



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau
September 21, 2014

“You Are The Man!” - 2 Samuel 11:27b-12:7
The Rev. Dr. Tim Shaw

Now this only applies to the guys here today, or at least I think it only applies to the guys. But have you ever had someone say to you, “You’re the man!” That’s the way you say it in California. You might set it up by saying, “Dude, you’re the man!” But there’s also another way to say that if the guy REALLY is the man. You turn one sentence into four one-word sentences. “Dude! You! Are. The Man!”

I think in Hawaii you’d say this to a guy, “You da man!” or “Brah, you da man!” Or, “You da guy?” Is there some other way to say that or do locals even say that in Hawaii? I think the female equivalent of this is, “You go girl!”

So how does one get to be “the man”? Well, it’s not complicated. You have to do something manly, something particularly awesome to be called “the man.”

Well, in today’s text a good friend comes over to King David’s palace and during their conversation this friend, a guy by the name of Nathan, tells King David, “You are the man!” But it wasn’t because David did something that was particularly

awesome. No, Nathan tells David, “You are the man,” because David had done something that was stupid. It was shortsighted. It was self-Indulgent. It was even savage. And God was not happy with David.

2 Samuel 11:27b - *“But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.”*

That’s something you don’t want to hear. “But the thing that Tim did displeased the Lord.” Trust me, somewhere in heaven an angel has had his head in his hands looking down at me and has made that comment about something I’ve done. “But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” What thing? Last week Pastor Dan talked about the “thing that David had done”. It was actually more than one thing. To feel the full impact of what Nathan says to David, let’s review what David did.

David got himself in big trouble because he should have been busy doing something other than what he was doing in chapter 11. He should have been busy. Instead, he was bored. He

should have been busy on the battlefield with his army but he was on the balcony of his palace looking at his attractive next door neighbor who was taking a bath. You can always remember what she was doing if you can remember her name. Her name was Bathsheba. David was not busy. He was super bored or so it seems. He was not on the battlefield but up on his balcony staring at a woman taking a bath. That is a receipt for disaster.

David sees Bathsheba and he keeps on looking. He could have looked away. But David flies right on by an off-ramp that could have saved him a lot of grief. Stop looking. Just like the collision avoidance systems on commercial aircraft, David should have listened to that voice in his head that said, “Pull up! Pull up!”

He doesn’t listen but instead asks one of his servants who she is. The servant tells David that she’s Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite. That servant is dropping a couple of big, very helpful hints on David. That’s the closest thing to a warning the servant can safely give the king. “David, that’s not just a beautiful woman.

That's someone's daughter. That's your friend's wife. You remember Uriah? He's a friend of yours." But David can't see Bathsheba for the person she is and he can't hear the implied warning in the servant's response to his question.

So, David sends his servants to get her. David seduces her, she gets pregnant and David panics. Here's another off-ramp David could have taken. It would have been a difficult maneuver to make since he's careening out of control. But this all could have stopped right here with a confession to his friend Uriah.

But David doesn't just fly by the exit. He accelerates. David decides he's going to try and cover his tracks so he sends for Uriah. Uriah comes off the field of battle to have dinner with David. This is David's cocktail conspiracy strategy. He gets Uriah drunk because he thinks he can convince Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife. But Uriah will not do it. David tries two times to get Uriah to go home and spend time with his wife, but Uriah refuses. He will not experience a comfort that is not available to the men he leads on the battlefield. Uriah is an honorable man.

I have a basic philosophy of ministry that I like to call the Uriah the Hittite philosophy of leadership. I've tried to follow this philosophy since I was a youth pastor in Berkeley. If my high schools students were sleeping in tents, I slept in a tent. If my

students were staying at a big cabin in the mountains that ended up looking more like a refugee camp than a lodge, I slept on the couch. I don't rent a motor home for the leaders like some churches do in Mexicali, Mexico. I don't sleep in air-conditioned comfort while the people on my team sleep on the ground and use a port-a-potty.

