

### Nathan Confronts David

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be always acceptable in your sight O Lord. Amen

As soon as I saw the word 'confront' in the title I thought that this is not the sermon I should be preaching. I am, like many people, someone who tries her best to avoid confrontation. That doesn't mean I don't know my own mind or can be pushed around, it means that I will avoid situations that are likely to lead to an argument and keep my counsel to myself on occasions. When I was teaching I attended a course that was about managing others and the piece of information that has stayed with me is that you have to 'eat your frog' at the start of the day and then the rest of the day will be easier and less stressful. In this instance 'eating your frog' is not literal; it means to tackle your most unpleasant or confrontational task early on so that it is over and done with and you can then focus on other tasks. Nathan is facing one of these tasks.

David is the great king of Israel. He has succeeded Saul as God's chosen king of Israel. As God's faithful leader he has been successful and united the 12 individual tribes of Israel and made Jerusalem the capital. He has defeated surrounding nations and had the Ark of the Covenant taken to Jerusalem. The belief was that God was where the Ark was and David wanted God to be at the centre of his kingdom and in the place where he lived. Regularly the text says that David was powerful because God was with him and that David did as the Lord commanded him. All seems very comfortable and promising for David. He is walking with God and he is successful for Israel

However, the story of Bathsheba shows that human nature can too easily prevail and David loses sight of what is right. David's desire for a beautiful woman leads him to sleep with her leading to a pregnancy; then try to trick her husband into sleeping with her, but Uriah is loyal and faithful soldier who will not return to his wife. This leads David to send Uriah deliberately, to the front line of a battle where the fighting is fiercest and David is relieved to hear of Uriah's death. The commander on the front line is all too aware of what David has done and tells the messenger that if David argues about the battle tactics he is to

say that Uriah is dead. The commander knew that David wanted this but probably felt that he was not in a position to confront David about positioning Uriah on the frontline. Who would be bold enough to question a king on his actions?

Bathsheba is given time for mourning (probably 7 days) and then brought into David's house as a wife and bears him a son. A son that was conceived before Uriah's death.

Nathan is the man who is to confront David. He is sent by God to David as God is displeased with him. David has broken God's rules, he has committed adultery, had Uriah murdered, he has lied and shown jealousy. David has broken four of the Ten Commandments and he has abused his royal position which was a gift from God. As king David did not have to answer to his people, he was on a pedestal and his advisors were subject to him and not the other way round. Nathan, as God's prophet has the task of rebuking David and announcing God's judgement for his totally unacceptable behaviour. This could have been a battle of words, or more, between two powerful men. However, Nathan has clearly prayed and thought deeply about how he will tell the king that he has lost God's favour.

Nathan tells David a parable about a wealthy man and a poor man. The wealthy man takes a treasured lamb from the poor man to entertain a guest. David burns with anger at the story and says the man should pay for the lamb four times over as the law required. What a humbling experience it must have been for David when Nathan explained to him that he was the rich man and Uriah the poor man and in v 10 Nathan states that the sword will never depart from David's house and that his wives will be publically taken from him.

David recognises his guilt and confesses to Nathan immediately. Psalm 51 is David's humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing. He pours out his soul asking for God's mercy and grace. David could not be more contrite. He prays for the remission of his sins which he has openly confessed and deeply deplores. He says that he is willing to offer sacrifice but is convinced that God prefers a broken heart to all kinds of offerings. He asks to be washed clean of his sins and he knows that he will always have his sins in his mind, they are something that he will live with for the rest of his life.

As king at this time David is not accountable to his people but he is accountable to God and he can see that God wants truth and not his lies and deceit and he asks that God will guide him in wisdom for the rest of his life. In v10 David asks God to create a new heart in him, he feels that his current heart is too badly damaged to be mended. He wants to stay in God's presence and he prays fervently that God's Holy Spirit will stay with him, as without it he will be lost to God with no hope of salvation. He knows that he once had the joy of God's salvation but through his sin all could be lost. Keeping our minds on God and working with his Holy Spirit can help us not to be led into sin.

We leave this psalm with David saying that with God's spirit he will teach other transgressors God's way and show them how they can experience God's justice and mercy.

Nathan tackled David's sinfulness without confrontation. He told a simple parable that illustrated the situation and drew David's attention to his own wrongdoing. We too can live our lives with the Spirit to support us and seek to guide others gently towards the truth of God. As our reading from John says in vs 28 and 29 to do the works of God we must believe in Him. We should not be seeking miracles and signs but be feeding on the word of God for nourishment and sustenance that will fill us and give us the strength to do God's work in our daily lives. David fell down as he allowed temptation to lead him away from the teaching that he knew to be right and this took him away from God. His life after this episode was not as blessed as his life before.

We all need to be guided in our lives and we look to different sources for that guidance. As parents we try to bring our children up in a way that we think is responsible, we often see them rebel against our decisions and then have a wry smile when they chose a more responsible path. At times we do confront our children and then there are times when it is best that they learn for themselves. At work we have people who are 'managers' and policies that we are expected to follow. If we go against the policy we are confronted with it and there can be consequences. Politicians are elected by us to represent our interests and they have a duty to us the people, and that certainly is a cause of confrontation! It is almost natural for us to look up to authority, but maybe we should be asking questions when we feel that our Christian way of life is not being respected. Who do we confront when things are going wrong? Who do we

confront when we see wrong? Former Archbishop Carey has recently been questioned about the behaviour of ex-Bishop Ball. He says that at the time he believed what he was told and saw no cause for further investigation. Now he can see that he was duped. Hindsight always gives 20/20 vision, but maybe there are times when we should confront and question more deeply. God is not duped and Nathan's duty was to confront David about his misdoings.

David did not have the example of Jesus, as we do, but he did have the guidance of Nathan, God's prophet. We have many resources we can turn to for spiritual support. We can read our Bibles, we can pray, we can ask other believers, discuss things in our house groups, the important teaching is to walk with God and keep his rules and let our lives be mirrors of His way. When we say the Lord's Prayer let the words 'and lead us not into temptation' be inspirational for us to stay with God's teaching and not to be led astray by our human weakness like David was.

Let us pray that we live lives that are blessed by God through our love and obedience to Him and may we share that blessing generously with those around us, and that when we see wrong doing that we have the courage and strength to tackle it safely and well. Amen.