

Sermon Note: Call to Confession

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

The call to confession is a vital part of our worship service, inviting us to come before God with honesty and humility. It's a time to acknowledge our shortcomings and seek God's forgiveness and grace. In 2 Samuel 11:1-15, we encounter one of the most well-known and troubling stories of King David's life. David's actions, leading to the adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged death of her husband Uriah, reveal the depths of human weakness and the necessity of confession.

As we continue our series on the elements of our traditional worship service, this week we focus on the "Call to Confession." David's story serves as a stark reminder of the importance of seeking reconciliation with God and recognizing our need for God's mercy and grace. This week gives us the opportunity to reflect on how we can respond to this call to confession with sincere hearts, trusting in God's unfailing love and forgiveness.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmWKvvXzlyg>

In this scene from 1994's *The Lion King*, Simba, haunted by his past and his role in his father's death, encounters Rafiki and is reminded of who he truly is.

Video Discussion Questions

1. How does Simba's journey back to Pride Rock reflect the elements of a call to confession?
2. What emotions and realizations does Simba experience that mirror the process of confession and repentance?
3. How can we relate Simba's confrontation with his past to our own experiences of acknowledging our sins before God?
4. In what ways does this scene inspire you to confront your own past and seek God's forgiveness?
5. How does Simba's acceptance of his identity and responsibility resonate with the need for us to embrace our true selves in God's eyes, despite our flaws?

2 Samuel 11:1-15 (NRSVue)

¹In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

²It happened, late one afternoon when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. ³David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. ⁵The woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

“So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared and how the war was going. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” Uriah went out of the king’s house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?” ¹¹Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.” ¹²Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, ¹³David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk, and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Where was David supposed to be during the events of 2 Samuel 11:1?
2. David saw a beautiful woman named Bathsheba bathing, and he slept with her. When he found out that she was pregnant, what was David’s initial plan to cover up his sin with Bathsheba?
3. Have you felt tempted to do something you knew was wrong? How did you handle the situation, and what did you learn from it?
4. What final plan did David implement to cover up his sin? Do you think there was a purpose beyond hiding his sin?
5. Imagine you are Nathan the prophet. How would you confront David about his actions in a way that leads him to true repentance and change?
6. Reflect on a time when someone in your life made a mistake that hurt others. How was the situation handled? What could have been done differently to promote healing and forgiveness?
7. This is the beginning of a series of poor decisions that David makes. The king, who is still surely at the pinnacle of his power, is revealed to be as human, as much of a sinner in need of redeeming as anyone. What can we learn from David’s failures and mistakes?
8. Do you have something you want to confess to God? How might we focus on confessing to God this week so we will not make the same mistakes?
9. What action will you take this week to seek forgiveness for a past mistake or to help someone else find the courage to confess and make amends?

Add'l (Optional) Discussion Questions

1. Can you list the key events that led to David’s failures in this passage? If David had acted differently, would he have avoided doing such harm?
2. Why do you think David made the choices he made in this story?
3. How do you think Bathsheba and Uriah felt about David’s actions?
4. What are some modern-day examples where people might need to confess their wrongdoings?

5. What makes confessing a wrongdoing, a mistake, or a sin difficult? Is it a different experience when a wrongdoing is said aloud to others and not just internally to oneself? Why or why not?
6. Do you think David's actions can be justified in any way? Why or why not?
7. How important is it for communities to incorporate confession into their worship? What benefits do you see? What difficulties do you see?
8. Imagine you are advising King David. Create a plan of action for how he could have handled the situation with Bathsheba and Uriah differently.

Weekly Action

This week, spend some time in personal reflection and prayer, acknowledging areas in your life where you need to seek God's forgiveness. Write down your confessions on a sheet of paper. Then, in a symbolic act, release them—perhaps by tearing up the paper or burning it *safely*—signifying your acceptance of God's forgiveness. Share this experience with a trusted friend, family member, or with a church group. Encourage one other in the practice of confession and the embrace of God's grace.

Prayer

(this is a traditional confessional prayer from The United Methodist Book of Worship)

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.