

# Covered by Innocent Death

Lent 5 PM Prayer

#1842

2 Samuel 11:1-12:14 & Matthew 27:32-66 (Passion Reading V)

1 April 2020

My, how we love to cover up our sins! David sets the example, and we gladly follow in his footsteps. He was Israel's greatest king, after all, a man after God's own heart, a good role model, to be sure. But notice how he, a man who could sing God's praises like no one else, could also cover up his sins like no one else.

It began before the cover-up, before the murder, before the adultery, even before the coveting of another man's beautiful bride. It began as David neglected his vocation, his God-given calling. It was *"the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle."* It's what kings do. It's in their "job description" under the heading "Defend and protect the citizens of your nation." But that one time David neglected that duty. He presumed he had better things to do, more important things to accomplish—like play peeping tom and ogle the topless beauty next door. "Who is she? Oh, Bathsheba. Bring her to me. But keep it hush, hush. No one needs to know."

God knew, though.

Then David, the suave, debonair, romantic lover, easily concealed his sin of neglecting his vocation. And one sin led to another, all too naturally and all too easily. A little sweet talk. A lot of passion. Don't worry about the guilt or others finding out. After all, he's the king. Surely he

knows how to keep such things under wraps. They don't call it "Secret Service" for nothing.

Then the big "Uh-oh!" She's what? Pregnant? Oh, my! Everyone will know soon enough, especially when she starts showing. Hmm. How to fix this? How to clean up this unfortunate mess? Ah-ha! Bring hubby home. Get him to sleep with his wife. Everyone will think it's Uriah's child. No one will be the wiser.

Except God.

It turns out that Uriah the Hittite, the foreigner, the little man from an unbelieving people, had more honor and integrity than powerful, respected King David. Enjoy the comforts of home while his army buddies were still out suffering the heat of battle and the fog of war? Perish the thought! And perish David's cover-up plan too, as it turned out. Even stone-cold drunk, Uriah displayed more honor and integrity than King David, who's sole intent was covering up his sins. So when Uriah would not participate and cooperate, David would eliminate, in the battle, where it would be sad, to be sure, but only natural. Who would suspect a thing?

God would. And God did.

Notice the pattern. David's first unnoticeable sin—neglecting his vocation—led to another—coveting—and then another—adultery—and then another—murder—and all under his man-made cloak of secrecy. But God's

X-ray vision sees right through the sheer and flimsy strategies we use to cover up our many transgressions.

God sent Pastor Nathan to confront and rebuke King David. Not only was Nathan risking his very life—because the King could easily say, “Out of my sight and off with his head”—but he was about to do the more dangerous task of exposing sin. So Nathan shrouds his rebuke in an innocent story: a poor man cheated out of his only lamb by a rich man who should have taken from his own God-given wealth. When David heard the innocent-sounding story, his passion for justice burned hot. You see, covering up your own sins often makes you quite self-righteous, hotly indignant, and overly judgmental about the sins of other people. All of that pent up energy from keeping your own sins under wraps explodes and erupts at the least little transgression ... of someone else.

Nathan’s rebuke of David comes in the simplest of words: “You are the man!” He might as well point the finger and say those same words to each of us: “You are the man! You are the woman! You are the boy! You are the girl! Yes, you are the one who has sinned. Cover it up all you like; you cannot hide it from God. Conceal it under your every excuse and rationalization; hide it with deeds that appear honorable and even devout; but you still cannot fool God. As He says elsewhere: “*Whoever conceals his transgression will not prosper.*” Man-devised cover-ups never work. No way, no how!

But here is where David becomes a salutary role model in a better way. He simply confessed his sin and sins—no excuses, no justifications, no more covering up. ***“I have sinned against the LORD.”*** They are words for you too—and words to utter with no excuses, no justifications, no more covering up. “[I] have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what [I] have done and by what [I] have left undone.” *“Lord, to You I make confession: / I have sinned and gone astray, / I have multiplied transgression, / Chosen for myself my way. / Led by You to see my errors, / Lord, I tremble at Your terrors”* (LSB, 608:1).

Then, for David and for you, God’s words delivered through the pastor’s mouth come rushing in to heal, to restore, and to give life. ***“The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”*** Sins exposed, forgiveness uttered, life bestowed! What a sweet and glorious moment! What a life-changing and liberating message! God’s own forgiveness comes through the voice of a man, a fellow sinner. As God says in the Proverb: ***“but he who confesses and forsakes [his transgressions] will obtain mercy.”***

There’s a curious little conclusion to David’s confession and absolution, however. Yes, David confessed, but that’s not why he was forgiven. Merely confessing and forsaking our transgressions does not earn or achieve God’s life-giving forgiveness. Listen to God’s words uttered through Pastor Nathan’s mouth: ***“Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die.”***

At first we might hear these words as God unfairly withdrawing His absolution, or suddenly hiding His mercy behind a cloak of retribution. But let's take these words as glorious and comforting Gospel instead! The LORD put away David's sins; he would not die. But the Child born to David—the Son of David yet to come, ten centuries down the road—He would die, and He would die carrying David's specific, concrete, and now-exposed sins. The Absolution was certainly free for David, just as it's free for you and me. But it is very costly for the Child of David named Jesus. No, you will not die for your sins, God says, but the Son of David will. The Son of David has. As we sing: *"For Your Son has suffered for me, / Giv'n Himself to rescue me, / Died to save me and restore me. / Reconciled and set me free. / Jesus' cross alone can vanquish / These dark fears and soothe this anguish"* (LSB 608:3)

And we—like role-model David before us—are now covered by an innocent death. Instead of feebly covering our sins, and multiplying them exponentially in the process, we can take comfort in the innocent death of the sinless Son of God and Son of David. When Jesus died on that cross, the centurion marveled saying, *"Truly this was the Son of God!"* He could have said just as truly, "This was the Son of David—the innocent Child whose death covers our sin." And when the greater Child of David covers the sins that we expose in Confession, they remain truly covered—covered by His innocent blood, covered from God, covered from us, covered and never to be

exposed again. The Lord who has suffered and died for you has put away your sin; you shall not die. Amen.