

Our first reading today continues the narrative from David's sin with Bathsheba we heard about yesterday. After having Uriah killed, chapter 11 ends on an ominous note, "*But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.*" Previously, Nathan was sent to David to bear good news. In chapter seven, he announced that the Lord would build David a house – that one of his sons would always sit upon the throne. Now, he is the bearer of bad news. Genuine prophets must bring both good news and bad news. They are God's mouthpieces.

First, notice that Nathan uses a parable of a shepherd, which would be near and dear to David's heart. As a boy, David himself was a shepherd. This would have caught David's attention. One of our goals in proclaiming the gospel is to catch people's attention. Find out what people are interested in, then begin there.

Of course, the parable hooks David. He becomes angry and says that the rich man ought to die. Literally, David refers to him as a "son of death."

Then, Nathan delivers the sting. He says, "You are the man!" Coincidentally, this phrase is the basis for "That Man is You!" which our parish began here last fall. The veil is pulled away so that David can see his evil deed for the first time. After all the gifts the Lord had given, David has no excuse for what he did.

David then hears about the consequences. There are always consequences for sin, whether personally or that extend to one's family. For David, it will be both. He will be driven from Jerusalem and there will be tremendous friction and violence in his own family.

If one keeps reading the narrative, within David's family there will be rape and multiple murders. In fact, four of David's sons will die tragically. David and Bathsheba's son dies shortly after his birth, while his sons Ammon, Absalom, and Adonijah are killed. Upon hearing the parable, David had said that the rich man must restore the ewe lamb fourfold. Ironically, four of David's sons will die, three violently.

Thankfully, however, David admits his guilt right away. It's believed that Psalm 51 was written at this time. David's repentance makes it possible for him to experience God's grace. According to the Torah, David ought to die. But the Lord forgives a repentant David. In this year of mercy, may we be inspired by David's humility and repentance after he recognizes his sin. Like him, may we quickly turn to the Lord when we sin and ask for His mercy.