

Title: The Cover-up pt.1
Text: 2 Samuel 11.6-13
Theme: The grace of failed plans
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: The innocent one becomes the sacrificial lamb to cover the sin of the guilty.

Last week I was listening to the barber saying that he is all on in the Lions this year. He said, I am drinking the cool aid. He is absolutely convinced they are going to the playoffs. We've been here before, haven't we? If we were to be gut-level honest, we would admit that most of life is marked by disappointment. Even for people like me, who are hard-wired optimists, I have to acknowledge that most of the time the anticipation and build-up to the next thing in life is usually greater than the reality that unfolds. It rains. Someone gets sick. The airline goes on strike. The QB got injured. The perfect girlfriend isn't perfect. But we really see it in politics. We exist in what feels like an eternal election cycle. The current people in power consistently let us down, and the people gunning to take their place consistently exaggerate the incumbent's failures while they over promise their own capabilities. We are a jaded lot and with good reason. 2 Samuel 11 happened 3,000 years ago, and feels like it happened yesterday.

But this is the Bible. There is more here than a study of politics and power. Oh, there is politics and power alright, but there is more. The stories of power, betrayal, intrigue and deception are way more than sources for juicy gossip. This story is part of a greater story. The account of 2 Samuel 11 is depressing. On its own it has no hope, but it is not on its own. This chapter does 2 things: 1) It highlights the fact that we cannot save ourselves. We are incapable of being the hero because we are all flawed. At the same time, 2) it points to the one who can. We are used to David being the hero, so this account is hard, but necessary to read. And right here, in the dark ravine of sin, we are introduced to a one who reminds us of another. Our text this morning begins the account of David's attempt to cover-up his sin. In so doing, we meet Uriah the Hittite. He is the innocent one. He is the one betrayed. He is the one sinned against. He is the innocent sacrificial lamb who is offered up in death in order to cover the sin of the guilty.

Read Text:

This portion of chapter 11 highlights and contrasts the conversation between David and Uriah. David is the king. He is the one in charge. He is the one giving orders. He is the one taking the initiative while Uriah is the one who is at the mercy of the king. And yet, Uriah is the one who is holding all of the cards. He is not in charge but he holds the authority by virtue of his character and by virtue of David's dilemma.

1. **Sin is serious, but covering it is even worse.** (6)

David's sin was known to a few and he likely assumed that it would stay that way. Then he received word from Bathsheba, "I am pregnant." What was David going to do? We have seen so many times when this guy amazed us with his willingness to do the right thing even though it would cost him, so would we see that again? We could only hope so. David sends for Uriah. He

doesn't tell Joab what this was about. Joab doesn't need to know. Was David going to confess to Uriah and seek to make this right? David may have thought that the messengers that were involved in bringing Bathsheba to him would be close-lipped, but pregnant? That which was private was not going to be private for long. David had to address this and perhaps her pregnancy was forcing him to do the right thing. But no. Sovereign power is not like other power. You think you have it, but in reality it has you. The sovereign power of the king that had been wielded against him and chased him from cave to cave in order to kill him, was now his to wield and he could use it to cover his sin and save his reputation. After all, he was the king. But even kings are subject to laws, such as the law of God.

Jesus famously said that it is so hard for rich people to get into the kingdom of God, because it is so hard for a rich person to admit that he or she is in reality poor (impoverished and destitute) before God, spiritually bankrupt and without anything to offer of value for their forgiveness. The same dynamic is in play here. It is so hard for those who in authority to believe that they too are under the authority of God. The higher the authority, the thinner the oxygen of reality. Therefore, it is so easy for David to think that he can do now what he couldn't do before and that is cover up sin. But when I try to cover sin, I am believing things that are not true such as:

A. I can manage sin.

Think of a time when you thought this. I can handle this. I can quit whenever I want. I can try this and it won't affect me. This text is a case study on the deceitfulness of sin. David resorts to deceitfulness because he is already deceived. He is deceived into thinking that he can manage this. When we think we can manage sin, sin is already managing us. Related to that is the idea...

