

Rev. Mike Cole
Providence Presbyterian Church
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 21, 2026
II Samuel 11:26-12:13

"Oops"

Years ago, I met Nancy Warlick, a missionary in Zaire when we both attended a General Assembly meeting. She told of a chance encounter she had on an airplane. After she had settled herself into her seat on the plane, she discovered that she was seated next to a lady who was wearing the biggest diamond she had ever seen. She tried not to stare, but it was so large and beautiful that she couldn't seem to help herself.

Finally, with some hesitancy, she introduced herself to the woman and said, "I couldn't help but notice your diamond ring. It's quite stunning. I was wondering, is there a story behind it?" "As a matter of fact," replied the woman, "there is. This is the Klotman diamond and it comes with a curse." "Really?" said Nancy, "What's the curse?" "Mr. Klotman," responded the woman.

There are times that we all get sucked into a good story. Almost against our will we find ourselves leaning forward and listening to every detail just to be sure that we don't miss a thing. The best stories are the ones that have a surprising ending that also makes a point. King David found himself in just such a situation when listening to a story told by the prophet Nathan. The story went this way:

"There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; 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.

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." While Nathan told his story, David's blood pressure was skyrocketing. His indignation was great because of the injustice done to the poor man by the rich man.

In fact, his anger was so great that he probably didn't notice Bathsheba, his most recent wife, trying to get his attention. I imagine that she was making hand signs at David to catch

his attention. But his self-righteous wrath was such that he wouldn't be distracted by the unsubstantiated conclusions of a woman's intuition. Many a man has mistakenly disregarded a woman's intuition, and most pay a high price for their incredulity. I know I have.

When he couldn't control himself any longer, David blurted out, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Bathsheba must have smacked her head and muttered to herself, because she knew that David had trapped himself. She tried to warn him, but being "a man", he just wouldn't listen.

The next words that David heard from Nathan shocked him into the reality of the blunder he had made. More than that, Nathan's words made it clear that David had condemned himself by his judgment of the rich man in the story.

For those who don't know the story of David's life preceding this encounter with Nathan, here is some necessary information to make sense of this scene. David had risen to stardom rather rapidly. He came out of obscurity to win the gold medal in the slingshot competition. The nation greeted him as their newest hero. In fact, his popularity was such that the king himself began to worry that David's popularity might unseat him from power. In spite of the fact that King Saul loved David dearly and depended on him for leadership, his paranoia got the best of him. He banished David from the kingdom, which only made David more popular with the people. Clearly, David was God's "golden boy." He led a charmed life where everything seemed to work out in his favor, in spite of the odds against him.

After Saul's death, David united the warring kingdoms of Judah and Israel. His rule was marked by the greatest prosperity the land had ever known. The people were content. They adored David. He was the original "teflon king." Nothing bad stuck to him.

He continued to be the apple of God's eye, until he started believing his own public relations experts. When David began to consider himself above the law he started to rot from the inside out. David learned what some of us discover the hard way: we are the most susceptible to sin just when we think we are the least likely to sin.

The trouble began on the palace roof top when David got up from sleeping and began peeping. He caught sight of Bathsheba taking a hot bath and suddenly felt the need for a cold shower. Not even the fact that Bathsheba was married to a soldier in David's own army dissuaded him from cooking up a plan to have her husband, Uriah, sent to the front line to be killed.

After an appropriate period of mourning, Bathsheba exchanged her widow's garment for a wedding gown and soon thereafter gave birth to a son. Now you can understand why

Bathsheba was frantically waving to David while Nathan was telling his story. She knew that her illicit relationship with David had offended God. But David was oblivious to the fact that he had single-handedly broken four of God's "top ten ways to offend God."

The "golden boy" was tarnished and God knew it and was going to let all the kingdom in on the sordid secret. Through Nathan, God allowed David to bring judgment on himself and then reminded David what we all know: there are consequences for sin.

As long as David thought Nathan was talking about somebody else, it was easy to see sin. Isn't that true for all of us? It's always so much easier to see everyone else's faults. In other people, they are sins; in ourselves, they are character flaws. That's the fuzzy thinking into which David had fallen.

But God cared too much for David to allow him to persist in his sin. Through Nathan, God called David on his Persian rug not because God enjoys punishing people but because God desires a healthy relationship with us. God is not in the business of enabling our misdeeds; God is in the business of calling us out for our actions to restore us into a right relationship with God. It is because God desires a fulfilling relationship with us that the Lord holds a mirror up to our sin so that we can recognize ourselves and correct our behavior.

It is to David's credit that when he realized that he'd been caught "red-handed," he didn't deny his culpability; He didn't accuse God of using unfair tactics to entrap him; he didn't try to justify his actions. Instead, David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." His acknowledgement of sin began the restoration process which was so important to God.

Just because David admitted his sinfulness, that didn't mean that he didn't have to suffer the consequences of his sin. The price of sin must be paid. Through his actions, David had set in motion a series of events that would bring heartache to everyone connected to him. But that is what sin does - it separates us from those whom we love.

God accepts David's confession of sin in the same way He accepts our confession of sin; with forgiveness and the restoration of our relationship with God. God doesn't promise to make everything right for David. There is no promise to restore David's image and make everything "hunky dory." But God does promise that David shall not die with this sin marked against him.

David experienced what I call an "oops moment;" a moment when a person recognizes themselves in someone else's dilemma. It happens to us when we see someone behaving badly while driving and we remember the times we have done the same thing. It happens to us when we see a parent over or under discipline a child, a mistake we have made many times. It happens to us when a friend confides that his or her marriage is breaking up because of the very behavior we have exhibited. It happens to us when we see the ugliness

of racial prejudice and realize that we are complicit in perpetuating bigotry. It happens to us when we break bread with Christ and recall the ways that we have betrayed and crucified him.

Our "oops moments" may not happen with a prophet standing right next to us, but God uses our OOPS moments to call us back into relationship with Himself. That is the marvelous thing about God's love for us - it refuses to let our sin stand in the way of our relationship with God. God is always prepared to offer us the same treatment as He offered David - to put away our sin. To put it so far away that it will never interfere in our relationship with God.

Whenever the "oops moments" occur for us, we can respond just as David did, admitting that we have sinned against the Lord. We can do so because we are assured that God will respond to us just as He did to David - with forgiveness. God's forgiveness enables us to begin again the process of restoring our relationship with God, which is what God wants from every "oops moment."

And do you know what else? There are no limits to how much or how many times God will forgive us. For every "Oops" moment, there is a divine offer of forgiveness when we confess to God. And that's a great thing by God's design!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Charge: Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God will equip you. God will accomplish a purpose in your being there. Christ who dwells within you has something He wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in God's grace, love and power. Amen