

## Living with Mistakes

Sermon for the 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: 2 Samuel 12:1-15



*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. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest*

*who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, <sup>6</sup> and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." <sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' <sup>11</sup> Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." <sup>15</sup> Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick.*

The evening hours are the best hours. You children know this too. Parents are a bit relaxed; they can rest. Perhaps even read aloud an interesting story. In our Bible text today, we see just such an evening hour. It's bedtime for the famous King David. The king had taken his place in a big wingback chair and the Prophet Nathan wanted to tell him a nice bedtime story. The story is exciting because it's about a shepherd. David himself was a shepherd and he must think back to his own childhood as a shepherd. He thinks about how he loved his sheep. He loved them so much that he even put his own life in danger to defend his sheep from bears and wolves. It would have warmed his heart when he heard about the shepherd who dearly loved his only sheep and daily cared for it. Nathan told this story but the story had a bad end: in the same city, there was also a rich man. He had lots of sheep and could have at any time slaughtered one of his own sheep. But when a guest came to visit, he desperately wanted the tender meat from the poor man's sheep. And that's why he simply sent for the lamb and slaughtered it for himself. Now the poor man no longer had a sheep... and the rich man could fill his stomach... So went Nathan's story up to this point. And that was the last straw for the king. He jumped up. The pretty, upholstered chair flew backwards and David shouted furiously: "What??? Did that really happen! What a terrible person! This may not happen in my kingdom! This rich man must die!" Then Nathan turned to David and looked him straight in the eyes: "You are the man!" he said. "You took the wife of a poor man and to cover it up, you sent him on a dangerous mission to die!"

David's face paled. His life flashed before his eyes like a movie. He remembered his meteoric rise. After killing the terrible giant Goliath, he was celebrated as a hero. He was a star! An idol! Just like some soccer or tennis stars today can allow themselves some fun, King David also thought that as the victorious king, he could afford a few more privileges than others. And when he sent the husband of the dearly beloved woman to war, it wasn't David who killed him. It was someone else! An accident of war! These things happen! Just one problem remained. David's plan

didn't stay covered up – not from the prophet Nathan and above all, not from God. But alarmingly, David could live quite well with his sin and even hide it from himself and from everyone else. How could it get so far? How can a person deceive themselves so well? In the story of David, we see that everything started slowly. It all started with a glance in the wrong direction because David saw a beautiful woman, something that is not wrong in itself. What was wrong is what happened after because King David appeared to forget for a moment that God exists. He just pretended that God was not there. And just because he could forget about God, he could take the law into his own hands and do what actually only God can do. Which is, end a person's life. Just as if God didn't exist. Just as if King David himself had become God. All of this is terribly shocking because we see that the evil started small at first and later became bigger and bigger. First a glance, then a little lie, until finally, death comes. And then the explosive lie as if nothing had happened. The culprit succeeds in covering it all up with a lie. That's not unfamiliar to us. Something like this can be seen in so many examples. We see, for example, the athletes who claim in front of cameras that they have not used banned substances... and a few days later, when there is nothing left to deny, must confess that they had lied. Or Russian news that reports that Ukraine bombed its own people though we all know that Russia did it... and we could go on. But wait a moment. In the story of King David, we aren't dealing with some dictator. We're dealing with a very devout person. King David. He is even called a man after God's own heart! The Bible bluntly shows us that evil can also come knocking on the door of devout people. Even good people can do evil. We could even do evil. We can fall into temptation.

You, dear children, you stand at the beginning of your lives and look with great hope towards what will happen in your lives – this year or even next year. Perhaps you also are thinking about the distant future. Who knows what you will become one day. Who knows, perhaps one of you will be a superstar or a famous athlete. Or perhaps you will become an ordinary adult and have a job, family, and children. The story of David wants to show you that good people can also stray. Even good people have faults. Good people can also suddenly fall into something bad and can become involved in even worse things. And what do we do when we make a mistake? In King David's story, we are shown that someone must show us our mistakes: "You are the man!" Nathan the prophet says to David. We also need someone to show us our mistakes. These are terrible moments when one's eyes are opened, and they must face their own flaws ruthlessly. In the Bible, we meet people and this exact thing happened to them. And yet this is good because otherwise, evil will only get worse and worse. When we make mistakes, we still become sad. Because we know that mistakes have consequences. Sins and slip-ups don't just disappear. Just like the red markings in your school notebooks don't simply vanish. They have consequences. Often, you get a bad grade because of this and there is still trouble with your parents. Maybe you aren't allowed to play as often with your friends anymore. That's how it is with our mistakes. Our mistakes cry out for us to do something about them or pay for them. And that's exactly why we want to hide, so no one discovers our mistakes. But that is the worst thing that could happen to us. Because that's how everything gets even worse. God also knows that. God knows that all our mistakes can't easily disappear but must be paid. And God knows even more. He knows that we can never come to terms with our many mistakes. They're just too much and too big. He also knows that we can never fight against evil. And that's why He is our good Shepherd. Just as David took care of his sheep, God takes care of us too. But God does even more for us. Nathan explained about the man who just had one single sheep and loved it. God has only one Son, and His name is Jesus Christ. God loves Him so much. But because God doesn't want to lose us, He gave this Son, Jesus, whom He loves so much, to die for us and to pay for all our mistakes and sins. Whoever knows this doesn't need to hide from his mistakes. Whoever knows this can openly confess where he made mistakes. That's how it went with King David. When Nathan had gone and everything was at an end, David picked up pen and papyrus and wrote: *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions."* (Psalm 51:1) And he continued to write: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."* (Psalm 51:10-12) Amen.