

## God's Endless Love

Hello to everyone online! I think I speak for the entire youth group when I say that we are so sad that our youth Sunday is taking place virtually. But we will make the most out of it!

My name is Sophia Loose, and this year I will be graduating from Bountiful High School.

Today I will be delivering the sermon on God's endless reserve of love and forgiveness. We're going to turn to 2 Samuel Chapter 11. The David and Bathsheba story is very well known, but I'm just going to read it to refresh everyone's memory. Verse 2. "From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her... She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David saying, 'I am pregnant'".

David abused his power and position to get what he wanted. Already bad, the story gets worse when David tries to cover his sin. David sends for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. He tells him to go home to his wife, but Uriah unknowingly foils the plan. He says, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields". Out of intense devotion to his military duty, Uriah refuses to go home to his wife. He stays with his men at the palace and sleeps as one of the King's servants. Uriah's devotion to his duty contrasts strongly with David's lack of devotion. The one, a man obedient to his Lord; the other, lacking obedience to his Lord. The one, dedicated to performing well on the battlefield; the other, living leisurely at home.

Twice David tells him to go home, but twice he refuses. So then David sends him to the front line, and Uriah gets killed. "When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord. David has just done some horrific things. 1 Samuel 13:14. "... the Lord sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people..". This is honestly appalling, because you'd think that God would choose someone with a better moral compass or SOMETHING. And yet, that is who God chose to lead Israel, but he is definitely not happy with David. God is concerned with our holiness above all else, not just our happiness. He doesn't want us to suffer, and He's a loving, holy God, but He cannot condone sin.

Little kids are curious and like to crawl or walk around and grab things. Parents chastise their children when they are about to touch something dangerous, such as a stove. The kids often cry when they're scolded like that, but parents do it out of love. They do it for the benefit of their child. That's similar to how God treats us. He is genuinely looking out for our wellbeing, and wants to protect us from harm. All instances of pain teach us something. Hebrews 12:10 says, "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, only painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it". The Lord sends the Prophet Nathan to David. Nathan tells David this story: "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or

cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him". When Nathan tells him this parable, David is outraged! He declares that the rich man would be punished if it had been in his kingdom. "Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says... Verse 9 "You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own'. The child that David and Bathsheba conceived then ended up dying. And from then on, David's family is full of tragic events, such as rape, incest, and murder. David's sin had horrendous consequences.

I'm always taken aback by how David acts in this story. He was a great king, and God proclaimed him a man after His own heart, but David just completely screws up with Bathsheba! And that is why this story is so interesting. It shows us how everyone is fallible, no matter their status, including all of us! And David did suffer intense consequences, as do all of us when we sin. However, God still loved him and wanted to reunite with him. In fact, the next son that he had was Solomon, who was incredibly blessed. No matter what we do, or how much we push God away, He will continue to love us and hope to be close to us. King David was an amazing ruler of Israel and he wrote most of the psalms. Beauty came out of the situation. It's reassuring to think that through all of our countless sins, we have a loving God. **His love is unconditional. God uses and loves us, even though we are broken. In Jeremiah 29:11, God says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"**. **We live with the consequences of our sins, but not with the guilt because of God's forgiveness.**

I have grown up at First Pres. I've been surrounded by a loving and encouraging community, and my parents are devout believers. But I've honestly had a hard time finding my own faith. My mom always says that God doesn't have grandchildren, only children. I long for an active and personal relationship with Christ, but I have really struggled with finding that. God has his timing for everything. Back to the quote from Jeremiah 29, God has a plan and a future for me and for every single person. I don't need to worry about doing religion right, or feel frustrated about how I feel like I am not where I want to be with Christ, because I know that He has a plan for me. He has not abandoned me. His love for me and all of us is enough. At times in my life, I've really pushed him away, which is why I think David's story resonated so strongly with me. No matter how much I push religion and Christ away, He will always welcome me back with open arms. That's so reassuring and incredible to think about, that no matter what we do, He will forever love us. I think that David's story is relatable to everyone. Everyone has their shortcomings. Like David, we fail to make the right decisions. Every day we should strive to be intentional about our actions regarding our lives, families, careers, and friends. However, when we do fall off track, we can always come back and repent. In Psalm 51, David writes: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin". David repents and asks for forgiveness, just as we must do. No matter how repetitive the cycle may feel, forgiveness is always waiting for us. Psalm 37:23-26 "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his

hand". We can live knowing that we can let go of our past mistakes, failures, and sins and turn back to the all powerful God who makes everything new again. We are never too far away.