

Truth Has Consequences
August 1, 2021 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a

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

¹But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had very many flocks and herds; ³but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now there came a traveller 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." ⁵Then 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; ⁶he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

⁷Nathan 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; ⁸I 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. ⁹Why 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. ¹⁰Now 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. ¹¹Thus 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 the sight of this very sun. ¹²For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." ¹³David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God

Prophet Muhammad said, "Speak the truth even when it is bitter." Civil rights leader Bayard Rustin adapted that to "speak truth to power." The words translated as truth appear much more often in the Psalms and Prophets than in other material in the Hebrew Bible. The word truth, ἀλήθεια, is found regularly in the Gospel of John and among the writings of Paul. We are told that Pilate posed a question to Jesus, "What is truth?"

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I was wondering the other day how Walter Cronkite might have reported the events in Washington DC last January 6th. It struck a chord because he always ended with, "And that's the way it is." Is this the way it is? Are we going into the future with no answer to Pilate's question? Back when there were three major networks and all the newspapers were filtered by editors was it just an illusion? Has the news always been ambiguous and we just didn't know it?

Well one good measure of truth, also a measure of good science, is the ability to predict outcomes. Even if nobody knew the earth rotated and traveled around the sun that happened for far longer than humans were around to observe it. So truth is still true when it gets ignored or we embrace a comforting lie. The information the prophet Nathan brought to King David could have been spun out by political forces to make the whole thing Uriah's fault. After all he married a trophy wife and could have installed indoor plumbing so the king couldn't see her bathing on the roof. Then he could have spent a night with her to cover the pregnancy. What about Bathsheba? Didn't she think it odd the king sent for her? It's not like David picked up a gun and shot Uriah, I mean the fog of war and the fortunes of battle surely Uriah might have been killed in any case, the King's minions just thumbed the scale a little, it might have been inevitable.

Then along comes Nathan with his story. Prior to that, the truth had no consequences, or at least no immediate negative ones for David. He got a pretty new wife and a possible heir to the throne and who is going to question the actions of a divine right monarch. Aye, there's the rub. David wasn't elected by the people he was appointed by God. It's a tough thing to have God as your boss. God, who sees the truth, unembellished and stark, kind of like we all thought Walter Cronkite saw it, knows that

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you can get away with lies but the sum total of your lying will make the world a dangerous place for you. In a world where you can take what you want there will always be others willing to take what they want from you.

If it is true, there will be consequences. If it's a lie, there will be different consequences. Keep that in mind, and if you find yourself arranging a murder to cover your indiscretion you're probably better off owning up to what you did.

Closing Prayer: Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry with the bread of his life and the Word of his kingdom. Renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.