

**Message**  
**June 12-13, 2010**  
**2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13; Luke 7:36-8:3**  
**Saved Heroes - Hillary T. West**

Heroes are those people who show great courage in times of trouble and adversity; people who save others in the face of danger; our helpers when we've lost our direction. Heroes are willing to make sacrifices for the greater good.

But, don't be mistaken. Heroes are not without flaws.

Throughout his presidency, Abraham Lincoln's service was debilitated by bouts of serious depression. He's been labeled a racist as he probably uttered disrespectful jokes about African Americans during his time in office. His 1863 Emancipation Proclamation granted limited freedom to slaves. Yet, Lincoln goes down as the most compelling president in American history. Martin Luther King, Jr's first name was Michael, not Martin. He's been reported to have "borrowed" much of his very famous, "I have a dream" speech. And yet, he gave his life securing civil rights for African Americans. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, is said to have been so painfully shy she couldn't attend school. But, she survived the battlefields of the Civil War with ease.

King David is probably the prototype for a great hero. He fits the mold. He's good looking, with ruddy cheeks, fine eyes and an attractive appearance, a well spoken, skilled musician and poet, with more than ½ the 150 psalms attributed to him. The prophet Samuel tells us David is brave. He's chosen by God to serve as a fighter and protector. He conquers the Philistines with nothing but a sling shot and a rock in his battle with the giant Goliath. He's triumphant as a military leader winning both tribes of Judah and Israel, uniting the kingdoms. Under his expert organizational skills, and competent leadership over his vast army, David grows the kingdom of Israel into a powerful empire the likes of which is never seen again. For all intents and purposes, David was the super hero of kings in the tenth century B.C.; a favorite of God.

And, yet, David is a fallen hero.

A story of a fallen hero, a story of sin, is also a story of God redeeming us with accountability, and most importantly, a story of God who is always with us, at our right hand with saving help; a God who sets us free, with marvelous, loving kindness; our rock in whom we can put our trust. Our struggle always comes when our heroes fall from their pedestals; when our bubble is burst as the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of our heroes are revealed to remind us all too often of our very humanness. When we just step a bit to the other side of God's holiness and take matters into our own hands, we lose sight of who and what holds the power. Misuse of power is exactly what happens with David. This is not just lack of good judgment. This is David at his very worst. He lets his lust and wanton desire run amuck with the beautiful Bathsheba; lonely from long nights awaiting her husband's return from the battlefield. Plotting his murder, David connives and tricks his most obedient and loyal officer, Uriah the Hittite. Learning that she's pregnant, David marries Bathsheba. But, there's every indication he's entered into a loveless marriage in an effort to cover up his sinister scheme and save face. The story ends, seemingly with David cleaning up the mess. Or so we think.

Maybe that's why we have this story that reveals the most sinful selfish side of this great King David; to remember that God knows all too well our human frailty. That God confronts us with those people in our lives to remind us of God's true intent. That even in our fierce ambition and desire, God still pushes through with love and forgiveness.

See, somewhere along the line, David forgets. Maybe he's seduced by his success and gets overly confident in his power. What we do know, is that David goes looking in all the wrong places to still his restlessness. He forgets how God's favor is upon him; that when we're tempted, our safest bet is to turn and trust in God.

Clearly, David's ambition and unchecked craving hardens his heart. He turns away from God. But, God does not forget. God is not a God of hesitancy or question. In fact, our God is a God with an absolute promise of love and forgiveness, a God of grace and mercy; that no matter our brokenness, the mistakes, the illness, the addiction, the wrong, God still loves. God doesn't withhold, doesn't pull back when we've wronged...

In fact, God's grace, is a grace that saves, and is a promise rooted in us with Christ long before the sin even begins to sprout.

Here's the other part. We can keep secrets from one another. In fact, I imagine we've all got a few secrets in our pockets. But, there is no secret keeping from God. The minute we miss the mark; have the evil thought; do the hurtful act; play by a different set of rules, God knows. With God all that we are is fully present and fully revealed and God redeems.

David may well have thought his secret was safe from his kingdom, and from God in his marriage to Bathsheba. But, our God's love is fierce. Our God will not rest at redeeming us. Blessing us, God sends his only son to show us his ways, to teach us his paths, to die for us, to restore us to the full capacity of who we are in the eyes of God.

