

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Sunday Worship Service with Communion
10:30AM 2nd August 2026
Jill Bird leading & Rev. Zoltan Biro preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
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NATHAN the prophet

This is week two in our series on some of the great Old Testament prophets – men chosen by God to bring his message to his people in their generation.

But within their messages were also many prophecies pointing to our LORD JESUS and all he would be and do for us many years later. Today we will especially remind ourselves of his amazing gift to us of forgiveness and restoration through the death of our dear Saviour Jesus Christ. We remember our teaching on the New Covenant especially as we will take communion together again as the central part of our worship service.

Jesus we love you, we welcome you and we enthrone you in our midst today.

MP 870

Jesus is the name we honour; Jesus is the name we praise.
Majestic name above all other names,
the highest Heaven and Earth proclaim that Jesus is our God.

*We will glorify, we will lift him high,
we will give him honour and praise,
we will glorify, we will lift him high,
we will give him honour and praise.*

Jesus is the name we worship; Jesus is the name we trust.
He is the King above all other kings,
let all creation stand and sing that Jesus is our God.

Jesus is the Father's splendour; Jesus is the Father's joy.
He will return to reign in majesty,
and every eye at last will see that Jesus is our God.

Last week we looked at the prophet Isaiah – we remind ourselves of his calling when he had a vision of our holy God high and lifted up seated on a throne surrounded by angels singing

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory.

Isaiah called out: 'Woe is me I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. But an angel came with a burning coal from the altar and touched his lips to cleanse him from sin and take his guilt away.'

As we come before the Lord let us remember his holiness and absolute purity, asking God to reveal our need too for cleansing and healing.

MP 239

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, Holy is the Lord God almighty.
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, Holy is the Lord God almighty.
Who was, and is, and is to come, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the Lord, Jesus is the Lord God almighty.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the Lord, Jesus is the Lord God almighty.
Who was, and is, and is to come, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the Lord.

Glory, glory, glory to the Lord, Glory to the Lord God almighty.
Glory, glory, glory to the Lord, Glory to the Lord God almighty.
Who was, and is, and is to come, Glory, glory, glory to the Lord.

FAMILY TIME

*(*An offering will be taken during the following song, after which teenagers and children will leave)*

MP 388

Jesus, we enthrone You We proclaim You our king
Standing here, in the midst of us We raise You up with our praise

And as we worship build your throne And as we worship build your throne
And as we worship build your throne Come Lord Jesus and take Your place

BIBLE READING 1 2 Samuel 12 1-13

MP 375

Jesus, name above all names Beautiful Saviour, Glorious Lord
Emmanuel, God is with us, Blessed Redeemer, Living Word

SERMON Nathan: the prophet who confronted the king and lived

Nathan is one of the earliest prophets in the Bible, and is often called a court prophet. Earlier in 2 Samuel he is advising David about the building of the temple. To understand the role of the prophets in Israel, we have to understand the time they first appeared. The political development in Israel shifted dramatically at around 1000BC, about 400 years after Israel occupied the Holy Land. Initially, there were loosely connected tribes, who even waged wars among themselves, and were locally led by Judges. But nationally they were linked by a Priestly leadership. As the geopolitical situation in the region changed and stronger enemies started to emerge the nation felt they needed a strong national leader, so they moved to Kingly leadership. But we know how dangerous to put all the power into a single hand, for example look at North Korea. So this change brought about the establishment of the Prophetic order. Prophets acted as moral compasses for the nation. 1 Samuel 8:10-18.

This is at the core of today's reading. The word used to describe the rich man taking the lamb of the poor man is exactly the same as the one used in 1 Samuel 8 describing taking something unfairly. To fully understand Nathan's story, let me recap what happened in the previous chapter.

2 Samuel 11 we see David staying in Jerusalem. There was a war going on between the Israelites and the Ammonites, but David was now getting so settled and comfortable in his role as king that he no longer feels the need to go out and personally oversee the fighting. So he stays behind, on his couch. David sees Bathsheba, taking a bath. But she is immediately identified as the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. David knows from the start that she is the wife of another. This fact should give him pause, but there is no hesitation. David acts swiftly and decisively. "He sent, he took, he lay" (11:4). The action is stark - no romantic words, no cuddling, no flirting - just action.