Oh, it's easy to rationalize why you, the leader, with all your leader responsibilities need this special accommodation, but it's not what Uriah the Hittite would have done. He would be in a tent. He would stand in line for the portable toilet. Have you ever used a port-a-potty at a camp site with 3,000 high school students who are teaching a week-long Vacation Bible School in villages all across Mexicali? Let me tell you, by midweek it is an experience that forms character. I think, for the most part, whenever possible, good leaders do what the people they are leading do. That's the Uriah the Hittite philosophy of leadership.

David tried to cover his tracks but he couldn't get Uriah to go and spend the night with his wife. So he takes it a step further. He sends for the commander of Israel's army, a man by the name Joab. David directs his commander to position Uriah on the front lines where David is sure things will not go well for Uriah. Joab does what David tells him to do and Uriah gets killed in the battle. David then sends for Bathsheba

so he can marry her. Up on his high and lofty perch David sends for a lot of people. He sends for Bathsheba, he sends for Uriah, he sends for Joab. And if we're honest, we don't like this "sending" David. And the text says in 2 Samuel 11:27, *"But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."*

It's easy to think that the story of David and Bathsheba is only a story about sex. It is about that but I think it's mostly a story about power. David probably thought he was being "the man" when he seduced Bathsheba. He probably thought he was being "the man" when he invited Uriah to dinner to talk about how the fight with the Ammonites was going. He probably felt like "the man" when he ordered Joab to take care of the situation. But David's attitude towards the death of Uriah was not God's attitude. God was not happy. The text says God was "displeased" and that is putting it mildly.

I think David was most likely suffering from altitude sickness. He's at the pinnacle of his career but he can no longer see people for who they are and he can no longer hear the warnings people are giving him.

I've experienced some mild altitude sickness climbing Mount Shasta in Northern California. The pinnacle of Mount Shasta is at 14,162 feet. There is nothing like standing on the top of a big mountain like that.

The view is spectacular and the sense of accomplishment is exhilarating. On the way up the mountain at about 11,000 feet I began to feel a little nauseated. I never got sick but I thought to myself, "Oh boy! I hope this feeling doesn't get worse." I could hear the sounds of some of my fellow climbers depositing their breakfasts between the rocks above me and I was praying that I was not going to be next. The best thing about climbing a snow-covered mountain is getting to slide down the snowy face. It's so fun.

Altitude sickness can hit anyone. It doesn't matter how physically fit you are. If you get altitude sick, the longer you stay at a high altitude the duller your hearing and eyesight become. Those are warning signs that you're entering the danger zone. The only cure is to descend. You have to go down the mountain. It's much better to descend the mountain than slip and fall off the mountain. David was suffering from altitude sickness.

Listen to Max Lucado as he writes about David a chapter he's entitled "Thin Air-ogance."

"What has happened to (David)? Simple. Altitude sickness. He's been too high too long. The thin air has messed with his senses. He can't hear as he used to. He can't hear the warnings of the servant or the voice of his conscience. Nor can he hear his Lord. The pinnacle has dulled his ears and blinded his eyes. Did

David see Bathsheba? No. He saw Bathsheba bathing. He saw Bathsheba's body and Bathsheba's curves. He saw Bathsheba, the conquest. But did he see Bathsheba, the human being? The wife of Uriah? The daughter of Israel? The creation of God? No. David had lost his vision. Too long at the top will do that to you. Too many hours in the bright sun and thin air leaves you breathless and dizzy." (Lucado, Max (2006-11-21). Facing Your Giants: The God Who Made a Miracle Out of David Stands Ready to Make One Out of You (pp. 137-138). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition)

David doesn't realize what's happened to him. So God sends David a good friend. His friend Nathan comes over to have a talk with the king. Before we get further into this, I want to underline something the Bible clearly teaches about God. Our God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. And because He abounds in steadfast love He will sometimes need to do surgery in our lives. David is in need of some heart surgery.