Sometimes we need help in recognizing the error of our ways. We just get in those places where we've carved for ourselves such a dark hole we're not sure how to get out. So, God sends in reinforcements. God knows David's secret and *the thing David had done displeased the Lord*. So, God sends the prophet Nathan to David.

In enters a hero of a very different caliber. Now, prophets are those who carry the presence of God's Spirit and holding us accountable, ethically and morally. And, because God is forever faithful, prophets are always a voice of hope and promise: Those people in our lives we've known forever and can say just about anything and we're apt to listen; and those people, we may not know so well, but who enter at those critical times when we just really need to hear the ugly truth; those God bearers who serve as the patient, courageous voice for God drawing us back to God's grace; who help us get to those places where we're on our knees before God, giving thanks for his mercy and begging for forgiveness.

Nathan is one of those messengers. He employs brilliance in his dealings with David and his ego. He's probably remembering their first encounter. Nathan is all too familiar with David's victories.

Earlier, David, having secured a united kingdom of Israel and Judah, making a brilliant, strategic move, relocating the capital to its neutral location of Jerusalem, then arrogantly decides to create a permanent home for God by building a temple for the Ark of the Covenant. He conveniently forgets that God has promised a dynasty. In other words, the buck doesn't stop with David.

Nathan reminds David that his leadership is the beginning of a long line of God's kingdom of salvation. God promises, King David's dynasty will prevail. But, David will not build the temple. The building of the temple will be the responsibility of David's son, Solomon.

*We don't always get what we want.*

**What we get is a God who gifts us with grace that saves us over and over again; and every bit of success we achieve is simply a result of God's grace so abundantly and lovingly bestowed upon us.**

God is persistent. Now, Nathan is back again. God uses the prophet to hold David accountable for his heinous actions with Bathsheba and Uriah. Intervention is a delicate task. Often the receiver is not a bit interested in listening. We don't want reminders of our sin because, then we might have to do something about it. Especially when we think we've so carefully hidden it under the rug. But, as long as we live in deception, we can't trust and be free to grow in the purity of God's redeeming love for us.

God doesn't send Nathan to condemn David. Somewhere along the line, David, with all his power, got off track. God sends Nathan to bring David back into the fold; to create in him a clean heart; to be what he's intended to be; the great king of a great people, chosen by God. So, Nathan does the clever thing. He tells a story. Because, we all know full well that when we're listening to story about someone else's plights, our hearts soften, and we tend to just let down our defense mechanisms a little bit.

Nathan, tells the parable of a rich man masquerading under the guise of hospitality, who unjustly takes from a poor man his one precious possession and feeds it to his guest. David flies into a rage and quickly leaps to judge the rich man. Nathan serves it right back. "You are the man!" You, David are the taker of what is not rightfully yours.

God uses Nathan to deliver the heartbreak that the wrongs we deliver, or the wrongs done to us, are not just offenses against others or ourselves, more importantly, the sin is against God. God suffers.

David finally grasping that God doesn't dwell on sin; instead, God puts away sin with redeeming grace, turning to God crying out repenting, "I have sinned against God!" And, God puts away the sin.

It's a heroic story with displays of courage, bravery and an honest willingness to just try. But, it's just not an easy story to hear. It's a flawed story. David does turn to God and there are great rewards, achievements and successes for David, his family and the dynasty created by God. And, if we look out far enough onto the branches of David's family tree, we'll see the name Jesus.

But, there is much heartbreak and sadness as well in David's family. Life is altered forever for David. He buries a son. He battles with another.

But, the true victory comes in Nathan and David as God leads them through David's indiscretions and then his confession to turn once again to God, who lovingly extends open arms to receive his most precious child into his loving embrace. We respond, not because of judgment; rather, we respond because of God's favor upon us.

We all have heroes in our life and I imagine each of us serves as a hero for another, somewhere along the line. Heroes, flawed and fallen, grace filled and passionate about doing what is just and right for God; who God sends with messages to

remind us of God's grace; that in our choices, we will have consequences buoyed up and redeemed by and God's undying love; that our God is a God of great compassion, love and forgiveness.

May it be that we rejoice in God's glory, and like David, rise up, face God and say, "I'm sorry;" and may we, trusting in the tender mercy of Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us, go out and make amends with those in our path, not because of our fallenness. No, we go out rejoicing because of our salvation, in Christ our Lord.