We see a real ugliness in David here. He can have whatever he wants, and he takes, simply because he can. Bill Clinton in his autobiography offered an explanation as to why he pursued a romantic relationship with a White House intern. He said he did it because he could. This is exactly what we see here with David.

But this one-time affair threatens to come crashing down when Bathsheba announces "I'm pregnant" (11:5). Suddenly, David's world is spinning out of control. Again, David acts swiftly and decisively. David acts and sends for his right hand man Joab, to sort things out. They decide to bring Uriah up from the battle to be with his wife; this way Bathsheba's sudden case of pregnancy can be easily explained.

But Uriah is so noble! In contrast to David, he shows incredible discipline and loyalty. He will not visit his wife, and David is starting to get stressed out. For all David's power, he cannot get this man to sleep with his very own, and presumably very attractive, wife. Uriah will not lie with his wife while the war continues, and his buddies are at risk. And we see this nobility in a Hittite, a foreigner! The whole business makes David look bad. You know what happens from here. David sends for Joab, the kind of henchman that every king needs, the guy who will always act in the interest of the king without regret or reservation. So, Joab, on David's order, sends Uriah out to the front lines where he knows the fighting will be the heaviest and the opponents the toughest. There is no suspense this time. Uriah is killed quickly. The plan works, and David is off the hook. As soon as Bathsheba's allotted time of mourning is over, he brings her to his house and she has a son. It looks as though David, at least, will live happily ever after.

However, Chapter 11 concludes with the statement: "And the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord" (11:27; n.b. NRSV's translation sounds a bit softer [(it) displeased the Lord]).

And so God sends the prophet, Nathan to David (12:1). Nathan's goal is to shake David out of what looks like a power-drunken trance. He does not march in and confront David directly. Instead, he tells the parable about the rich man who takes the poor man's beloved lamb. David is so self-righteous and self-assured that his anger kindles against this man (12:5). David says that the man deserves to die "because he had no pity" (12:6). At this point, when David arrogantly slips into his role as judge, Nathan delivers the judgment: "You are the man" (12:7).

This is when Nathan the formerly calm and detached parable-teller speaks for the Lord who seems to be brimming with hurt. Like a parent who feels betrayed by her child's behaviour, "after all I've done for you!" lecture (12:7-8). God's investment in David has

been so great and God's disappointment so deep that the lecture even ends with the typical parental question: "Why?" (12:9). "Why did you do it, David?"

However, God is not a parent who will be satisfied with a guilty expression and a sincere enough apology. There will be consequences. There will be a sword over David's house, his family, and his dynasty for all time. The unconditional covenant, in Chapter 7, has not been revoked, but now there is a plague to go with it.

Now the amazing thing about David is that here, he seems to recognize his depravity. He does not try to explain. He does not protest the judgment. He says simply, "I have sinned against the Lord." The narrative in 2 Samuel 11-12 shows two very distinct sides of David. On the one hand, in taking Bathsheba and ordering Uriah's death, David is presented as an unfeeling public figure who uses his vast power as commander of the army to pull off a shrewd and ruthless cover-up (2 Samuel 11:25). Yet, on the other hand, at the end of the story, we see David repenting (12:15-17).

In the story, we see David trying to keep his professional and private lives separate. Yet by the end of the story, we see that God will not allow this boundary to be maintained. The "personal sin" has a "professional" and public consequence. As the narrative continues in chapter 12, David's public and personal troubles infringe upon one another, and as the narrative builds, the boundaries between his two worlds become increasingly blurred. Hard as he tries, David cannot keep his private hell from seeping into his public life. The culmination of which is the rebellion of his son, Absalom. Like so many of us, David tries to separate his personal and professional lives, his religious self from his public self. As it eventually does for so many of us, it threatens to tear him apart and destroy both worlds he inhabits.

As human beings in relationship with the living and demanding God of the Bible, we cannot divide ourselves and our loyalties. We cannot be Christians on Sunday and non-Christians during the work week. Our God does not accept the categorization of our religious and secular selves. The good news is: God is always calling us back to integrity, to be whole and undivided selves, united within ourselves in our commitment to God. I would like to finish with two practical applications for us to take with us. Firstly, we need people like Nathan in our lives: faithful friends, pastors, spouses, or fellow believers who love us enough to tell us the truth. None of us is immune to self-deception, especially when we have power, comfort, or something to hide. So let us ask God for humility to receive correction before our hidden sins become public ruin. Secondly, David's story reminds us that repentance is not excuse-making, blame-shifting, or managing appearances. It begins with the simple and painful honesty of saying, "I have sinned against the Lord." When God exposes our sin, it is not to destroy us, but to bring us back to truth, mercy, and integrity. Amen

BIBLE READING 2 Psalm 51. 1-10

MP 82

Cleanse me from my sin, Lord; put your power within, Lord;
Take me as I am, Lord, and make me all your own.

