

Genealogy

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1 ESV)

The Wife of Uriah
December 19th, 2021
2 Samuel 11
Rev. Levi denBok

Introduction:

Good morning!

I must confess before we go any further – our sermon this morning is not going to feel like your typical, last-Sunday-before-Christmas sermon. But I would also like to say that – while this sermon may not hit the “Christmasy” notes that we’re used to hitting, it is a very appropriate text to prepare us to marvel at the manger.

We have been making our way through the five women listed in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. We’ve considered Tamar – the forgotten and neglected widow, Rahab – the prostitute who responded with faith, and Ruth – the noble Moabitess. Next week we will celebrate as we revel in the story of Mary – the mother of Jesus.

But today we turn our attention to one of the most disappointing and disillusioning stories in all the Bible. I don’t say that lightly. The Bible is filled with stories of sin, murder, and adultery. But this one story in particular stands out above the rest because of the man that it involves.

Let me read to you now from Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, **the son of David**, the son of Abraham.
(Matthew 1:1 ESV)

Let’s pause there. I’ve told you this already, but today of all days I want to make sure that you hear it. The PRIMARY purpose of Matthew’s genealogy is to prove the Jesus is a legitimate descendant in the line of David. The Jewish people were longing for the Messiah King who would

pick up where David left off and who would restore the nation of Israel to her former glory. Tuck that away, because that will prepare you to see and understand what comes next. Let's jump back in now:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by **the wife of Uriah**, (Matthew 1:2-6 ESV)

Here we find the fourth woman in this genealogy – the fourth curious footnote. This addition is perhaps more curious than all the rest. This fourth woman is not even named! That's odd because Matthew knew her name! He is referring here to Bathsheba, yet he intentionally introduces her in this genealogy as the *wife of Uriah*.

Why is that?

Matthew seems to be taking David off of the pedestal with this inclusion. His listeners were longing for another David. But we don't need another David. We had a David, and he did some horrendous things. We had a David, and he proved to be just as prone to sin and rebellion as the rest of us.

We had a David. But God is sending us someone who is going to be SO MUCH MORE!

Any Jew reading this genealogy would have understood the point that Matthew was making with this insertion. They were all familiar with the story of Uriah's wife. We find that story in 2 Samuel 11. Please turn there with me now.

Every pastor has a collection of memorable one-liners that he uses to plant truths in the memory of his congregation. One of Pastor Paul's lines that I'll never forget is that David was like an arrow shot at the sun – He pointed in the right direction, but he ultimately fell tragically short. Well, the story that we are going to consider this morning marks the beginning of David's catastrophic descent.

Our text this morning is a vivid illustration of the destructive power of sin. It reminds us that even our greatest heroes are not immune from the rebellion that courses through our veins. As we prepare to celebrate the incarnation – as we revel in the mystery of God with us – Matthew wants to make sure that we see this. We’re going to work our way slowly through 2 Samuel 11 as we ask the question:

What Does This Story Teach Us About Sin?

Look with me at verse 1. Hear now God’s holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today:

In the spring of the year, **the time when kings go out to battle**, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. **But David remained at Jerusalem.**

² It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. (2 Samuel 11:1-2 ESV)

Let’s stop here and consider what we’ve read.

The Israelite army is valiantly advancing against the Ammonites. Now remember, David was known as a warrior king. He rose to prominence after he famously defeated Goliath and he continued to accumulate accolades. In his earlier years, women would sing in the marketplace:

“Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands.” (1 Samuel 18:7b ESV)

Yet, in our text this morning we find David – the warrior king – rolling off of his couch late in the afternoon while his army is off fighting his battles for him. We learn in this first scene that:

1. **Idle hands are the devil’s workshop**

The army left in the spring, but David decided that he could sit this one out. You can almost envision him standing up from his couch looking around the palace wondering, “What am I going to do today?” He looks over at the harp. He could spend an hour or two practicing his scales. But

he did that yesterday. Perhaps he could exercise? Or he could call for the scrolls and spend some time reviewing the law?

He knows that he needs to get away from the couch, so he moseys over to the rooftop. As he stands in the afternoon sun breathing in some fresh air and looking out over his kingdom, he sees a beautiful woman bathing.

Suddenly, David's boredom disappears. He knows what he will devote his time and attention to today.

The old adage is right: Idle hands are the devil's workshop.

Our enemy seizes upon our boredom. David should have been at war with his men. David was the King of Israel – there was no reason for him to resting on his couch into the afternoon! And it was there – in the neglecting of his responsibilities – that the enemy set a trap for him. Our enemy is no fool. He knows our weakness. Matthew Henry says it well:

When we are out of the way of our duty we are in the way of temptation.¹

Have you ever experienced this?

