

“Irreparable Damage”



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Nineth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 11: 1-15

11 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

² It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. ³ David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” ⁴ So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. Then she returned to her house. ⁵ The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

⁶ So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” Uriah went out of the king’s house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰ When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?” ¹¹ Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.”

¹² Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, ¹³ David

invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”

May the Lord bless the reading of God’s word to our hearts and lives.

Irreparable damage – we hear it in the news too often. For some we may know of situations of irreparable damage done within our family. For most of us we hear stories of irreparable damage on the news. I am not talking about the irreparable damage caused by acts of nature, although these are terrible too. I’m talking about the irreparable damage caused by the action of one or a few that changes the lives of many others forever.

Give examples - School shootings, Schildgen children abuse, punishment on schools such as Penn State and MSU when bad actors were operating within their systems.

Irreparable damage caused to so many by the actions of one. Nothing will bring the situation back to the way it was prior to the damage being caused. No amount of prison time or apologies can restore the lives impacted and even as legal actions take place there is no perfect justice. Perfect justice is restoring people’s lives to what they were prior to these events ever happening.

In the wake of the building collapse in Surfside, Florida in addition to so much gun violence that kills children irreparable damage is a part of the reality that is in this world. As I listened to these events, knowing that one of the texts that I could preach on this week was the story of David and Bathsheba, I began to hear their story anew.

The story is about a King – a beloved King – a King so beloved that even after his death, the Israelite people for generations would long for another king just like this one. King David, had a reputation. He was known as a ‘man after God’s own heart’. He had united all of Israel in a way that the people had never seen. The people who lived in his kingdom felt secure and safe, protected by his leadership.

Then comes the day when David sees Bathsheba. You know the story. David sends for her when her husband is away. Bathsheba conceives a child. And while there is no question that this has created a tough situation, David's choices made it tougher.

In my mind David was likely thinking: What will I look like, what will people say when they discover that I am home with the wives of men who are serving their nation, and will this action make me look weak? Adultery wasn't good for the women of the day either – remember the story of the woman caught in an act of adultery in the New Testament? Remember that the people were ready to stone her?

What had happened to David that he got himself involved in this situation? Did he not have enough wives? Could he have sought someone else? Yet scripture tells us what had happened to David. King David's focus had shifted – it shifted away from God to himself. How do I know? I looked.

In the preceding chapters of 2 Samuel 1 to 11, David mentions God and is seeking the heart of God. But in chapter 11, the only one who is speaking of God is Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) and many theologians believe that some time has passed between chapters 10 & 11. As David tries to cover his indiscretion, Uriah is still following what he believes is David's example in honoring God in his choices.

This is a story that could be ripped right from today's headlines. Once a person gets focused on self and begins following their own inclinations, people and institutions get hurt and causing irreparable damage.

As I continued to think about how the actions of one can cause so much harm to others, suddenly, I realized something. I realized that every one of us are vulnerable and capable of making choices where our actions can hurt others. It is not only David and Bathsheba or a shooter or a predator whose story may include hurtfulness to others.

I have been witness to a situation where anger in someone's heart bled over and almost ruined a very special family event. Perhaps you can think of times in your own lives or in your own families where choices of people close to you caused

deep pain that remains with you to today. And even if our action never impacts another, the choices we make damage our spirits.

In the 14th psalm, the poet is going to address this type of situation. The concern for the poet in the psalm is that we (humanity) lose sight of God. When we lose sight of God, we begin to lose sight of the humanity in others or as the psalmist said – we “eat up God’s people as we would eat bread”.

We stop seeing the other as God sees them. We forget that the person(s) we are causing harm to is someone that God deeply loves. We act as if everything is possible for us in our own self-absorption.

The psalmist would remind us that all people need God. We need to have God in our lives in an active way. By keeping of God in our lives we are more likely to ask ourselves – is this something that God would have me do or be involved in?

The opposite of being under the leadership and committed to God is autonomy (in the sense of not being accountable to anyone). This autonomy can get one into real problems and the poet of the Psalm suggests that it is foolishness on our part to live in the denial of God’s relevance to our lives. We can find ourselves being so far away from God that it can lead us into choices that we deeply regret, and regret is a terrible partner to sleep with at night.

In the movie, “Shawshank Redemption”, Ellis Boyd Redding (played by Morgan Freeman) says to the parole board, “There’s not a day goes by that I don’t feel regret, not because I’m in here or because you think I should be. I look back on the way I was then, a young stupid kid who committed that terrible crime. I want to talk to him. I want to try and talk some sense to him. Tell him the way things are but I can’t. That kid is long gone, and this old man is all that’s left. I got to live with that.”

My desire is that the message today holds an important reminder to us. It is a reminder that God wants and desires to be in an active relationship with us. It is how God created us and how God desired it to be – remember God being in relationship daily with Adam and Eve. It is good to hear the warning of the psalmist who would tell us that when we lose sight of God something else

happens - we begin to lose sight of the humanity in others and as I quoted a line from Shawshank Redemption, we can lose sight of our own humanity.

We know that God chose us in love before the foundations of the earth were laid – but we need to choose God too. We need to:

- be aware of God in our lives in every moment of every day.
- be engaged with God’s word and listen to what God says to us.
- be engaged with God’s house and God’s people.
- help others know the importance of God in their lives as well.

May God help us to never eat up God’s people as we would eat bread.

Let us pray: Remind us this day that the foolish say, “There is no God, we are alone and on our own”. Remind us this day that the foolish say, “It is my life; I am accountable to no one.” Remind us this day that the foolish say, “Everything I have is mine; I owe nothing to anyone.” Remind us that we belong to You, Holy One; that we are your advocates for justice, peace, healing and hope. Remind us that we are to use everything you have given us to build up and never tear down. Forgive us when we have failed you and inspire us to living Your vision for this world today. Amen