There are a lot of people who share some measure of responsibility for what happened between Bathsheba and David and for what happened to Uriah. But David was the one who was ultimately responsible for all that took place.

Things didn't need to go the way they did. David could have stopped the progression of

events that tumbled out of control. Could it be that one of the main reasons David ended up in the mess he ended up in was because he was suffering from what Tim Keller calls "Majestic Self-Pity".

"Majestic Self-Pity" is a kind of self-pity reserved for people with power. This is the kind of self-pity that develops when we think that no one really knows how hard it is for us to do the job we have to do. To the degree it was a rational decision and not just an act of passion, David could have easily thought to himself, "You know, people have no idea how stressful it is for me to care for the needs of a nation, to make sure the country is protected, that its economy is growing. Nobody knows how much pressure I'm under or really understands the weight of the responsibilities on my shoulders. I have done so much for others. What about my needs?" That's "Majestic Self-Pity" talking.

You don't need to be the king of a nation to fall into "Majestic Self-Pity." You can simply be the "man of the house", the boss, "the funder" of a project, the lead person in a department. People don't see how you're sacrificing for them. They don't appreciate how essential you are. If it wasn't for you, they would have nothing. "Majestic Self-Pity" can lead us to the erroneous conclusion that the rules don't really apply to us like they apply to others.

The situation David finds himself in is a mess.

Thankfully, we have a God who is slow to anger and is full of steadfast, unshakable love for you and me. God is about to do some surgery on David's heart. Because of His steadfast love for David, God sends David a friend. In His displeasure, God is not interested in crushing David. God is interested in restoring and transforming David, but it's going to require surgery. There's a cancer growing on David's heart. And it's been growing for a long time. Step by step David has compromised, made decisions that were self-serving, acted from a place of privilege and power, increasingly unconcerned for how his decisions and actions impacted others. Step by step he's given in until that day, when in a fit of sexual passion, he drove himself off a cliff.

In the middle of this mess, God sends a friend to David, a real friend. This is what real friendship looks like. We need Nathans in our lives. I am so thankful for the Nathans in my life. You and I probably don't need any more people who won't challenge us, who will simply go along with our wishes. We probably don't need a Joab in our life who will not question us when asked to do something that at a minimum seems suspect or they know is wrong. We need a Nathan, who will risk our relationship and tell us what we need to understand—not out of a sense of condemnation or

superiority—but out of love for us.

So, here it comes. One big sermon illustration by David's friend and pastor with a very pointed, personalized application. The communication strategy Nathan employs is brilliant. Using a parable, Nathan will take David on a little journey into David's own thoughts and feelings and along the way David's conscience will be reawakened.

*2 Samuel 11:27b - But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD. **12:1** and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. **2** The rich man had very many flocks and herds; **3** but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.*

***4** Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him."*

***5** Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has*

*done this deserves to die; **6** he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."*

Let's let that hang in the air for just a moment. David's reaction is over the top. What the law required was a four-fold restoration of what was stolen. But David wants to make sheep-stealing a capital offense. David's conscience is beginning to wake up.

I'm no psychologist but sometimes I wonder whether our strong reactions to the failings of others might be completely appropriate, but could there also be something else going on? Could it be that something deeper in our lives, something closer to home, something we feel guilty about is being touched when we look at other people and react to what they are doing?

2 Sam. 12:7 Nathan said to David, "You da man!" Well. Not exactly. Nathan says to David, "You are the man! Bro, that story I just told is about you. It's your story."

You are the man! Those are the words of a friend. Those are the words of someone who actually cares about David. Those are words sent by a God who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. They are delivered not with a sword in order to crush David. They are the application of a skilled surgeon's scalpel.

I think God wants to use the story of David and Bathsheba in our lives in the same way Nathan uses the parable of the little ewe lamb in David's. God may want to do some surgery in our own lives today. We read the story of what David did with Bathsheba and to her husband and quite frankly, we're outraged by his actions. How could he possibly have done these things? We're repulsed by his self-centeredness, his wanton abuse of power and the utter disregard for those who had served him so faithfully.