Keep me day by day, Lord, walking in your way, Lord;
Make my heart your palace and your royal throne.

COMMUNION

Today as we celebrate together again the New Covenant that Jesus gave us, we particularly remember with deep and meaningful thanks what our LORD Jesus did for us. Through his death we can be forgiven all our wrong doings, our selfishness and independence and receive again his gift of life in all its fullness.

1 Corinthians 10. 16-17 Is not the **cup of thanksgiving**, for which we give thanks, a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way he took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing the Bread So when we take and eat the Bread let us remember, that Christ died for us and feed on him in our heart by faith with thanksgiving.

Sharing the Wine Drink this and remember that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

MP 351

It's Your blood that cleanses me It's Your blood that gives me life

It's Your blood that took my place. In redeeming sacrifice

Washes me whiter than the snow, than the snow. My Jesus, God's precious sacrifice

So Lord thank you again for feeding us with the body and blood of your son Jesus Christ – we receive with thanksgiving and praise Amen

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION Adenor and Doris

Dear Heavenly Father, we gather here today to celebrate your love, your care, your mercy, your holiness and your grace. How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you (2 Samuel 7:22).

We thank you for another day of worship, communion and fellowship in the Spirit. We thank you for the message delivered today and for every way you speak to us, for your word is a lamp for our feet and a light on our path (Psalms 119:105). Thank you for always guiding us through your Holy Spirit and for reaching out to us even when we harden our hearts.

Teach us how to silence not only the external noises but also the desires of our flesh, for we are your sheep, and your sheep listen to your voice. You know us and we follow you (John 10:27).

Thank you for the time of worship on Thursday, may we all be the kind of worshipers that the Father seeks, by worshiping in the Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). May your Spirit be with us in our fellowship as we gather with our connect groups, for where two or three gather in your name, you are there with them (Matthew 18:20).

Everlasting Father, we pray for wisdom for the new leadership in our country, for we know that every governing authority has been established by you (Romans 13:1). Grant the leaders the humility to serve people, letting go of greed and desire for power.

We pray for your mercy for everyone affected by the heatwaves, and we lift it up to you the regions in France and Spain that are struggling with the wildfires. We pray for protection of all the firefighters and for those who had to evacuate their homes.

Dear Lord, as death tolls continue to climb and search for survivors is still on going, we lift it up to you the populations of both Japan and Venezuela. Bring help, hope and comfort for all those who have been affected, who have lost loved ones and those who have lost their homes.

Sovereign Lord, we pray for peace in Middle East and all the nations involved as tensions continue to escalate. Protect those who are vulnerable. Comfort those who have suffered loss and trauma. Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace, may your Peace reign over the nations.

We lift it up to You the students' protest in India sparked by the corruption in the educational sector. We pray for wisdom on both parties as they meet for negotiation, and for a peaceful resolution.

And our Heavenly Father, we thank you that even in the midst of all the escalating violence globally, we still see a glimpse of hope with the reopening of swimming classes in Gaza for the children. Bless all the volunteers and keep the children safe under your wings.

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

MP 181

1. God forgave my sin in Jesus' name, I've been born again in Jesus' name, and in Jesus' name I come to you to share his love as he told me to.

He said: 'Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.
Go in my name and because you believe, others will know that I live.'

2. All power is given in Jesus' name, in earth and heaven in Jesus' name, and in Jesus' name I come to you to share his power as he told me to.

He said: 'Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.
Go in my name and because you believe, others will know that I live.'

BLESSING

May we go out today knowing we are a chosen and loved child of God, with sins forgiven and wearing a royal robe of resurrection glory and hope. In Jesus name AMEN

THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.

Events to highlight next week

Wednesday 5 th	10.30 Renew Wellbeing
	12.00 Bible Study
Thursday 6 th	10.30 Bible Study
	10.30 Toddlers
Friday 7 th	10.30 Church prayer meeting
	4.30 Table Tennis Club

QR Code for Financial Offering

