

August 4, 2024 Worship With Rejoicing: The Weight of the Word 2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:13

“You are the Man” (2 Samuel 12:7) ... “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, and for correction and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Have you ever wondered why a preacher stands up on the pulpit every week to deliver the sermon and share the Word of God? Are you questioning what the preacher might say that you haven't heard before, especially since you're already familiar with the stories from the scripture? Why should we listen to these sermons and God's message? And how does the preacher put together their message?

In his letter, Paul summarized why it's important to hear the word of God regularly. The word of God has the power to comfort, strengthen, encourage, train, challenge, correct, lead, and guide us toward eternal life: **“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, and for correction and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16)**. Preparing weekly sermons takes a lot of time. The first step is to pray for inspiration and guidance from the Holy Spirit while studying the scriptures. Then, the preacher gathers information from various sources, pays attention to current events, takes the congregation's temperature, and asks the Holy Spirit for empowerment to deliver the message without fear.

We witness the skillful confrontation between Nathan and King David, where Nathan effectively makes David recognize his own guilt. Nathan achieves this by telling a compelling story that captivates David's attention. Through this tale of the little lamb, David is forced to acknowledge the injustice and abuse of power, prompting him to see things in a new light. This exemplifies the transformative power of preaching in worship. A well-delivered sermon has the power to not only explain a biblical text but also to help us perceive ourselves and the world in a new way, particularly our place within the world. It inspires us to strive for a better understanding and a deeper connection with God.

Preaching is about creating connections, building relationships, and intertwining our story with the gospel story in ways that make disciples. Sometimes, preaching involves holding people accountable. It's difficult to imagine Nathan enjoying confronting the king with this message, just as any preacher who is also a pastor and has shared in people's struggles and joys would find it challenging to deliver a tough message to the congregation.

Certainly, the type of message Nathan delivered to David was more of a personal challenge. We're not suggesting that preaching is solely about calling individuals to task for their behavior or choices. However, there are times when the weight of God's word cannot be denied. Preaching demands transformation, and embracing change is always difficult, even when it's the change we desire or think we desire. There's an inherent resistance to change, making it a tough message to hear.

David's reaction to Nathan's sermon provides some insight into why he is referred to as a man after God's own heart. Despite his actions during this troublesome time, he recognizes the inherent sinfulness of it all. It's as if he's like the prodigal son who finally realizes the gravity of his actions, gaining a clearer understanding of what he has done. As we continue reading, we see

that there will be consequences, and innocent people will suffer as a result. We may question the fairness of children suffering for the sins of their fathers, especially when it contradicts the theology that Jesus teaches. Nonetheless, it is clear that there are repercussions from our actions, and the impact can be significant. Children often bear the brunt of the actions of the adults around them. This calls for us to recognize our interconnectedness and understand that our actions can never be entirely harmless, contrary to what our "common wisdom" might suggest. In the real world, there really is no such thing as a victimless crime.

It is important to recognize that the scriptures are not God but the Word of God! When we proclaim and receive the Word—whether sung, read, preached, or acted out (Hymn 595)—we encounter God through the stories, wisdom, psalms, and teachings in the Bible. **The weight of the Word calls for everyone to listen and participate.** When we hold the weight of the Word together in worship, we grow together in the love of God and neighbor as the Word encourages, challenges, edifies, and instructs us as the gathered Body of Christ.

Let the word speak to you this week, as it does every week. Let the proclamation be one of transformation, repentance, and restitution. Let there be a challenge to all not to abuse their power, their position, or their authority. And let us hold our leaders to a high standard in life and official capacity. Let us see all the people who might be impacted by our choices and preferences. Let us hear the weight of the word that tears down and builds up in equal measure.