

The Story: The Trials of the King

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[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome. I can only do that prayer voice for so long. I just don't have it in me to do it any longer. It's great to see you all this morning. And let's face it, this would have been an easy skip.

This would have been an easy Sunday to skip. Lots of you have already been here 22 and 24. You're still in recovery from overindulging 25, 26.

And you've got to build up your stamina for 31. Plus you knew that Pastor Kent wasn't going to be here today. So he's not here to check.

If you could overcome all of that and be here, then you can pay attention to the sermon too. Pastor Kent asked us last week, for those of you who are here, he asked us to think of our very favorite Christmas carol.

Remember he asked that last service? And I wasn't prepared. Some of you were like, you were right there, you had it. And I wasn't prepared. I was kind of off guard. And so I couldn't respond in the little bit of time allotted.

[1 : 11] And so I thought about it. I thought about it a bunch this week. I thought, okay, so there's so many good ones, right? So I thought Silent Night. And I thought, oh, Little Town of Bethlehem.

And then I thought, yeah, come all ye faithful. Like there's just so many good ones. And then I pondered that and reflected. And I finally thought, really, there's just the one.

And this is the best. You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch. You really are a heel.

You're as cunning as a ship. You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch. You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch. You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch. So who could resist, right? I mean, there's number one. There it is. Can anybody tell me who sings that song in the original version?

I knew you wouldn't know. Come on. Boris Karloff. Karloff. So yeah, it just struck me. It came down to either you're a mean one, Mr. Grinch.

[2 : 12] The only one that was close, I had to admit it was a bit of a toss, was Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer. That's a classic, too. I hope each of you had a great Christmas.

I hope you were surrounded by people who care about you. I hope you ate well, but not too well. And I hope that Christ had a meaningful place in the celebration.

I love, I just love reading the Christmas story. It's one that draws me back all the time. I love the birth and the manger and the shepherds and the angels. And again, no Christmas is ever complete until Linus reads his part in the Christmas play.

Today, as we begin to transition from Christmas church to post-Christmas church, let's not forget all that Christ did for us by coming.

A part of the Christmas narrative that I often think it gets sort of overshadowed is the story of Simeon. This is, this was in that little, that little 10 page thing that we got given a few weeks ago.

[3 : 25] And I don't know how many of you got to it, so I actually want to read it because it's so good. This is Philip Yancey's commentary on Luke chapter 2, verses 25 to 35, which is the Simeon part.

And what he says is, in Luke's account of the Christmas story, only one person, the old man Simeon, seems to grasp the mysterious nature of what God has set in motion.

This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him, he told Mary.

And then he made the prediction that a sword would pierce her own soul. Simeon knew, this is the part of love, Simeon knew that though on the surface, little had changed.

Herod still ruled, Roman troops still occupied Israel. Underneath, everything had changed. God's promised redemption had arrived.

[4 : 31] That is what we celebrate at Christmas. And that is the first mini-sermon. Turn with me now to Matthew 1.1.

That's, the Bible is that huge heavy book in front of you. Matthew 1.1. Perfect place to start. And what it starts with is, it says, a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

And then in verse 6 it says, Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. Are you feeling inspired?

It's just a single innocuous little verse in a long genealogy that we never really look at, covering 42 generations and leading us right up to the birth of Christ in a manger.

And yet behind that single solitary verse lies a tale. A tale of intrigue, infidelity, and murder that only God, only our God could or would have used to carry on the thread linking Abraham and the first covenant to Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind.

[6 : 02] Today, we come to explore that tale. So turn with me, if you can find this one, to the book of 2 Samuel. And we're going to look at chapters 11 and 12.

2 Samuel is in the Old Testament. That's the early part. And surprisingly, it comes right after 1 Samuel. And then right before 1 Kings.

It's a pretty long chapter, so I'm actually going to summarize the action, because I didn't think you want me to read that much. So 2 Samuel, starting in chapter 11.

The year is around 1035 BC, and it's springtime. When in those days, restless kings went off to war with their armies.

It's kind of what they did, I guess, in the spring. But this spring, 1035 BC, King David stayed home and sent out the army without him.

[7 : 03] With clearly not enough to do and way too much time in his hands, David had an affair with a married woman named Bathsheba, who was the wife of Uriah.

Remember what we just read in 1.6. There's Uriah. And not only didn't he have an affair with her, he got her pregnant. Things then go from bad to really bad.

When David decides that the solution to this problem is to have Uriah killed. Not sure how he came up with that idea, but it came to his head. This plan succeeds.