B. I can outwit God and get away with it.

One of the worst things that could happen to you and me is to sin and "get away with it." The truth is, we don't get away with it. We only appear to get away with it, for a time. It will come out, some way or another. Either we confess our sin and are forgiven or we live with a timer that that will go off and our cover-up is laid bare. Some of you have been frustrated because it seems as if every time you sin, you get caught. Praise God!! That is God's mercy in your life. If you were able to sin and seemingly not get caught, you should be terrified. God disciplines his children. He doesn't discipline other people's kids.

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he LOVES, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." (Hebrews 12.5b-8)

If I believe that I can outwit God, and I live that way, then what happens when I die? I face the God I cannot outwit but I now face him without hope. Oh beloved, recognize the goodness of God in his discipline. Your conscience that convicts you is the kindness of God to drive you to

dealing with your sin so that it doesn't deal with you. Another related belief that motivates us to cover our sin is thinking that...

C. People are more important than God.

This is what the Bible calls the fear of man. We fear what others think more than we do what God thinks. Our fear of God is intended to motivate us to do the right thing, no matter what. But, when we fear man instead of God, we are motivated to the wrong thing, which only adds to our anxiety. Here is the irony. We cannot please people, but we can, by humility, confession and trust, please God. Covering sin is a game that we cannot win because our attempt to deceive others reveals the fact that we are already deceived. David believes he lies his heart is telling him (previous subpoints). David is deceived. David is living in the arena of deceit. As long as he is doing this, he is living behind a mask. The David you see is not the real David. It is exhausting to live behind a mask. We cannot sustain this indefinitely. Covering sin does not deal with, it is like giving oxygen to fire; it only spreads.

2. Covering sin compromises everything in my life. (6-13)

A. We use others. (6)

As the king, David has to give orders. But, our positions of authority are vested to us so that we will use them to for the good of others. David uses his authority to tell Joab to send him Uriah. Joab is unwittingly being used by David to cover-up David's sin. David is playing his card of authority as well as his well-earned reputation of goodness. He is banking on that in order to carry out his deceitful scheme. If his scheme is discovered, then the authority that he is using and the good reputation that he has earned will be compromised. Here is the guy who would lay down his life for the good of others now using them.

I suspect that you know what it is like to be Joab. You are told to do something and you do it, only to discover that you were being used. I thought he liked me. He was just using me. I trusted her and she used that and played me. We all hate that, and what is worse, we are all capable of doing that. That is my point about the deceitfulness of sin. Sin turns everything into make-believe. Joab can only assume that David wants something good from Uriah. The order is intended to be deceitful, just as the conversation that David has with Uriah is deceitful.

B. We have fake conversations. (7)

Does David care about Joab, the soldiers and the war? Sure, but that is not the real reason why Uriah is there. The whole thing was a cover-up. David was pretending to be interested in Uriah. Does Uriah have any idea of why he has been summoned? Has he heard any whispers or rumors? We don't know. We do know that David was pretending to care about what Uriah was saying. David did not care about Uriah. He knew that Bathsheba was Uriah's wife before he sent for her. This is a David that we detest. He is a fraud. He pretends to care about others, he feigns interest and uses his authority in order to cover up his sin.

There is a sense in which we are all guilty of this. We say things because it is nice and we want people to think we are nice, but not because we really want to. Part of that is just being a sinner. You and I are never going to have conversations that stem from a perfectly pure heart, until we are in glory. We all know that. However, to purpose to have a conversation or purpose to create a scenario that makes it look like we are being generous or considerate in order to cover up sin is not only crushing to others because of its deceit, but it is deceitful to us. We get to the point where we cannot distinguish between who we really are. What is a game and what is real. Related to that...

C. We have fake concerns. (8, 10b)

David sends Uriah home. It has the plausibility of concern. You have been at battle. You are home. You are very close to home. Your home is in view of the palace and you have a beautiful wife. Surely you would want to go home to her, so I am ordering you to do what you certainly want to do. But the concern and kindness is fake. Does Uriah suspect something? We don't know. If he does, he doesn't show it. He appears to do what the king orders him to do. He went out of the king's house, presumably to go to his own. Once again, whoever wrote 1 and 2 Samuel was a masterful writer. The "king's house" is repeated enough to remind us that it was the place where the betrayal occurred and now, where it was ironically ongoing. David can only assume that Uriah is going to his house. *"There followed him a present from the king."* I don't know what this was. My guess is that it was a sumptuous meal that David had delivered to Uriah's home to ensure a delightful evening for the couple. But...

