

# Sermon Note: The Weight of the Word

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

In week 4 of our Worship with Rejoicing series, we step into a powerful narrative from the story of King David that reveals the weight and impact of God's word in our lives. Following last week's difficult text about David and Bathsheba, the King is confronted by the prophet Nathan. In the narrative, we witness a moment of deep conviction and repentance that underscores the transformative power of acknowledging our failures and seeking forgiveness. The prophet's confrontation with David serves as a poignant reminder that God's word is not just a comfort but also a call to accountability and change.

### Illustration Videos

This week I've selected two clips showing the same narrative from the classic novel *Les Misérables*. In both clips, Jean Valjean confesses his true identity.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f\\_acHqG3L14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_acHqG3L14)

In the 1998 film, Liam Neeson plays the lead character.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXhofhspBd4>

In this 2012 film version of the popular musical, Hugh Jackman plays the lead character.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. How did Jean Valjean's confession impact those around him in the courtroom?
2. In what ways do we see a parallel between Jean Valjean's confession and Nathan's confrontation with David?
3. How can we apply the lessons from this scene and the scripture to our own lives when we face situations that require us to speak out or seek justice?

### 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a (NRSVue)

<sup>26</sup>When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. <sup>27</sup>When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, <sup>1</sup>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 that 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. <sup>4</sup>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." <sup>5</sup>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; <sup>6</sup>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 rescued you from the hand of Saul; <sup>8</sup>I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into

your bosom and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah, and if that had been too little, I would have added 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, for you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. <sup>11</sup>Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within 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 broad daylight. <sup>12</sup>For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and in broad daylight.” <sup>13</sup>David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

### **Scripture Discussion Questions**

1. Who is the father of the son of Uriah’s wife? Bathsheba (Uriah’s wife) was sexually assaulted; her husband was killed, and now she is giving birth to this man’s baby. We do not hear her voice in the Bible. How do you think she felt?
2. After David heard the parable from Nathan, what was David’s reaction? What does David’s reaction tell us about his understanding of his actions and his willingness to repent?
3. David said, “I have sinned against the Lord” (verse 13a). This seems to show a sincere recognition of his wrongdoing and a desire for reconciliation with God. What do you think about his reaction?
4. How can we apply Nathan’s approach to confrontation in our own lives when addressing wrongdoings? What steps can we take to ensure we are both truthful and compassionate?
5. Rev. Dr. David Weber (Director of Preaching Ministries at the General Board of Discipleship, UMC) writes, “So, let the word speak to God’s people this week, as it does every week. Let the proclamation be one of transformation, repentance, and restitution. Let there be a challenge to all to not abuse their power, their position, their authority. And let us hold our leaders to a high standard in life and official capacity. Let us see all the people who might be impacted by our choices and our preferences. Let us hear the weight of the word that tears down and builds up in equal measure.” Based on today’s discussion, what action will you take this week to address a personal or communal issue that requires confession? How will you ensure that you follow through with this commitment?

### **Add'l (Optional) Discussion Questions**

1. Summarize the story Nathan told David about the rich man and the poor man in your own words. Can you think of any real-world and current equivalents?
2. Why do you think Nathan confronted David with the story of the rich man and the poor man?
3. How can you apply the lesson from Nathan’s story about owning up to mistakes in your own life?
4. What are some ways we can share and discuss the Word of God with others in our daily lives?
5. What does Nathan’s approach in confronting David teach us about how to address someone who has done wrong?
6. Compare David’s initial reaction to Nathan’s story with his reaction after realizing the story was about him. What changed?
7. Have you ever known someone, including yourself, to have an initial reaction that then changes after new information? Do you think this is a sign of weakness or strength?
8. What do you think about the saying, “We desire mercy for ourselves and justice for others” related to this story from scripture? Do you believe that saying is true? How might we move to wanting mercy and justice for all, ourselves included?

**Weekly Action**

This week, I would like to encourage each of us to reflect on areas of our lives where we may need to seek forgiveness or offer it to others. Consider writing a letter or having a conversation with someone with whom you need to reconcile. Let the weight of your words bring healing and restoration, just as Nathan's words led David to repentance.

**Prayer**

Dear God, we thank you for the story of David and Nathan, which reminds us of the power of confession and the importance of accountability. Help us approach our wrongdoings with humility and seek reconciliation with those we have hurt. Grant us the courage to be truthful and the wisdom to be compassionate in our confrontations. Amen.