

Session 3—Speak

Following Christ by confronting abusive power

Principal Text: 2 Samuel 11:1-to 12: 1-7a

Supportive Texts: Matthew 1: 5b; 2 Samuel 12:1-15; Psalm 51; I Kings 1:5–40

We will consider:

- Emerging from victimization to be victorious.
- Profiling a violator and understanding the escalating cycle of violence.
- Providing to the violators a scope for repentance, restitution and restoration.

Hymn Suggestion: (*Found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship*) “Borning Cry,” #732

Prayer (*Spoken by the leader*)

Gracious God, you envelop us with your compassion and love us in spite of ourselves. Your grace moves us beyond our failings and limited visions, helping us to see your faithfulness and your loving plan for each one of us. Open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to experience such a redeeming grace in a special way. Help us God, to identify evil, and, with a bold love, to denounce evil and violence in all its manifestations, overt and covert. Help us to walk with the victimized to affirm their self worth. May we be prepared to meet any person or enter any place, believing that in every situation there is possibility for redemption. In the name of Christ the redeemer we pray. Amen.

Introduction

Bathsheba is the only woman who remains unnamed in the genealogy of Jesus. Though Bathsheba had been the wife of King David and was the queen mother, she is only identified as ‘Solomon’s mother who had been Uriah’s wife,’ which gives the impression that there is disapproval to be detected from the lens of male authorship.

Naming a person is important. It affirms one’s identity and gives some insight into the wish or longing of parents for their children. The name Bathsheba means ‘daughter of an oath’ to remember the covenant God made with Abraham.

Bathsheba came from one of the most prominent families of Israel. Her father and her first husband, Uriah had both served as elite palace guards and her grandfather served as the chief political adviser to King David. Her grandfather, Ahithophel served as the chief counselor to David (I Chron. 27:33). But he later switched his loyalty to Absalom, David’s son. The reason could well have been the way David had coerced Bathsheba into becoming an adulterous one night stand and the fact that he had Uriah, a very honorable and devoted man, killed.

Yet, Bathsheba’s story is not only about her victimization, but also how she came out of victimization to claim a distinctive place of honour in society. She, in fact, with the help of the prophet, Nathan, shaped the future course of the monarchy of Israel by setting up her own son Solomon to become the king, even though he was not next in line to succeed David.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-27

It is important to name violence. The violence that Bathsheba undergoes begins as a subtle, covert act perpetrated in the secrecy of the king's palace, but when Bathsheba becomes pregnant with David's child it escalates into further intrigues, schemes and ultimately the murder of innocent people.

Whenever a woman or a girl is sexually molested, she eventually undergoes multiple victimizations—the violent act being but the first. She then begins to question herself, wondering whether it was her fault, or if she did something to cause it to happen. She is further victimized when she has to go for medical procedures to prove that she was molested and answer personal and graphic questions from authorities. She is then asked to recount her experience in public in order to prosecute her abuser. It is much worse if she becomes pregnant. Whether to abort or to give birth and carry the proof of her victimization forever is a further victimization such a woman has to brave.

It takes a while for a violated woman to move beyond her victimization, but it begins by boldly naming the sin, confronting the violator and then looking ahead and claiming the life of a victor.

In the passage from Samuel, Bathsheba does not speak, nor is she given a voice before or during her sexual encounter. But when her body speaks through pregnancy, Bathsheba takes charge of the situation and sends the message to David informing him of what has happened. Bathsheba does not take the responsibility solely upon herself. Though David tries various despicable means of relinquishing responsibility, he eventually has to take her as a wife.

For true justice to be served, any story of violence must not end with the woman struggling to find her bearing and a way to turn her life around. The perpetrator not only should retribute, but must also be restored in his relation with God and be guided through a process of repentance, grieving, confession and restoration. All these happened in the life of David, with the help of the prophet Nathan.

The stories of the other women in the genealogy of Jesus end with the birth of their sons, but Bathsheba's story continues into the book of I Kings. We learn that she keeps contact with Nathan, makes him to be the teacher of Solomon, and listens to his advice at the right time to secure for her son the kingship.

She acts quickly and resourcefully to save her life and that of her son by thwarting Adonijah's effort to come to power, even though he was the legitimate heir and next in line to the throne as the eldest son of David.

It is indeed possible to move from victimization to selfhood. By moving beyond her fate into a position of great power and influence, Bathsheba becomes a tremendous role model. Bathsheba created her story and ends up in the genealogy.

We too have the opportunity to engrave our names in the book of life by participating actively in reducing and denouncing violence, working for peace and being signs of hope and healing.

Note:

Proverbs 31 is often quoted to women as a model to follow. It is attributed to a king named Lemuel. Most Bible commentators agree, along with ancient Jewish rabbis, that the name Lemuel is a pen name for King Solomon. If this supposition is correct, the first verse of that chapter is worthy of note: "The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him."

How Then Shall We Live? Following Christ in a Broken World

Discussion

1. Consider a time when you stood up to power. What were the consequences, both positive and negative?
2. Why do you think Bathsheba risked so much in order to hold her abuser responsible? Where, in her context, might she have drawn support from?
3. What made the subordinates of David, like his servants and Joab, succumb to his devious plans?
4. How did David reconcile himself with God? (Read Psalm 51)

We cannot do justice to the story unless we talk about David as the perpetrator. The following are some hints to profile a victimizer. Using the text, consider together how David fits the profile.

5. Most often, the ones who victimize women are not strangers but close associates or relatives who are supposed to protect the person or who hold some position of authority.
6. Often people would not believe that such a person could be a violator.
7. A potential violator is one who would deviate from the norm or the routine of life expected of him.
8. He will manipulate others under him or related to him into abetting in his crime.
9. He will usually discharge his duties well but will have a different set of standards and often think he is beyond the normal laws and regulations.

Closing Prayer (*An extemporary prayer may be offered by any member of the group.*)

Memory verse: Psalm 51:10-12

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.”