D. We provide fake gifts. (8a)

Let's play this out. Let's say that Uriah goes home and surprises Bathsheba (unless David had let her in on his plan). Then let's say that doordash delivers the feast and now what is Bathsheba expected to do? She is expected to be overwhelmed at the visit of her husband and overjoyed at the generosity of the king. But in reality, Bathsheba has been drawn into this web of deceit. She can't be honest with her husband. She is pregnant by the king who pretends to love her husband and to whom her husband is incredibly loyal. How was she supposed to react when she saw Uriah? How was she supposed to enjoy this meal or enjoy her husband? Later on, David invites Uriah to eat and drink with him. It all looks like he is honoring him. But these gifts are fake. When Lord Acton wrote in 1887 that "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely" he could have been describing this scene. Everything is dirty. Everything is a game. Freedom is gone. Honesty is gone. Joy is gone. Love is gone.

We cover up sin and this is what we get. It's way worse than confessing. You start out on this road because in your mind, you are trying to keep people from finding out who you really are, but what happens is that you don't know who you really are and others do not recognize who you have become. This is not the David we know.

3. God's kindness uncovers your attempts to cover sin. (9-13)

David went to bed that night thinking that his plan had worked. No one would know. He had covered his tracks. The next morning, he was stunned to find out that Uriah did not go home last night. Uriah did not sleep with his wife. He was not on leave; he was on duty. He stayed with the servants, the guards who watched over the palace. He was loyal to a king who was disloyal to him. David has a second conversation with Uriah. For the second time David is looking face to face with a man that is, what David used to be. He is loyal. He is humble. He has integrity. He is simple and what is more, he is godly. Uriah was a Hittite. He was not from Israel, but he was a follower of Yahweh and cared deeply about the Ark of the Covenant and his fellow soldiers. Of course, we know that in the Ark were the stone tablets that contained the 10 commandments, one of which states, you shall not commit adultery. Uriah was so loyal to Israel and Judah that he referred to Joab as "my lord" and to his fellow soldiers as "the servants of my lord." Uriah is well aware that he could go to his own home and enjoy his wife, but that, he believes would be a betrayal of his brothers who are fighting and he would esteem in their eyes.

Those of you who have served in the military have a sense of this, particularly if you have been on deployment. If you get sick and miss a mission, or miss a training exercise, others may assume that you are relieved, but you aren't. You feel like you have let the others down. Uriah is owning his role as a member of the team. He does not want to do anything that will cause any loss of esteem, trust or unity. David, of all people, knows this. His greatest moments were seen in his sacrificing with his brothers, living with them in the caves, fighting alongside of them of refusing to drink the water that they risked their lives to get for him, since he was not worthy of such acts. This was the David, the warrior, the leader, the man that people would lay down their life for. Uriah is that man now. David is face to face with what he used to be and this second conversation is a second opportunity to come clean. He took what did not belong to him. Bathsheba and Uriah were in the covenant of marriage and David violated that covenant and he needed to repent, confess to God and Uriah and seek forgiveness. Uriah's integrity is God's grace to David. Uriah does not go along with David's attempt to cover up the sin. Uriah's response in v.11 is convicting in its integrity and concern and pointed. *"Shall I then go to my house, to eat and drink and to lie with my wife? As you live and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing."* That had to kick David in the gut. His pulse had to quicken, his hands get sweaty and his body tries to absorb the adrenaline blast, while he tries to maintain a poker face or a look of admiration to cover-up the frustration of his failing plan. But do you see what this is? David is on a bad road. He blew through a red light back in v.3 and stayed going in a really bad direction. Now, the Lord gives him another opportunity to stop and get off the road. David, stop! This will not end well. Do not believe the lie that you can

David apparently realizes that ordering Uriah to go home is futile and would expose the plan. So David tries one more tactic. If he gets Uriah drunk enough, maybe Uriah would then go home, but even though Uriah got drunk, he still did not go home. He stayed with the servants of his lord. The message was clear. God will not let you get away with your sin. He loves you too much. You need to believe that.

Conclusion:

Is there anything that you are seeking to cover-up that you need to deal with? Listen to Proverbs 28.13. "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."