

“You are that man” I bet David didn’t expect that. My daughter would say, “O snap”.  
Some of us might have a more barnyard expletive, but the point is the same.

The story goes like this: David looks out his window and sees a really hot girl next door. He’s king. He wants her, he gets her. The problem is her husband – he’s still alive. Well, David is fighting a war so he sends this girl’s husband, Uriah the Hittite, off to war and has his generals put Uriah in the most dangerous position. So, the general basically painted a target on Uriah and dangled him out in front so that the enemy would have to have been blind and terribly uncoordinated not to hit him.

And so, Uriah the Hittite died and David could take possession of Bathsheba and make her his wife. Nathan, the prophet, came by and told David a parable which served the purpose of convicting David of this great sin. (Treating Bathsheba like a piece of property to be owned wasn’t really sin material back then). You are that man. O, snap.

Now, unfortunately, I feel I have to make a little side trip here. I don’t want to leave this idea of being the man, but I can’t ignore an incredibly difficult part of this story go by without remark. In this story, Nathan tells David that because David sinned, his new born baby was going to die, and it did a couple of verses after what we read.

I have said countless times that God does not kill his children and I believe that with all my heart. But here, we have scripture that says he does. I think the scripture is wrong. And, if the scripture is right, then I think God was wrong. It’s probably hard for me to avoid a heresy one way or the other. This idea that God kills people for the actions of others has caused more persecution and intolerance than any other religious tenet. This is why I will never be a

scriptural literalist. This is where reason and experience trump the literal written word of scripture at least for me.

Now, back to Nathan and David. Joking aside, Nathan has taken a huge risk and called the king to account for his actions. Think about it. David killed a man because he thought the man's wife was hot and he wanted her. Do you think he would hesitate in striking off a prophet's head for such insolence as Nathan's? Nathan took a huge risk.

To David's credit, he got it. He came to realize that his actions were wrong in the eyes of God. He confessed his sin and Nathan tells him that his sin has been put away. There are consequences, but the sin is put away.

Have you ever had one of those "O snap" moments? All of a sudden your eyes widen and your mind gets real clear and you think, "O golly, did I just do that?" Too many times for me to even count. Our mind has a way of doing that. It's what we call our conscience. That little voice whispering in our ear, "you shouldn't have done that".

Let me suggest that our conscience has another name. It's called the voice of God. I think we all have that inner voice. I truly believe that God has a place in each of us, believer or not. The difference is whether we hear it or not, and if we do, do we listen to it. David wasn't listening to the internal voice of God, so he had to hear it from Nathan.

That's what a prophet's job is – to be the voice of God when we're not hearing him any other way. We might ask, "why do we need prophets? Why doesn't God just make us do what he wants? The world would be a much safer place." That's one of the wonders of God. He took a tremendous risk at creation in giving us free will – the ability to think and decide for our selves.

He could have made us love him, but is it really love when you are forced to show it? No, I don't think so. So in order for us to truly love God, we had to be able to say no to him. And boy, have we.

So, we have this little voice and occasionally we have a prophet pop up in our lives. Not a fortune teller, but a truth-teller. A Nathan who's not afraid of our reaction when he points to a sin and says, "You are that person."

There are a lot of voices out there that claim to be the voice of God. They call it different things. The voice of justice, choice, life, freedom, success. It's hard to figure out which voices are prophetic and which are malignant.

We are bombarded daily by the prophet's of materialism. I guess you'd spell profit with an f. Make your self happy. Be better than the person next door by driving this brand of car. How about this – no rules just right. I was watching a talk show and the guests were a man and a woman who claimed to be professional marriage counselors who strongly advocated couples live together for a number of years before getting married. The woman said, "you wouldn't buy a pair of shoes without trying them on first". Besides the incredible reduction of the value of human relationships, what does this say. I'm not going to judge those who live in that kind of relationship, but to sit on national TV and completely ignore the values of religion and it's attendant morality is strange at best.

Sometimes, those claiming to be the spokesperson for God preach a message that really runs contrary to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel of hate – Jews, gays, blacks, Hispanics (O and a little pet peeve. Central and South Americans speak Spanish. They are not

Spanish. That would be like calling us English.). You can dress it up in religious clothing, but it's still bigotry.

I guess my litmus test to determine if a voice I'm hearing is from God is this: does it build up the Body of Christ? Does it reflect the Kingdom of God? Is it consistent with the teachings of Jesus found in scripture, interpreted by the church and applied in accord with human reason?

The actions of Jesus in today's Gospel, I think, support that. The Pharisee wanted to limit the Kingdom of God. He wanted people like "that woman" excluded from the loving touch of our savior. She was a sinner. Legend says it was Mary Magdalene and that she was a prostitute, but the Greek doesn't support that. It just says that this woman was a sinner and that Magdalene had 7 demons cast from her. But anyway, Jesus extended his loving embrace to even this sinner.

And to drive the point home, he reminded the Pharisee that he had done nothing to show the hospitality of God to his guest, whereas this sinner reflected the love which Jesus came to give us. It was kind of a Nathan moment – you're the man. You're the one that falls short. This woman's sins have been forgiven by her faith. Now, what about yours?

That kind of Christian haughtiness makes me crazy. "Those sinners! Why does the church waste its time with the likes of them? There's a character in that classic theological movie, Porky's who runs around pointing at people and shouting "moral turpitude!"

Oh, we know them. We are them. We run around pointing a people and shouting "moral turpitude". And Nathan quietly said to David, "You are that man."

True, morality is important. We can argue whether an action is moral or not, but some sense of what is acceptable in our community is vital to the well being of that community. And, there are some things that are pretty universal. And, I believe that there is a moral compass in the bible that must inform our lives. But to proclaim ourselves the bearer of all that is right and good is to take on a role that has been reserved for another.

See, when that woman knelt down a Jesus feet, he could see her heart, her character and he knew what she had done, why she had done it and the resolve to be different. We lack that divine knowledge and so make our judgments based on external appearance and learned rules of behavior. Only God can put away our sins, and only God can truly judge us.

So we are better off to be more like the woman at Jesus' feet, loving him in the midst of our sinfulness than to be the Pharisee, ignoring the presence of God and finding fault in others without acknowledging his own sinfulness.

It is better, I think, that we let our tears fall on the feet of our savior and hear him say “your faith has saved you; go in peace” than to run around pointing a people and shouting “moral turpitude” and hearing the quiet voice of Jesus say, “you are that man.”