm pregnant." Her parents couldn't understand why she could have done something so contrary to their values and expectations.

"I can't think of anything more dreadful than having my teenaged

daughter announce that she's pregnant!" the girl's mother said.

"There is something worse than that," her minister replied. "A pregnant teenager who has no parents to come home to, or parents who will reject her when she does."

We need to be a church family where men and women and young people will be able to come home to without fear of rejection no matter what they have done contrary to Christian values and expectations. David belonged to a faith community which didn't take adultery lightly, not even when it was committed by the king. But he belonged to a community of faith, created by the living God, the Father of Jesus Christ, who wants all his people to live in freedom and forgiveness.

~~I'm glad I'm a part of a church that isn't afraid to talk about these~~ things. I'm glad I'm a part of a church that offers the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to all sorts and kinds of people caught up in the sexual confusion of our times. I'm glad I'm a part of a congregation where there are people to whom you can turn for counsel and support no matter what you've done, no matter who you are or what you are; people who can be the bearers of good news to you of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: Almighty God: you know that in this world we are under great pressure, so that, at times, we do not stand. Stiffen our resolve and make our faith strong, so we may dig in against temptation and, by your power, overcome; and whenever we wander, in mercy find us and bring us back home to a family who welcomes us with outstretched arms. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.