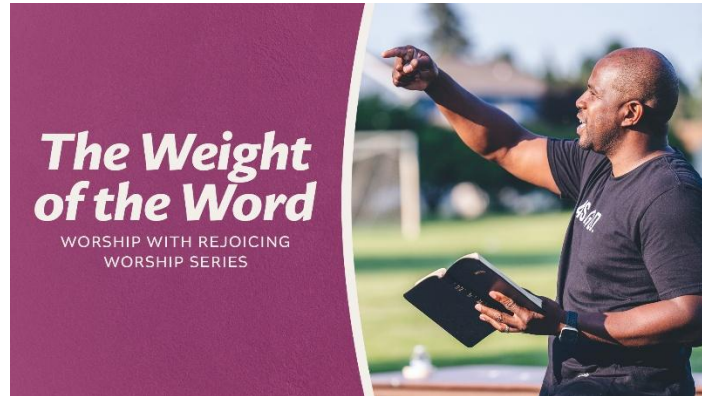


Let's begin with prayer...

O God, Fill us with joy as we gather together to meet with you. Show us your glory and splendor. Open the eyes of our hearts to know you more and delight in you. May this time of worship be a time of encounter with you, our living God. In Your name we pray. Amen.



This is week 4 of our “Worship With Rejoicing” series with our sermon title called “The Weight of the World”.

The first week of our series we learned about our “Gathering for Worship”. And how the definition of *worship* is – **to give praise, honor, hope, and glory to God**. By using this definition, worship is not something to be done, but rather a lifestyle to be lived – 24/7.

The second week of our series we learned about our “Call to Worship” and how The Call to Worship invites us to turn from the world and to focus our hearts, minds, and actions on God.

Let's begin with a call to worship...

Leader: Family of God, what is our story?

People: We are part of God's good creation, created and sustained by the Triune God.

Leader: Family of God, what is our story?

People: Though created by our loving God, we have sinned and harmed ourselves, one another, and creation.

Leader: Family of God, what is our story?

People: While we were yet sinners, God sent Jesus to show us how to turn away from sin and toward the love of God.

Leader: Family of God, what is our story?

People: We carry the weight of the Word in our hearts, our hands, and our voices, proclaiming with our lives the good news of God's love and the mercy of God's grace.

Leader: Family of God, this is our story and our song!

People: Thanks be to God! Amen.

(Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, May 2024)

Last week we learned about our “Call to Confession” and how it acknowledges human sinfulness, fosters humility, and reminds individuals of God's forgiveness. It's a time for both personal and potentially communal reflection on shortcomings and a recognition of God's grace and mercy.

Join with me in our prayer of Confession...(in unison)

Continue, O Lord, to extend your grace and mercy to us, your unworthy servants. We have failed you because you depended on us to be your witnesses, but we were too embarrassed to testify about your faithfulness. We were too busy to speak a word in your name. We are neither anxious nor ready to sit and reflect deeply on Holy Scriptures. Good Lord, extend your grace and mercy as we ask your forgiveness. In order to receive your forgiveness, we know that we need to forgive everyone who has offended us. Help us to hold nothing against anyone, for that may jeopardize our gift of forgiveness from you. Set us free to live fully in you, and to love all unreservedly. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

[Written by T. Anne Daniel, The Africana Worship Book, Year B (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007), 158.]



And today we will be talking about the “Word of God for the people of God”. When we proclaim and receive the Word—whether sung or read or preached or acted out—we encounter God *through* the stories, wisdom, psalms, and teachings in the Bible. The “Weight of the Word” calls for everyone to listen and participate, not just the preacher! When we hold the *weight of the Word* together in worship, we grow together in love of God and neighbor as the Word encourages, challenges, edifies, and instructs us as the gathered Body of Christ.