Temptation hits hardest when you're home alone. Temptation hits hardest when you've stayed up later than the rest of your family. Temptation hits hardest when you've just numbed your brain with two hours of video games, or two hours of Netflix, or two hours of social media. Temptation hits hardest when the boredom sets in.

So busy yourself with the Master's work. Fill your day with things that are worth doing.

And, if your circumstances force you into a season of boredom, pray diligently and stay on guard. Recognize that you are in a dangerous position. Idle hands really are the devil's workshop.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible (Unabridged)*, Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 8187.

Now, perhaps you're sitting here this morning thinking, "Boy, I'm glad So-and-so is hearing this! I remember when I was facing these challenges..." but I want to make sure that you see something else in these opening verses and that is that:

2. Temptation comes for us all

As I mentioned earlier, David was the arrow that was shot at the sun! David was the greatest king that Israel had ever known! God Himself said of David:

'I have found in David the son of Jesse **a man after my heart**, who will do all my will.'
(Acts 13:22b ESV)

David – the giant slayer; the Psalm writer; the man after God's own heart! – found himself staring lustfully at the woman next door. David – the one who was to be executor of God's justice – succumbed to his sin and committed one of the greatest injustices that Israel had ever seen. Who would have thought that the brave, pure-hearted shepherd boy who penned Psalm 23 would also be the selfish, perverted king of 2 Samuel 11?

Please, hear me this morning: We are all capable of terrible, tragic, terrifying sin. All of us.

Have you ever been let down by a leader that you trusted? Have you ever felt that sick feeling that comes when you realize that your hero is just another selfish, flawed sinner like the rest of us? Well, take that feeling and multiply it by 100, and you'll get an idea of the impact of this sin on the people of Israel. This was DAVID! There had never been another king like him!

How deeply disillusioned must they have been when they came to realize the David was just one more wretched sinner.

Let's make sure that we learn this lesson. Good people with years of faithfulness behind them have fallen. Godly, respectable, admirable people have let their guard down and have made peace with sin and have destroyed a lifetime of ministry in an instant. Ravi Zacharias, Bill Hybels, Carl Lentz, and this is just a snapshot of the list from the last three years!

The enemy is baiting us! He's waiting for us to let our guard down! He's waiting for us to say, "I can loosen up a little bit – I've been a Christian for 25 years! Is it REALLY going to be that bad if I adopt this new hobby that keeps my family out of church twice a month? Do I REALLY need to

stop watching this show just because there are some explicit scenes? Do I REALLY need to say no to this relationship? This hobby? This bad habit?”

Listen: Your enemy doesn't care if you've been clean for one year or twenty. He doesn't care if you're in your teens or your eighties. He doesn't care if you're a new believer or an elder or a pastor. He just wants you to let your guard down.

David hadn't cultivated a habit of staring at women from his roof. He didn't have a track record of stealing other men's wives. Up to this point, David had been a faithful, admirable man. He made one decision not to go to war. He took one stroll onto the roof. He found himself faced with temptation, he let down his guard, and destruction ensued. Temptation comes for us all.

Let's get back into the text and pickup at verse 3:

³ And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” ⁴ So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. (2 Samuel 11:3-4 ESV)

Here we learn that:

3. Sin longs for forbidden fruit

This episode with David shares striking similarities with the episode that we find in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve were free to eat from any tree in the garden. There was only ONE tree that was off limits. Similarly, David was the King. He had many wives, and ANY unmarried woman in the kingdom would marry him in an instant. But his focus was drawn to a woman that even the king couldn't have – the wife of Uriah.

There is something about forbidden fruit that seizes upon our hearts. There is something about the thrill of doing what we know we should not do.

We HATE to be told, “no.” Don't we? The devil whispers in our ear, “Did God really say?” and we entertain his lies. We convince ourselves that God IS withholding from us. We convince ourselves that happiness IS on the other side of that fence. We make peace with our sin. We justify it. It looks good to us, and so we silence our conscience and we reject God's voice and we TAKE IT.

That is the pattern of sin. We saw it in the garden, we see it in our own lives, and we see it here in this story.

David called for Uriah's wife. Bathsheba couldn't say no. David was the king. He used his position and his authority to take advantage of Bathsheba. David – the king after God's own heart – raped Bathsheba.

Then, having tasted the forbidden fruit, and no doubt feeling ashamed for his disobedience, David sent her back home. The thrill of the disobedience subsided. The reality of the sin set in. David – like ever sinner before and after him – was left asking himself the question: "Was it worth it?"

