

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-14

Had this story in 2 Samuel taken place in our day, I suppose that instead of sending the prophet Nathan to King David to say: "*You are the man!*" He could have sent Maury Povich to say: "*You are the father!*" But of course King David already knew that - that Bathsheba's child was his; and he was not attempting to hide this fact - at least not from himself. What he was trying to hide is that what he did was displeasing to the Lord.

This story is a wakeup call for us. If David can live an entire year convincing himself that his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah are not serious enough offenses to bring him to his knees and repent before God, then there isn't anything so dreadfully sinful that we can do which will automatically cause us to repent. Sinners do not repent just because they sin. King David is proof of this. But then, so are we. When we sin, whether it's grievous sin or not, our natural reaction is not to repent of it, but to hide it, excuse it, justify it, make light of it - everything except repent of it.

King David did not go in search of the prophet Nathan, so God brought Nathan to him. Two men facing each other, each holding in their hands sharp instruments. Nathan holding the scalpel of God's Law with which to cut open David's heart and expose the sin he is hiding. David holding the sword in his hand, as king. With one word he can order God's prophet to be put to death. He has already murdered Uriah to cover up his sin. What's one more murder to a king who has already used drastic measures? But Nathan is not deterred. "*You are the man!*" he cries. He wields his scalpel with precision. And now it's in God's hands. Nathan puts the accusing Law into David's ears. He can do no more. If David is to repent, God now must act upon his heart.

No one enjoys hearing the words, "*You are the man!*" It's like being confronted by your doctor and being told, "You have cancer." We don't want such accusing fingers pointed at us. And so we go to great lengths to keep such painful words away from our ears.

But consider this - it's not the size of the sin that matters to God. It's the attitude of the sinner toward his sin. Unrepentant sin is damning. It's a cancer killing us from within. Had God not sent Nathan to David, he would have perished in hell. God was acting in mercy, telling David through His prophet, "*You are the man!*"

I can put these words into your ears, but like Nathan, I cannot act upon your heart. I'm like the doctor who can say, "You have cancer," but I cannot make you believe it. Nor can I force you to act upon it and seek the medicine for it.

How do I know that you are the man? Because I, too, am the man. Because all people "*are the man!*" "*All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.*" *One common sin infects us all.* "*The soul that sins, it shall die.*" Whether your sins are grievous in your eyes or not, you have the cancer of sin within you. To ignore it is death, eternal death.

Do not fight the Holy Spirit on this. Don't say to yourself, "I can't be the man...others are worse than me!" Even the smallest cancer can quickly grow and take over the entire body. If you or I hold on to a sin and don't want to confess it and be forgiven of it, but want to ignore it, excuse it,

make light of it, and keep doing it, that sin will quickly grow and take over, and kill us before God. Repent! *"You are the man!"*

When David heard these words from Nathan, God acted in mercy upon him. He confessed his sin. And immediately, without delay, Nathan forgave his sin.

To any who smugly say, "I am not the man; I do not have sin like a cancer that I must repent of," no cure can be given. But if you are the man, then you are forgiven of your sins. To you God says, "Jesus, My own Son, took your place. I pointed My accusing finger at Him as He hung on the cross, and I said to Him, 'You are the Man!' And so to you, now, I say that you are not the sinner. Jesus became the sinner for you. You are forgiven."

The punishment for David's sin did not fall upon him but upon his son. The child born to Bathsheba died a few days after Nathan forgave David. But even this was not the greater punishment, for death is swallowed up by life for those who believe. The greater punishment would fall upon David's Son who would be born one thousand years later. Jesus, born of Mary, the Son of David, would be punished for the sins of King David. And upon Jesus fell your punishment, as well as mine.

Not fair? In our minds it is not fair that Jesus was punished for what we have done. But this is the mercy of God. He keeps all punishment away from you. Jesus accepts all of it even though He committed no sin. Life, not death, awaits you. And in the Supper before you on the altar, you get a foretaste of what is to come.

Here in the Sacrament is the medicine for the cancer of your sin. Here is the cure. Here is life for you. Here is power over the temptation to fall back into sin. This is God's chemotherapy and radiation to combat the cancer of sin within you. You are forgiven. Upon Jesus your sin was laid. But you and I remain weak in our flesh as long as we live. We are forgiven of our sin, but we are never rid of it. Its curse is removed by Christ, but it still clings to us. Here is Jesus in bread and wine who comes into you through your mouth. He assures you of pardon and peace with God. He fights against the sin in your flesh. He is the medicine for those who repent. You come up to this Sacrament with all the cancer of sin within you. Jesus takes your sin. It is now His. And you leave the altar in peace. You leave with Christ who is medicine for your soul, filling you, cleansing you, keeping you from wandering back into sin.

For us who know that there is a cure; who know that God loves to forgive sinners, we do not need to live as King David did for that entire year. There is no reason for us to hide our sin, to excuse it, to make light of it. We can live confessing the truth: "Yes, I am the man!" because God never rejects those who confess this. He always, always forgives you for Jesus' sake. Amen.