David marries Bathsheba, and the cover-up is complete. David breathes a big sigh of relief, pats himself on the back, and prepares to settle down and live happily ever after.

Until we get to that ominous little sentence at the very end of chapter 11, where it says, But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

[8 : 17] Or as our moms taught us, we never really get away with anything. Because even though we can fool the world, and in this case even fool ourselves, we never fool God.

And I think many of you would agree we never fool our moms either. So let's continue on in the story with chapter 12, where we see God use a prophet, the prophet Nathan, and a parable to open up David's eyes.

2 Samuel chapter 12, verse 1. The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.

The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb he had bought.

He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children, it shared his food, drank from his cup, and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

[9 : 23] Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die.

He must pay for that lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity. Then Nathan said to David, You are the man.

Thou art the man. I want you to try to imagine David in that moment of stunned silence.

He thought he was home and clear, and he had no idea that this sin would matter to God. I have a couple of questions for you.

[10 : 36] If you were in David's shoes at that moment with Nathan, how would you have responded? What would have been your thoughts, and how would you have felt, and what would you have done?

See, an inevitable part of our amazing journey with God is that we will sin and we will fall short.

Our sin puts a gap or a barrier between us and our Lord. Then God reaches out to draw us back. Sometimes he will use our conscience to help us to see what we've done.

Sometimes he will allow us to suffer the consequences of our sin until we cry out to him, which is what he did with David. And sometimes, in his great mercy, he will put someone in our lives who will be a Nathan and confront us.

Question. How do you react when God puts a Nathan in your pathway? How do you react?

[11 : 55] We need to be thankful, but we're usually not. It's more likely that we'll get defensive, we'll feel offended, we'll refuse to listen. And if you're sitting there thinking, wow, that doesn't apply to me, think about the last time God used your spouse or someone close to you in your family as a Nathan.

How well did you handle that confrontation? Because God will use those people to bring home his truth to us. How well do we respond?

We're fortunate that we have a chronicle of how David responded to Nathan's confrontation.

Because he was a writer, thank goodness, and he wrote Psalm 51.

He wrote it soon after this whole thing happened. And it gives us a glimpse into the soul of the man. I want us to notice, I want us to notice a couple of things.

I want us to notice what's in there. And I want us to notice what's not in there. So this is, I'm going to do a little bit of a couple of pieces from Psalm 51.

[13 : 08] Psalm 51 verse 1 says, and this is David talking, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me.

Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. And continuing in verse 10, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence. And take not your Holy Spirit from me. But restore unto me the joy of your salvation.

And grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. Do you notice what's not in there? That's like a therapy question.

[14 : 13] How are you supposed to notice what's not in there? He's not making excuses. There's no explanations. He's not minimizing. He's not blame shifting. He's also not getting bogged down in unhealthy guilt.

Or self-pity. Or woe is me. Because those are the two directions it's easy to go. Instead, here's what he's doing. He confesses his sin. He clearly acknowledges what he's done.

And he lays it at the feet of God. In humility and in repentance. And this is the beginning of his journey back. Back from tragedy to reconciliation.

It begins with genuine repentance. I want to read you a couple of quotes that I came across that I just thought are so much better than anything I could have written.

When the Holy Spirit shows us an area that needs repentance, we must overcome the instinct to defend ourselves. We, and this is the part I love, we must silence the tiny little lawyer who steps out from a dark closet in our minds pleading, My client is not so bad.

[15 : 34] And a second quote, this is from David Wilkerson. When you repent of your sin and are broken before the Lord, he sees you through every step of the painful consequences.

His mercy, grace, and goodness enable you to bear it all with hope. I love that quote.

If one of your personal spiritual goals for the new year is to establish a relationship with God, or a closer walk with the Lord, then let me encourage you to meditate on Psalm 51 and biblical repentance.

Here's a thing. As we get closer to God, we actually get more sensitive to and conscious of our sin. This awareness can either trip us up, or it can make us humble. The path of repentance that David exemplifies is hard, because it means letting go of pride, and of ego, and of guilt, and of self-sufficiency, and laying them all down.

[16 : 57] In return, what God promises is a peace that passes understanding, and a strength that we can both lean on and depend on.

Does it seem remarkable to you that the God who runs the universe, who could have selected whoever he chose for that list, would allow David, this David, to be part of the lineage connecting Abraham to Jesus?

Doesn't that seem remarkable to you, that he would include him in there? But then I guess it shouldn't surprise us. After all, he also chose you, and me, to be a part of his family too. Let's pray. Let's pray.