It wasn't.

It never is.

The boundaries that God set in place are wise. His ways are right and lead to life. The forbidden fruit makes us promises that it can't deliver on. It leaves us wallowing in shame and it comes with consequences that we never anticipated. That's what we find as we jump back into this story. Let's pick back up at verse 5:

⁵ And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

⁶ So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰ When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" ¹¹ Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." ¹² Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³ And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. (2 Samuel 11:5-13 ESV)

Here, we learn that:

4. One sin leads to another

One sin always leads to another. In this story – as is often the case – David’s shame kicked in and he immediately sought to use whatever means possible to hide his previous sin. In his efforts to hide, those sins piled up.

That feeling of shame – that overwhelming urge to hide your sin – is one of the worst feelings you could ever feel. We weren’t made to hide. Adam and Eve were made to walk with God in the garden. And they did. And they were fully known by God and by one another, and they were unashamed! They had nothing to hide!

But sin ruins our intimacy. Sin makes hidings of us all.

David went to great lengths to hide his sin. Plan A was relatively harmless. He called for Uriah to come home from the battle to provide an update. He assumed that Uriah, after providing the update, would spend the night at home with his wife and then he would never be the wiser that David was the father. Unfortunately for David, Uriah was a noble man, and he refused to indulge in the comforts of home while his brothers were on the battlefield and the ark of the covenant remained in a tent.

So, David moved to plan B. He kept Uriah for another night, only this time he forced Uriah to drink until the wine had overtaken him. Sometimes we blow past this detail and rush to the horror of the next step of David’s plan but take a second to think about how awful this scene is. Matthew Henry puts it this way:

God will put a cup of trembling into the hands of those who put into the hands of others the cup of drunkenness. Robbing a man of his reason is worse than robbing him of his money, and drawing him into sin worse than drawing him into any trouble whatsoever.²

David – the man after God’s own heart – compelled Uriah to sin in order to rob him of his reason. What a tragic scene. Unfortunately for David, even inebriated, Uriah displayed more dignity and restraint than his king.

² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible (Unabridged)*, Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 8195.

Here's an important lesson for us this morning: Until confession and repentance happens, sin multiplies. It's like a virus in this respect. It is in its very nature to multiply and to infect others.

In this way, you can imagine hell as something of a quarantine. Jesus has offered to bear our sin and to remove it from us as far as the east is from the west. He has offered to willingly take on our infection and to eliminate it once and for all at the cross.

But some people don't want that. They want their sin. They like the virus – even though it is constantly spreading and hurting everyone in their orbit. And you can do that. You can choose to keep the virus and celebrate the virus and spread the virus. Just know that one day, God is going to take you and everyone else who has chosen to make peace with the sin that is ruining the world and He is going to lock you up in the pit of hell for a FOREVER quarantine so that the world can flourish in His holiness again as it was intended to.

On sin leads to another. Thus, desperate to hide his sin, David initiated his final plan. Let's jump back in at verse 14:

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die."

¹⁶ And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. ¹⁷ And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. (2 Samuel 11:14-17 ESV)

In this final scene, we learn that:

5. Sin hurts everyone

Uriah was murdered by his own king. And he wasn't the only one. The company with him were forced to fight too close to the wall and many of them were struck down as well. These were men with wives and families – men who were loyal to king David and who were willing to follow his orders – even when the orders sounded like a meaningless suicide mission.

And one must wonder how this turn of events impacted Joab? He was a commander of the army. The lives of these soldiers were entrusted to his care. David essentially forced Joab to murder his own men – to betray the trust of the soldiers that he had faithfully led through many battles.

Bathsheba – having already been robbed of her dignity – was robbed also of her husband. The child that would be born from this affair would go on to die as well. The fallout from David’s sin impacted the entire nation of Israel.

And it all started with a little boredom. A little boredom led to a little glance from the roof top. Then a little rush of excitement. Then a little entitlement. Then a little compromise. Then a little secret. Then a little justification. Then a little visit, a little alcohol, a little letter. And then, innumerable families ruined, lives lost, people hurt, trust broken, damage done. Matthew Henry warns:

The beginnings of sin are therefore to be dreaded; for who knows where they will end?³

Your little, personal sin is not nearly as personal as you assume. Sin is no little thing. Sin spreads. Sin infects. And sin hurts EVERYONE. Our passage concludes:

²⁶ When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. ²⁷ And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. **But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.** (2 Samuel 11:26-27 ESV)

Why did David’s sin displease the Lord? Is it because God has a rigid plan for our sexuality, and He longs to rob us of joy? Is it because God saw David having fun with Bathsheba and He couldn’t tolerate David’s happiness?

