

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 31 2025

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Bad Apples of the Bible: King David"

Based on Various Scriptures

Well, we have come to the end of our Bad Apples of the Bible series. All the apples are picked, eaten, fallen to the ground, or been made into applesauce. Through this summer's meanderings I have learned two things about these Bad Apples:

1) Their stories are far more complex than the Sunday School version I was taught as a child

2) God used and continues to use imperfect people to fulfil His promises to the world.

Where this notion of being a Christian means being perfect came from, I don't know; because God clearly prefers to use those who recognize their imperfections, rather than those who think they are close to perfection themselves.

So who better to explore this, than King David. Of all the kings and leaders and heroes of biblical history, it is David's story that ties the Old and the New Testaments together, like a drawstring on a bag. David's story is almost magical, a meteoric rise and

fall, as only seen in Hollywood movies and in the political scheming of nation's capitals.

A young shepherd boy, David, wrote hymns and prayers while he tended the animals, developing a keen sense of nature and God's presence around him in the hours and days roaming the hills. While delivering food to his brothers, at war with the Philistines, he discovered a discouraged army too frightened to attack the giant. With a naivety and brashness often only found in youth, along with a little stupidity, skill, and luck, he landed a lucky shot on Goliath's temple, and stunned him. A swift cut of the blade and the giant was dead.

The soldiers saw it as a sign. YHWH had spoken. This young boy was destined for greatness. The commanders saw the value of a story of a local hero, and a whirlwind romance with leadership, battlefields, and destiny began for David.

David was a smart soldier; strategic, and very popular. He rose in the ranks quickly and when politics shifted, he became King; united warring kingdoms, declared Jerusalem the capital, and brought the

Ark of the Covenant home. He was unstoppable.

In a pivotal moment God made three promises to David:

Ø I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own (2 Samuel 7:10)

Ø I will raise up your offspring to succeed (2 Samuel 7:12)

Ø My love will never be taken away (2 Samuel 7:15)

I will give you land.

I will give you descendants.

I give you my love, forever.

And then, slowly, it all began to fall apart for David.

- Was it too much power, too fast, that went straight to his ego?

- Was it the adrenalin of victory and conquest that did not temper well with the daily grind of leadership?

- Was it greed; a continuous need for more and more, long after he had everything one could possibly acquire and desire?

- Was it whispers of doubt, already planting seeds of despair; furtively worried about when this great tower of success would begin to crumble?

Because crumble it did. It started with a liaison with Bathsheba, the army commander's wife. While this might offend our sensibilities today, it was not uncommon. A king was a king, and a king could have whatever a king wanted. And King David wanted Bathsheba. While Bathsheba is always made out to be the Bad Apple here, one wonders if she really had any choice in the matter. But that is another sermon for another time.

David's fall did not begin with his affair with Bathsheba. It began when he arranged for Bathsheba's husband to be killed on the front lines of battle Assassination by war. Convenient. And while those at home might have believed in the contrived story of Uriah's death, the soldiers did not.

The same soldiers that had rallied around David just a few years prior, now saw their commander in a different light. Conspiracy ran amok the ranks. Plotting and scheming from all sides through almost all of 2 Samuel.

Through these years, David rallied, repented, and repeated. Much like the fervent prayers of Jonah inside the belly of the whale, David's cries to the Lord for forgiveness and grace seem more like a means to an end,

than a sincere attempt to get his life back on track.

And yet, we are reminded every Christmas that God never forgot David, or the promises that He made to him, and to the Chosen People. As we read those opening lines of the Gospel of Luke with the Christmas trees blinking and Away in a Manger playing in the background, we are reassured over and over again, how God honoured and continues to honour, the promises he gave to Abraham, and to Noah, and to Moses, and to King David, and in time, to us.

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever. (2 Samuel 7:16)

Throughout history God has not just chosen great people to lead. He has simply chosen people;

- People from all walks of life:
- Men and women, and even children
- Rich and the poor,
- The ridiculed and the pompous.
- Those connected, and outcasts.
- Those who had great impact and those whose small voice has reverberated quietly through history.

And it quickly becomes clear to me, that none of these characters were perfect.

- Some were tainted, tempted, and tortured souls
- Some were boring, mundane, with lives of mediocrity.
- Some were ordinary people just going about their ordinary business on an ordinary day.

Being perfect does not seem to be a requirement to serve the Lord.

Being willing to serve seems to be what the Lord is looking for.

- Willing hearts and open souls.
- Active and creative minds.
- Humility.
- Inner courage.
- You.
- Me.

That's what the Lord is looking for.

Not to point out our imperfections.

But to use our imperfections to create perfection:

His perfection.

His promises fulfilled, forever.

May each of us continue to be Bad Apples for the Lord, sweet or sour, tough or juicy, late to ripen or first on the scene. We are all the apples of God's eyes. Amen.