

Sharing the Light: The Light of Truth

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2 Samuel 12:1-9

and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Samuel 12:1-9 (NRSV)

Let's join together in prayer. *Gracious God open us up. Open our eyes that we might see, and our ears that we might hear your word in the midst of these words, and open our hearts that we might feel. And then, O Lord, open our hands that we might serve. Amen*

In November of last year Steve Easterbrook was removed as the CEO of McDonald's for an inappropriate relationship he had with a subordinate. In May of 2018, eight different women accused Morgan Freeman of sexual harassment. Morgan Freeman - he plays God in the movies.

He exudes just this calm. I thought it couldn't be true about Morgan Freeman. Now I don't know if it is or not or even about Steve Easterbrook. But it occurs to me that sometimes we have this picture of someone, and then the reality of how they live their lives or what happens sort of jolts and shocks us.

I remember when I was a young pastor, and Walker Railey attacked his wife in the garage of their home. He was the pastor at First United Methodist Church in Dallas and was an awesome amazing pastor. Just the fact that that could happen sort of upsets the ground that you stand on.

Have you ever had a hero, someone you respect, and someone you believe in? Someone who has this ethical lapse and this falling?

Price Waterhouse Cooper did a study in 2018, and here's what they found, "Thirty-nine percent of forced CEO exits from companies were the result of ethical lapses rather than financial performance or board struggles. It is the first time in the study's history that ethical lapses were a greater driver of forced CEO departures than financial or board-related shakeups, which account for 35 and 13 percent of exits in 2018."

Oh, my! What a world we live in! Today's scripture could be written for just this time, just this moment when ethics in the world around us are called into question all the time.

So here's the story. In the Scriptural account up until 2 Samuel King David is cruising along. He's had all sorts of challenges and struggles, but he overcomes them all. He faces a giant and slays the giant. He escapes from Saul. He doesn't take Saul's life - he chooses to do that. He's like the "Golden Boy," and he's doing everything right. He's now the anointed king, not only over Judah but over all of Israel as a united kingdom. Everything is going great, and maybe that's the problem. That everything was going great. Because in 2 Samuel 12 begins with the words, "In the spring of the year when kings go out to war, David remained on his couch."

So he's unemployed. I don't mean he didn't have a job, but he didn't have something he was leaning into. So maybe he's bored, or maybe the power has just gone to his head, and he believes all his own press releases. I don't know what's going on in his mind. But he looks out of his window, and he sees a beautiful young woman named Bathsheba bathing on her roof. And he sends for her. Her husband Uriah is off on the front fighting for David, fighting in David's army and he sends for her. Now she didn't have a choice. This is the "me-too" experience in David's life. He's called for her, and she's a subordinate who can't deny the king. So she's taken to the

king and he has his way with her. Then she becomes pregnant. So what's he going to do? The cover-up is worse than the crime. He first calls Uriah home from the front line so that he might have a conjugal visit. That way, they could think it was Uriah's child, but Uriah being too honorable, says that none of the other soldiers would have such a conjugal visit. He says he'll come home but will just stay outside the door. So that's not going to work.

David has to send him off to the front line to be killed so no one will know. He puts him on the very front line of battle, and Uriah is killed in battle. And this is the part that just - when I read it, it makes me mad! The messenger comes back to tell David that Uriah has been killed in battle, and Joab, the general, is upset by it. Here's what David says, "David said to the messenger, 'Thus you shall say to Joab. Do not let this matter trouble you. For the sword devours now one, and now another.'" Things just don't go well.

This is the time when everything kind of falls apart for David. Nathan, the prophet, the royal prophet, comes and confronts David about it and tells him a parable. And in the midst of the parable, David comes to realize what he's done.

There are really three things that I want to share with you about this story - things that really have to do with us sharing with others the light of truth. Nathan tells David the truth about himself, about David. He helps him to see the truth about himself.

One of the things that I find so interesting here is that it isn't that Nathan simply came to him and said: "Hey, what you've done is horrible." What he did was allow David to see that for himself and to come to understand the kind of impact and pain he's caused. And just who he's become. This is to help him see it for himself.

Sometimes when we're just in peoples' faces and calling them names and telling them how bad they are, they become defensive. But Nathan, because he cares about David because he's speaking the truth in love as Paul says, he comes to David and helps David to see that for himself rather than simply accusing him of it.

When we are dealing with people, and we want them to begin to see the truth about their own lives, we have to listen, and we have to help them come to understand that themselves rather than it just be us being the ones saying so.