No, it displeased the Lord because when we reject His way and do things our own way, we leave a trail of broken people in our wake. It displeased the Lord because EVERYTHING that is wrong with the world is because of sin and yet we all keep perpetuating it. We keep spreading the virus – all of us – even King David!

³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible (Unabridged)*, Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 8201.

That's the story of 2 Samuel 11 – the story of Uriah's wife. It is a story about the depth and depravity of sin. A story that, properly understood, should leave you feeling absolutely and utterly hopeless.

And this is the story that Matthew chose to allude to in his genealogy of Jesus Christ. He didn't need to mention Bathsheba, and he CERTAINLY didn't need to mention that she was the wife of Uriah! But he did. Why is that?

Why Is This Curious Footnote In The Christmas Story?

Let's remember what we saw at the beginning of our time together this morning. Matthew wrote for a primarily Jewish audience – to a people who were longing for another King like David!

In fact, one of the primary reasons why so many of the Jews rejected Jesus was because he didn't line up with their expectations. Every time they tried to force him into a position of political power, he would slip through the crowd. Every time they tried to position him in opposition to the Romans, he would remind them that he had no desire to take the place of Caesar.

They were frustrated with Jesus because they wanted him to be – they expected him to be – another David!

So, Matthew intentionally begins his gospel with a reminder that, while Jesus IS a true descendant of David, he is NOT simply another iteration of the previous King.

And, he positions us to remember that that is a GOOD THING! We don't need another David. King David could not deliver his people from their deepest problem. King David could not deliver HIMSELF from the deepest problem. King David actively perpetuated the problem!

We don't need a king to deliver us from the Romans! We don't need a king to deliver us from poverty! We don't need a king to deliver us from COVID! We don't need a king to deliver us from secularism!

We don't need another David! We need someone who will address our deepest problem. We need someone with the power to once and for all set us free from the curse of sin! And we need that

salvation to stretch beyond the confines of Israel to reach the entire world! THAT is what we are meant to see in this curious footnote!

Matthew is preparing us to recognize that:

1. Jesus is the King who will save us from our sins!

THAT is why Jesus came! THAT is what Jesus accomplished! And just so you know that we're not out on a limb this morning, if you scroll a few verses past Matthew's genealogy of Jesus you will find Joseph's encounter with the angel of the Lord. Listen to what the angel says:

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for **he will save his people from their sins.**” (Matthew 1:20b-21 ESV)

That's what Jesus came to do and, can I tell you some wonderful news this morning? HE DID IT!

He lived for us. He obeyed for us. He suffered for us. He bore our sins for us. And then he cried out from the cross – bearing all the weight and the anguish of our sin – the sin of adultery, and murder, and rape, and deceit, and every other sin that is wreaking havoc in our world – he bore it ALL and then he cried out: IT IS FINISHED!!!

Hallelujah! IT IS FINISHED!

DONE!

ACCOMPLISHED!

Our Saviour King has come – the King that we need has come – and he has provided an answer for the problem that plagues our world. In his first coming, he ensured the victory and offered us his salvation. In his second coming, he will do away with sin and death once and for all and will lock it up and throw away the key! And PRAISE GOD FOR THAT!

Can I tell you something? I am so sick and tired of sin! I am sick and tired of watching it ruin marriages! I'm sick and tired of watching it wreak havoc on families! I'm sick and tired of feeling utterly helpless as people that I love are deceived by the evil one, lured by the forbidden fruit and knocked off of the road that leads to life! I'm sick and tired of seeing that same sin in my OWN

HEART! I'm sick and tired of living in a world where we collectively choose to ignore the true problem that underlies every other problem. We fight about politics. We fight about policies. We fight about ANYTHING and EVERYTHING except for the one thing that is truly dividing us!

If you don't see the brokenness of this world – if you don't see the problem of sin – then you'll never understand the indescribable glory of the baby in the manger. God is working in the midst of the brokenness. He entered in. He took it on. He made a way. When you see that, those familiar songs strike you differently.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining 'TILL HE APPEARED, and the soul felt it's worth.
A thrill of hope! The weary world rejoices! For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn'
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born!
O night divine! O night! O night divine!

The King has come!

The Saviour of the WORLD has come!

There is hope! See it with the eyes of faith.

There is a God who loves us – who entered into our captivity to set us free!

There is an answer to this overwhelming brokenness that surrounds us and indwells us!

There is light breaking through the darkness!

There is a voice cutting through the chaos!

For those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

It. Is. Finished.

Merry Christmas. Let's pray together.