

When the Good, the Right and the Beautiful  
Are  
Violated and Broken

Everything you need to know is learned in kindergarten.

Take turns

Share

Be kind

Don't hit

Tell the truth

Play fair

Don't take that which isn't yours

The message is respect yourself, respect others; help build a world guided by the good, the right and the beautiful.

We value and aspire to live in such a world. We want parents, spouses and children to be good people.

We want our public officials to be good human beings...to be trust worthy, to speak the truth, to have integrity.

Our military wants "good men and women."

At the end of life, we write obituaries and mark the passing of those we love noting that "she was a good woman," that "he was a good man."

We celebrate that which is good and right and beautiful.

In this morning's story from the Old Testament, Israel's King David's is anything but good, right and beautiful. King David, who had been the responsible shepherd boy, the courageous young man who faced Goliath, the the musician who calmed the king, the leader chosen by God, blatantly violates and shatters the good, the right and the beautiful. In fact he does the bad, the wrong and the ugly.

So what is the bad, the wrong and the ugly look like in this ancient Bible story? More importantly: What does the bad, the wrong and the ugly look like in our time and our place? What does the bad, the wrong and ugly look like in each of our lives? Even more importantly: What do we do about the bad, the wrong and the ugly when it occurs around us, among us and in our own lives?

Perhaps this raw, real-life David and Bathsheba episode from Scripture can enlighten us.

David, King of Israel is the main character in the story. Five other characters appear: *Bathsheba*, Uriah the Hittite's wife; *Uriah* the Hittite, a soldier in Israel's army; *Joab*, the commander of Israel's army; *Nathan*, God's prophet, and *God*, speaking through Nathan.

The events in the story occur in the spring; Israel's army is at war with the Ammonites, yet David, Israel's Warrior King is lying at home in the palace in Jerusalem. In the cool of the late afternoon, David rises from his couch and walks on the roof of the palace from which he is able to look down on the roofs of smaller houses in the courtyard.

On his walk David spies a beautiful young woman bathing. David is taken with her beauty and sends someone to find out who she is; he learns this beautiful woman is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, a prominent Jerusalemite, and the wife of Uriah the Hittite. In spite of discovering that Bathsheba is married, David sends for her and lies with her even though she is another man's wife. David uses his power to intrude in another's person's life and break into a marriage. David commits adultery with a married woman.

Bathsheba gets pregnant. David moves to cover up his tryst with Bathsheba. He uses his power as King to bring Uriah home from battle, to provide an explanation for Bathsheba's pregnancy. But Uriah does not sleep at home, rather with his fellow soldiers in the army barracks. David tries again to create a cover-up by inviting Uriah to dinner getting him drunk, hoping Uriah will sleep at home. Again Uriah sleeps with the troops in the army barracks.

David is disparate and will not be deterred in covering up his miss-deed. He makes arrangements for Uriah to be exposed in battle and be killed in battle. Joab, David's commander of the army, complies with the plot and Uriah is killed.

Lusting after a married woman, David has stolen another man's wife, and arranged for her husband's death in a botched cover-up. Joab, David's commander-in-chief has been complicit in the killing an innocent man. David has not told the truth. David has taken that which is not his. David has miss-used his power and privilege to harm others. This is a story of the bad, the wrong and the ugly.

What's haunting about this Biblical story, is that it echoes across the centuries and sounds like the news coming from around our world, from across our nation, from in our communities. Abuse of power, miss-use of authority, the objectification of sexuality, lying, cover-ups and complicity in schemas that injure others are common fare in our newspapers, on television and twitter. The barrage of these messages of the bad, the wrong and the ugly disgust and sicken us, often leaving us feeling stuck and helpless. At times we sense our inability or choice not do something about the malaise leaves us feeling guilty, complicit in the powerful and expansive bad, wrong and ugly.

I'm wondering if the end of this mornings David and Bathsheba story might be of some help.

As we go back to the story, Nathan, God's prophet, confronts King David by telling a short story about a rich man with his flocks of sheep, and a poor man with a single lamb. Upon the arrival of a guest, the rich man, rather than taking one of the many sheep from his flocks to feed the guest, takes the poor man's only lamb. Upon hearing the story, David is livid and asserts that the rich man should die and the poor man be re-paid four-fold. Whereupon Nathan announces to David in his righteous wrath: "You are the man!" ...Then speaking for God Nathan points out God's graciousness and David's selfishness:

I anointed you King over Israel  
I rescued you from the hand of Saul  
I gave you your master's house  
I gave the nations of Israel and Judah.  
I could have given you more....  
And you have despised me! Struck down Uriah and taken his wife!

Confronted with the truth and ramifications of the destructiveness of his action David comes to his senses, feels horrible for what he has done and recognizes that he has not only violated and broken the lives of others and his people, but violated his relationship with God as well. David becomes aware of the expansive destructive implications of his acts for himself, his family, his nation and his spirit. David is contrite...ashamed. David owns up to what he has done. David repents. David says...I have done the bad, the wrong and the ugly! I have sinned! Upon his repentance new life for David begins. Listen to Psalm 51:1-10

Might there be a path here from the bad, the wrong and the ugly that is available to our nation, our communities our lives? I believe there is and it might look something like this:

*Contrition* – taking responsibility for the bad, the wrong and ugly that's been done  
*Confession* – stating what has been done and its consequences before those injured  
*Absolution* – realizing that God and human beings can forgive...start anew  
*Restoration of life* – addressing the consequences of destructive acts  
*Amendment of life* – learning from mistakes and with support change behavior

It can start with one person...me...you; it can become a way of life in a family, a community and a nation.

Listen to my struggle to say what I mean and mean what I say, to do the good, the right and the beautiful and amend when I rather do the bad, the wrong, and the ugly.

The story of Rollie coming home late for dinner.

Closing Prayer