The first thing I want you to see is that he didn't just accuse him. He helped him to see it for himself. But he also recognized that Nathan is the royal prophet and what that means is that God has chosen Nathan. But that David has brought Nathan into his court and his job, his purpose

was to give him oracles from God to help him know what God wants. So it was a defined relationship - that was his purpose.

I wonder if you have somebody that will hold you accountable. Somebody who is willing to look you in the eye and have those hard conversations? That you have chosen to say, "I want you to know the truth about me, and I want you to help me see where I've gone wrong and where I'm going right." To be accountable.

I was driving down 290 the other day, and I was kind of late, so I was driving fast. The speed limit was 65 mph, and I was going faster than that. But there were cars buzzing by me at maybe 90 mph, and I was just driving along. Then pulling off one of the entrances comes a police car - a black and white Tahoe with police markings on it. But what was so interesting was that all of the cars, all the traffic slows down to 65 mph. So you have this group of cars all driving at 65, and no one wants to pass the police officer. He's just cruising right along, and we all just keep going for mile after mile at 65. Then he exits, and we're all back to 85 again. So here's the thing - accountability helps us stay within the boundaries. It helps us live the lives that God's intended for us.

I heard a comedian say that he's glad that murder is illegal, and you go to jail for it because otherwise, he'd kill people. I think there may be some truth to that, that the community of the faithful is here for us to hold one another accountable for living the life that God calls us to live. And that's what Nathan did for David.

There's a book called *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success At Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time* and was written by Susan Scott, and it's used in business and for home as well. But the point is that if you really want to make a difference, you can't avoid the hard conversations. You've got to be willing to have the difficult conversations and say to people, "Do you see the impact of your action or non-action?"

We have a class that's taught here periodically on the Enneagram, which is sort of a personality profile model. We have some people on our staff who are Enneagram 8's. I'm not but they're an Enneagram 8 is a person who likes to go right into the mess and say, "This is the situation, let's deal with it. Let's not be afraid of the conflict. Let's have the hard conversations and see if in the midst of those, we can begin to bring some healing."

Nathan gave David the truth about himself, about David. And that was a gift.

So the second thing is the flip side of that. It's that David then was willing to share with others the truth about himself. He was willing to acknowledge his own sin - acknowledge his own failures.

We sometimes lie. We lie to our kids, for example. I heard somebody say, "If you've never lied to your kids, you haven't had them yet!" Of course, you do things for their own good. I remember some years ago we had a little boat that we got when we lived in League City. I've had the two happiest days in a man's life - one where he buys the boat and the second when he sells it. We had a little boat, and one day we pulled it down to Destin, Florida, where my mom lives. We were going to tool around on it on the bay, which is pretty calm and a nice place to water-ski and other stuff.

One day while we were there, we decided we were going to take it down to Destin harbor, and that's where the ocean comes into the bay, and the harbor is right off of that. It's where all those things converge, and there are some really big waves. We get down there, and all five kids are piled into this little boat along with my wife and me. They all had their lifejackets on - Dee had hers on because she has so much confidence in my seamanship. But I don't have my life jacket on. They make me nuts. I'm buzzing right along, and we get to those waves and they begin to toss the boat around. And Dee says, "Are we going to be okay?" And I said, "Of course. We're fine - don't worry about it. All is well. Can you give me my life jacket? Let me put it on."

We still laugh about that today, where I asked them to pass me the life jacket.

But of course, I'm not going to say to the kids, "I think we're going to die!" Which is what I was thinking. You say, "Everything's fine!" Of course, everything's fine. You say that for their own good, you don't want them to panic.

But here's the problem. Sometimes we don't just do it like that. We lie to ourselves. We get to a point where we won't admit our failures. We won't admit to ourselves or to anyone else around us just how bad it's gotten for us.

When Nathan says to David, "You are the man! Look what you've done!" Here's how David responds: "David said to Nathan, "' I have sinned against the Lord.'" (2 Samuel 12:13a) Now that doesn't seem like a whole lot of conviction - just that one verse: "I have sinned against the Lord." That's all that's written in 2 Samuel. But, friends, there are seven Psalms that David is to have written that are called the Penitential Psalms. These are Psalms of lament about his own mistake, psalms of repentance and confession.

Let me quote two of them. In Psalm 32, he writes, "While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, 'and you forgave the guilt of my sin.'" (Psalm 32:3-5)

Or in 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. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight." (Psalm 51:1-4).

Seven times he begins to confess, "This is who I am; this is what I've done." And when we confess - when we're honest and transparent and truthful about our own sin, then healing can begin.

