

2 Samuel 12:1-10, 13

Welcome to the Museum of Saints.

A monument to all your favorite heroes and characters from the Bible. As you walk through these halls, you see familiar stories. There's Abraham a knife in hand, poised over his only son Isaac. Over there, you see Moses by the burning bush, and next to him you see a statue of Samson fighting a young lion. As you walk past statues and exhibits for all these heroes, you see one that stands a little taller than the rest. Here at the very center of all these Bible heroes and mighty champions, you'll find one who rises to the top, one hero so many have come to call their favorite: King David. And what is there not to like about him?

He was the loveable shepherd boy who took down bears and lions to defend his sheep. He was the brave warrior who defeated Goliath with a slingshot, and conquered kingdoms with the sword. He even lived for a time as a fugitive, like Robin Hood, on the run from King Saul. And he was even more than all those things, the Bible tells us that he was a man after God's own heart, he's listed among the heroes of faith, and he holds a special place in the salvation history. God promised David that someday a king would come from his line, a king whose kingdom would last forever, who would never be defeated or destroyed. David was the great forefather of our Savior, Jesus.

But if you take a closer look at David, as look at his tall statue, you'll notice that there is a large crack in its foundation. It's a broken statue, David is a broken saint. And if you read his story, you'll see that there is a massive black mark on his file. It all started as the smallest crack.

In the spring, when kings were supposed to go to war to protect their people, David stayed home. As he stood on the roof of his palace one evening, looking over the beautiful city of Jerusalem, enjoying his secure and hard-earned kingdom, his eyes came to rest on a beautiful woman who was bathing. But he couldn't look away. He couldn't let it go. He wouldn't. Lust was growing in his heart and so he summoned Bathsheba to his palace. And what was she to do? How could she say no to the king? He overwhelmed Bathsheba with his authority, David was the king, she was his subject, and David got what he wanted. David committed adultery. Maybe David told himself that this was just one night, one mistake, and he could move on, but Bathsheba became pregnant. So, David scrambled to save his own reputation. Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, was off fighting for David, and so David called him back in an effort to cover up his sin. When that didn't work, David sent orders back with Uriah to have him put in the very center of the battle, where he knew that Uriah would die. And David got his wish. With Uriah dead, David swooped in to take Bathsheba as his wife. To the people, David would have looked noble and kind, he had stepped in to take in the widow of one of his brave men. No one would know. But God knew.

So God sent his prophet Nathan to David with a story. There were two men. One rich, one poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, but this poor man had just one little lamb. But this little lamb meant everything to the man. He raised her himself, and she grew up with his children. She would drink out of his cup and even fall asleep in his arms. She was part of the family; she was a like a daughter to him. One day, a traveler came to visit the rich man, but he couldn't bring himself to kill one of his many animals. But he knew that the poor man had a small lamb. He took the lamb by force, killed it, and prepared it for his visitor. David's blood boiled. "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Can you hear the justice in his voice? The self-righteousness? Then Nathan turned to David and said, "You are the man!"

This is truly one of the saddest moments in Bible history. Look at how far our hero has fallen. Lust. Adultery. Murder. We shake our heads at David. How did he get here? How could a man after God's own heart

become such a disaster? Let's retrace David's steps. David stands on the rooftop of his palace. He looks over his kingdom, his wealth, his victories, and he takes pride in his works. He becomes complacent. He forgets who gave him every good thing. He looks to himself rather than to his God. But sin is crouching at David's door. It works quietly, planting a seed of lust in David's heart. That seed of lust turns into adultery. That adultery turns into murder. And that sin blinded David, from what was good, from what was right, from what he should have done.

He was blinded so completely that when Nathan told him this story, David in self-righteousness and with a sense of justice, he condemned the rich man who stole the lamb, without recognizing that he was that man. He was the man. He was the man who stole the lamb, he was the man who deserved to die. In that moment, David must have realized just how far he had fallen. In that moment, David saw the path of destruction he left behind him: A broken marriage, a murdered husband, a stolen wife. In that moment, David saw the root of his sin. His heart.

That same heart of David which sought after God instead chose to lust, and sin, and murder. The same heart which leaped to condemn the rich man who stole the lamb, was the same heart which was blind to his own sin. And it's the same heart you and I have. You may protest, after all, you haven't murdered, you haven't committed adultery, you haven't ruined a marriage, or even stolen a lamb. But the same seeds of sin can grow in your heart. Sin blinded David, and it can blind you. Sin will tell you what you hide in your heart really isn't that bad. After all, you're here in church. After all, you live a good life. Thank God you are not like other people, murderers, thieves, adulterers, thank God you haven't fallen like David. And there, like David, we condemn ourselves. You would never actually steal something, but you covet with your heart. You would never actually commit adultery, but lust is in your heart. You would never actually murder, but you kill that person you hate in your heart. You may have everyone else fooled, but while man looks at the outward appearances, God sees your heart. Don't fool yourself. If David, the greatest of our Bible heroes could fall, so can you. His story is a warning to you that sin is crouching at your door, eager to have you. Eager to take you on the same path as David. But David gave up the act. He said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." David could hide no longer. He had failed as a king. He had failed as a man. His sins were laid bare before his God. He had no excuses, no loopholes, nowhere to hide his sin. He had pronounced his own judgement upon himself, he must surely die. All he could do was beat his chest and beg, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." And the LORD forgave him. Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die." Immediate and full. No drawn-out forgiveness. No need for penance or reparations or retribution. God says it is forgiven, and it is forgiven. Adultery, Murder, Sins of the most grievous and ugly nature. Forgiven. David's sin is gone. Your sin is gone.

But how? How can David's evil deeds be wiped out? How can your darkest and deepest sins be taken away? It's found in God's promise to David, to his seed. A promise not because of anything David did, but because of God's love. A promise of a king who would rule forever. Of a king who would take the punishment of God upon himself. Jesus, who wore a crown of thorns, who was mocked as the King of the Jews, who was punished for sins he did not commit to bring peace between man and God. He was the man who died, to bring peace between you and God. There is no condemnation for you. Only God's love for you. While you were still a sinner, God died for you. See the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, who gives you access into the grace in which you stand, who invites you not to stand on a pedestal in a Museum of Saints, but brings you into his eternal kingdom, his Room of Grace. Don't hide behind your heart. Come! Be forgiven! God's grace is far greater than any of your sins, whatever they may be.

There is no condemnation for you. The LORD has taken away your sin.