And it is precisely at that moment when we're feeling those deep emotions of outrage that God, the one who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, says to us, says to me, "You know what Tim? Let's look at your life. Let's talk about how hard it is for you to trust me sometimes. Let's talk about how you can tend to seize control of situations and try to manage outcomes in stead of trusting Me."

What might God be saying to you today? Can we hear those words this morning as words of love coming from the hands of a surgical genius who wants to remove a cancerous growth on our hearts? The truth is, I am the man. Yeah, that person I'm so frustrated with has some issues they need to deal with but for right now, let's talk about you, Tim." Those are NOT the words of someone who wants to crush me. Those are the words of a God who wants to heal and restore me.

There are tragic consequences for David and Bathsheba. The child that is born from their affair will die but in the midst of these terrible losses, God is still at work inviting David to turn around, to abandon his intoxicating obsession with power. God is calling David to repent. After this experience, David will be less enamored with power.

What happens next in the story of David and Bathsheba is truly remarkable. David and Bathsheba have another little boy and his name is Solomon. God has another name for Solomon. God tells David and Bathsheba to call him Jedediah, which means "beloved of Yahweh." Jedediah means "beloved of God." Jedediah, also known as Solomon, will be David's successor and he will be the one who will build a Temple for God.

But more than that, it is from the lineage of David, through his marriage to Bathsheba, through the line of Solomon that Jesus Christ will be born. If you remember the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel According to Matthew, you'll remember that four women are mentioned. One of the women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus is listed as "the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Matthew refers to Bathsheba that way deliberately because right there at the beginning of his book, Matthew is already starting to proclaim the hope and good news of the gospel. Jesus Christ

is not ashamed to have his life, his story associated with a mess like the one we've been talking about.

God is at work in messes like the one David created when he abused his power. People like David can be used by God to bring a Savior into the world. David the man who seduced his good friend's wife, David the man who used his power to try and cover his tracks and ended up getting his friend killed, can be used by God to do the most important thing that has ever happened in the world. God chose to send His Son into the world through this messy story. Isn't our God good?!

I've asked our choir to come back up and sing, once again the anthem they sang earlier in our worship service. This piece of music captures what I know Pastor Dan and I want you to know. These last two sermons have been tough. They most likely have touched some very tender, even raw places in our lives. As we confess our need for a Savior, as we agree with God that we are in need of forgiveness, we want you to know and trust God's steadfast love for you. And you and I have the opportunity to live into that trust. What we need to do is affirmed in the first line of this piece of music. You and I need to actively, deliberately, proactively "shake off our guilty fears." We can do that when we confess our sins to Christ. We can shake of our fears.

When Nathan confronts David, David, to his credit, immediately admits he's wrong. David has no hesitation. He doesn't deflect, rationalize, blame something or someone else. He simply agrees that he is indeed the man. And that actually makes him "the man"!

If there was hope for David, there is hope for you and me. If God, in His disappointment, doesn't give up on David; if God can take the mess of David's life and bring Jesus Christ out of that broken story and into our world, what might God want to do with you and me?

Arise, My Soul Arise!

*Arise, my soul, arise; shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears:
Before the throne my surety stands,
Before the throne my surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.
My name is written on His hands.*

*Five bleeding wounds He bears; received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers; they strongly plead for me:
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"*

*My God is reconciled; His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child; I can no longer fear:
With confidence I now draw nigh,
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And "Father, Abba, Father," cry.*

*Arise, my soul, arise;
And "Father, Abba, Father," cry.
Arise, my soul, arise.*

◆ An audio recording of *Arise My Soul Arise* by Dan Forrest can be found online at: <https://soundcloud.com/beckenhorst-press/02-arise-my-soul-arise-dan>
(Note: This is not a recording of FPC Honolulu's Choir)

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Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org. The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. It can also be sent to you by e-mail. You may also request the free audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com