Our scripture for today is found in 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a (NIV) which says: ²⁶ *When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.*

12 ¹ *The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.*

⁴ *“Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”*

⁵ *David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”*

⁷ *Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.*

⁹ *Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.*

¹⁰ *Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'*

¹¹ *"This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"*

¹³ *Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."*

Last week's scripture told us how King David had done something very, very wrong. He made sure a good man named Uriah was killed in battle so that he could marry Uriah's wife, Bathsheba.

Our text begins this week with a woman weeping and an angry God. So, God does what an angry God does and sends a preacher. He sends Nathan and Nathan tells a story. He tells the story so well that David is caught up in it.

Nathan told David a story about a rich man who stole a precious little lamb from a poor man. David could see that the rich man had done something wrong and selfish, but Nathan helped David see that he had acted as badly as the rich man had done in the story. David is led to see the injustice and abuse of power in the tale of the little lamb, even when he can overlook it in his own life and actions.



Often, it is easier for us to see the mistakes someone else makes than to see our own wrongdoings. God sent many prophets to show the people of Israel the wrong and selfish things they had done. When you read the prophet's words in scripture, ask yourself whether you, too, need help to see what you have done wrong. I could certainly use a prophet in my life to point out when I am wrong in my decisions or actions.

When we worship God, we offer God our respect. When we do something wrong, we are being disrespectful. When we do something wrong, we feel horrible inside. David did something wrong, and Nathan was pointing out the mistakes that David had made.

David's response to Nathan's sermon might give some insight into what it means when he is called a man after God's heart. Despite his behavior throughout this sordid event, he is willing to see the innate sinfulness of it all. It is as if he is the prodigal who has finally come to himself in this moment, and he sees more clearly what he has done.

If we were to read on in the chapter, we would see that there are consequences to come and innocents to suffer from this. We can wrestle with the fairness of the child paying for the sin of the father; it seems the opposite of the theology that Jesus calls us to hold. But that there is fallout from our actions is evident and overwhelming. Children often suffer from the actions of the adults around them.

The call, then, is to be aware of our interrelatedness and understand that what we do can never be completely harm-free, despite what our "common wisdom" might tell us. In the real world, there is really no such thing as a victimless crime.

When done well the power of the proclaimed word in worship, doesn't merely explain a biblical text; instead, it can open us up to a new way of seeing ourselves and the world around us and, perhaps most importantly, seeing ourselves in the world.

Someone once said that, *"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the happiness of believers, the way of salvation and the doom of sinners. Every doctrine in the Bible is holy, every precept is binding, and every decision is immutable. You must read it to believe it, believe it to be saved and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you."*

It is the traveler's guide, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, daily, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor and condemn all who trifle with its contents." - Unknown

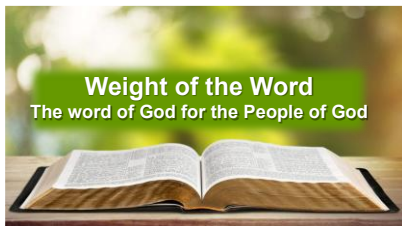
There's a story of a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. The man's face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He was just a new Christian, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible. Then he heard about a lady in England who read braille with her lips.

Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in braille. Much to his dismay, however, he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been destroyed by the explosion. One day, as he brought one of the braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters, and he could feel them. Like a flash he thought, I can read the Bible using my tongue. The man "read" through the entire Bible four times.

Colossians 3:16-17 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition) says:

"¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

So, let the word speak to you, God's people, this week as it does every week. Let the proclamation be one of transformation, repentance, and restitution.



Let us see all the people who might be impacted by our choices and our preferences. Let us hear the "weight of the word" that tears down and builds up in equal measure. Let us be open to the Word of God for the People of God. Praise be to God!

Let us pray...

Dear God, we thank You for the story of David and Nathan, which reminds us of the power of confession and the importance of accountability. Help us approach our wrongdoings with humility and seek reconciliation with those we have hurt. Grant us the courage to be truthful and the wisdom to be compassionate in our confrontations. Continue to open our hearts and minds to Your Word so that we can be all that You want us to be. In Your name we pray. Amen