The rest of that is that when we're honest about our sin, then others can experience that as a gift, not just us but other people.

The late Richard Foster wrote a book called *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, and it became a best seller. It really propelled him into prominence as a Christian author. Basically, it goes through 15 of the spiritual disciplines, and the 11th discipline is confession. It's listed as what's called a corporate discipline, meaning we do it together. It is true that the Scripture in Hebrews says that we have a High Priest in Jesus, so we don't need to go to another priest and confess because we can confess directly to God through Christ. But James always says, "Confess your sins to one another so you may be healed." This corporate sense in which we're honest with one another about our sins makes a difference because it gives others the permission to admit their sin.

This is what Richard Foster writes: "Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We feel that everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin. We cannot bear to reveal our failures and shortcomings to others. We imagine we are the only ones who have not stepped onto the high road to heaven. Therefore, we hide from one another and live in veiled lies and hypocrisy. But if we know that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners, we are freed to hear the unconditional call of God's love and to confess our needs openly before our brothers and sisters. We know we are not alone in our

sin. The fear and pride that clings to us as barnacles cling to others also. We are sinners together. In acts of mutual confession, we release the power that heals. Our humanity is no longer denied but transformed." (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*).

Sometimes people will say to me when I'm talking to them about our church that it's hard for them to come because they look around and everybody seems so shiny. Everybody seems so happy. But the truth is all of us are broken. We all need to be willing to share that with others.

Jason Boyett has a book I recommend to people periodically when I'm visiting with them about issues in their lives. It's called *Oh, Me of Little Faith: True Confessions of a Spiritual Weakling*, and in there, he confesses his doubts and his questions and his shortcomings and his failures of faith. And it's refreshing. It's refreshing - you read it, and you think, "Yeah, me, too! Exactly - me, too!"

After Mother Teresa died, they released her journal published as *Come, Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta* it was so full of her anguish, her feelings of separation from God, wondering if God was really there present with her. For some people, that shook them up. For me, it was such a gift. It made me respect her all the more. To know that even in the midst of that sense of brokenness, she still got up every morning and gave herself to help the poor.

When we choose to be transparent to share with others the truth of our own sin, our own shortcomings, we give them permission to do the same. It's a gift. It's a light.

Here's the final thing. And it's not quite as clear in this passage, but it's real. Nathan shared with David the truth about God's love. It's a very simple phrase "Then David said to Nathan 'I have sinned against the Lord.'" I read that to you before. Here's what Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin..." (2 Samuel 12:13b).

The truth is that it didn't take away the consequences of his sin; the baby that he had fathered with Bathsheba died. The dysfunction in his family got out of control. His son rebelled against him, and from chapter 12 on, it's just messy for David. And things don't go well.

But Nathan, the one who honestly was there, was with him, stuck with him, and continued to help build up so he would remain the king of Israel. He kept saying, "You've got to do what you got to do... we've got to keep this country moving forward. This nation of Israel moving forward." And it was Nathan who said to David that Solomon needed to be the next king and

helped engineer that so that Bathsheba's son Solomon could in fact build the temple for Israel. He didn't give up on him.

You see, especially when people acknowledge their sin, we're able to walk with them through the challenges that come after and help them know that God has not forgotten or forsaken them. That they've been forgiven and that God will be with them every step of the way.

When I think about truth, what comes to my mind is this song from Casting Crowns called "Voice of Truth." It's probably my favorite contemporary Christian song. In there, he talks about where King David faces Goliath. Let me read to you: "The giant's calling out my name. He laughs at me. Reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed." See, that's the voice of Satan - that's Satan's lies in our ears. That says, "You're a failure, you're terrible. Look what you did - you're never going to do it right." That's not the voice of truth. It goes on, "But the voice of truth tells me a different story. The voice of truth says, 'Do not be afraid.' The voice of truth says, 'This is for my glory.' I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth."

Friends, is there someone with whom maybe you need to have a hard conversation? Is there someone who can hold you accountable and tell you the truth about yourself? Is there some truth about yourself that perhaps it's time to admit, to acknowledge? To share with others? Is there someone who needs to hear you remind them of the truth of God's love no matter what?

If so, go share. Share the light.

Gracious and loving God, we confess to you our difficulty to face those hard truths, have those hard conversations, those fierce conversations. We thank you for the people you put in our lives to hold us accountable. And we pray, God, that rather than go around and avoid or lie to ourselves about our own failures, that we would be honest. That we would be transparent, that we would be vulnerable, knowing that your love is always there for us. We pray in the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.