

2 Samuel 12:1-9
Speaking Truth to Power
WRCoB 10.21.18

17,700,000.

Women who reported sexual assault since 1998
According to the #MeToo Movement webpage.

17,700,000
That the number of “reported” sexual assaults.
No one knows how many remain unreported.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center
One in five women, 20%
Have been or will be raped
At some point in their life.

One in four girls, 25%
Will be sexually abused
Before they turn 18 years-of age.

Terribly disturbing statistics!

But what has been kept suppressed for far, far too long

Thanks to the #MeToo movement
Is now move to the center
Of our national conversation.

The story before us is a perfect example
Of how men in power abuse their position

And how one person who speaks truth to power
Can make a difference.

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We jump ahead several centuries
Moving from the wilderness experience
Through the conquest of Canaan

Past the period when judges ruled the land,
To the second king of Israel, King David!

David, the youngest son of Jesse
Is called by God from his quiet, shepherd life
To be the next king of Israel.

He proves his worth
By killing the feared Philistine giant, Goliath.

And dramatically rises to power, fame, and fortune.

He has it all
Power, influence, wealth, physical comforts
Loyal servants, a strong army
And an ever growing territory.

Yet despite or maybe because of all his power and position
King David enters into a vicious cycle
Of extremely sinful actions

That affects not only his personal life
But the lives of his victims
And the nation he was called to lead.

2 Samuel 11:1 (NIV) In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

This is the first clue the author gives us
That not all is right.

In the spring of the year,
The time when kings go to war,
David remains in Jerusalem?!

Previously, David had led his armies into battle . . .
This time he chooses to stay behind.

What he does do is send everyone else to battle,
Joab, the king's men and the whole Israeli army.

The king is not where he is supposed to be
Doing what kings are supposed to be doing.

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Anyway spring came and found David by himself,
With time on his hands.

2 Samuel 11:2 (CEV) Late one afternoon, David got up from a nap and was walking around on the flat roof of his palace. A beautiful young woman was down below in her courtyard, bathing as her religion required. David happened to see her, and he sent one of his servants to find out who she was.

Here's our second clue, all is not right.

Please note King David is just rising from bed,
In the late afternoon.

Instead of coordinating and supervising,
Instead of sending and receiving news,
Instead of doing the work of a king . . .

We find King David taking a nap!

With nobody around and nothing to do
Roaming eyes and a restless heart
Become ingredients for a recipe of trouble!

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And so, one thing led to another.

David sees her and sends for her
Making his personal assistant complicit in his first sin
Coveting his neighbor's wife.

He then commits adultery with her.

But it doesn't stop there.

She, later, sends him the news
That she is pregnant.

And the plot thickens.
And the deception increases.

He sends for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah
Who is fighting on the frontlines
To return to Jerusalem.

He does this hoping that Uriah
Would come and stay with Bathsheba
Thereby confusing the issue of fatherhood.

But due to his loyalty to his soldier/comrades
Uriah refuses to go home to be with his wife.

Instead, he sleeps in the doorway of the palace.

The next day, King David gets Uriah drunk
Thinking that this would get him home.

But, no, if his colleagues can't, he won't.

In frustration, David sends him back to the front.

He has Uriah carry a letter to Joab
Instructing him to place Uriah
Where the fiercest of fighting was taking place.

Uriah is killed.

And after the proper time of mourning
David sends for Bathsheba
And takes her for his wife.

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God sends Nathan to David
To confront him about his behavior.

Obviously, this is a tough spot for Nathan
As it would be for anyone
Confronting the abuse of power.

What would keep King David from doing away with Nathan
As he had done with Uriah?

Nathan approach the situation tactfully.

2 Samuel 12:1-4 (NIV) 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.² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ 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.

4 "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 who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

Now here's a brilliant piece of work!

Nathan uses a story sure to touch the heart of David.
Remembering his background as a shepherd.

2 Samuel 12:5-6 (NIV) David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

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The hook was baited,
And the fish hit it like a ton of bricks!

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2 Samuel 12:7-9 (CEV) ⁷Then Nathan told David: You are that rich man! Now listen to what the Lord God of Israel says to you: “I chose you to be the king of Israel. I kept you safe from Saul ⁸ and even gave you his house and his wives. I let you rule Israel and Judah, and if that had not been enough, I would have given you much more. ⁹ Why did you disobey me and do such a horrible thing?

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God’s anger burned because of David’s transgressions.

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With God’s prompting
Little ole Nathan stood up to the King of Israel
And spoke truth to power.

Wasn’t an easy thing to do, was it?
But it was the right thing to do
And a necessary thing to do
To keep David’s abuse of power in check.

Speaking truth to power
Is one of the church’s callings.

Just as the prophets of Old Testament times
Riskyed their lives and reputations
By calling out the sins they saw before them

Being the mouthpiece of God
Representing God’s presence on earth . . .
God calls us to be Nathans to the world.

We are to speak truth to power.

Like Nathan, we are to stand in solidarity
With victims of sexual assault.

We are to be advocates
For all who suffer from the abuse of power.

The church needs to hold leaders accountable
In love and prayer
But hold them accountable, none the less.

Whether that leader is the pastor of a congregation
Or the president of the United States.

We are to speak truth to power.

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If the earlier statistics I quoted are true
And if 20% of women have been or will be raped
In their lifetime

And if 25% of girls under the age of 18
Are sexually assaulted

Then we need to acknowledge
That there are those within our midst
Who are victims of such abuse.

We need to recognize
That there are those within our gathering
Who have been sexually assaulted.

And if the #MeToo movement has taught me anything
It taught me the endemic proportions of the problem.

It has also taught me to stand with you!

We stand ready to be your advocate!

We are here for you.

You are in a safe place.

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17,700,000 reported victims of sexual assault.

We stand and declare, “No more.”
“Not in my house.”

It’s time for us all to be Nathans
For the victims of sexual assault
To stand up and speak truth to power.

Let us help to develop environments
To safeguard the innocent from sexual predators

Let us work towards a climate of respect
Where boundaries are clear and honored

Where human dignity cherished
Where integrity is our highest goal
And where children are safe and treasured.

It is our highest calling!

To God be the Glory!
Amen.