

4 March 2026  
Lent 2 Midweek

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Icons of Repentance: David - Covering-up”  
Text: 2 Samuel 11-12; Romans 4:1-8; Matthew 10:26-33

In the Name of (+) Jesus. Amen.

*Icons of repentance.* Last week it was the tax collector. No excuses repentance. No *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts* repentance. Just a humble *God, be merciful to me, the sinner* (Luke 18:13) repentance. The tax collector as a role model for us.

This week, our *icon of repentance* couldn't be more different than that! Tonight we go from humility to pride, from confession to I'll-do-anything-but confess! Tonight's icon is no role model, but someone we can definitely see ourselves in: **King David**.

We would expect more from King David. And we should. God had chosen him, the eighth of eight sons, a most unlikely king, and had so abundantly blessed him. *And this is how David thanks the Lord.* You know the story. It's pretty famous. You've heard it before and you heard it again tonight. But as bad as it is, it may be even worse than you thought . . .

For right from the get go of the story, something's off; something's not right. It's the ***time of year when kings go out to battle***. But David didn't go. ***David remained behind at Jerusalem***. A coincidence? An accident? Or a plan? A plan to create an *opportunity* for sin . . . Sin, which James tells us in his Epistle, works like this:

*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death* (James 1:14-15).

Ironic words for us tonight, because that's exactly what David's sin did: his desire for Bathsheba gave birth to his sin with her, *and* gave birth to a son with her. And that sin brought forth death - the death of Bathsheba's husband, the death of David's Son, AND the death of David's *conscience*.

So David does what sinners do, and what sinners have done from the very beginning, which we heard also last week with Adam and Eve - **he tried to cover-up his sin**. First by feigned kindness, then by alcohol, and finally by vengeance. Take a break, Uriah, my friend! Go home and enjoy your wife. Then when that didn't work

... OK - eat, drink, and be merry, Uriah, and go home and enjoy your wife! Then when that didn't work ... Well then go back to the battle and die, you stupid Hittite! And then he took the object of his lust and murder into his own home to care for her and look honorable, good, and upright in the eyes of the people. Pretty much obliterating not just the fifth and sixth commandments, but *all of them*.

Because King David, as Matthew put it tonight, feared those who ***can kill the body*** instead of the one who can ***condemn the soul***. He feared for his honor, his reputation, his pride, maybe even for his kingship, for he knew what happened to his predecessor, King Saul, when he sinned grievously. David was afraid. As he should have been! But he was afraid of the wrong ones.

We do it, too. The child that tries to put back together what they weren't supposed to touch, but they did, and now its broken. To the teenager who lies and denies. To the adult who blames someone else, preferring to murder someone else's reputation rather than have their sin exposed. MY sin exposed. And there's a thousand other ways we do this, too. Because we are afraid. And we should be. But we're afraid of the wrong ones.

Because while covering-up our sin might work with one another, it doesn't work with God. He's knows. We say in the liturgy for Private Absolution: *Let us begin in the name of God, to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hid*. Your sins are not a surprise, anymore than the sin of the child standing before her parents and being asked: *Did you do this?* It's not really a question. It's an opportunity for confession and absolution. It's a question asked *in love for love*.

Which is why God sent Nathan to David, *to love him*. To not just expose him and his sin, but to provide an opportunity for confession and absolution. **To resurrect his dead conscience and save his life**. So even though for David and for us, when we repent, we when confess, when our sin is found out, it feels like we're dying - dying of shame, dying of embarrassment, dying of humiliation - it is a death that is for resurrection and to lead to resurrection.

### **And God is in the resurrection business.**

And so He came to Adam and Eve, He gave His Law, He sent His prophets like Nathan, and He sends pastors today, *for this: to provide an opportunity for confession and absolution*. Because despite who you are and all that you have done, God loves you anyway. Because that's who He is. He knows ***each and every sparrow that falls to the ground, and the number of hairs on your head***. If He didn't care about you, he wouldn't care how many hairs you do or do not have or your head! If I don't care about you, I'll let you walk around with that toilet paper

stuck to your shoe! But if I care about you, I won't.

And your heavenly Father loves you, more than you know. More than you could possibly understand. That's why *three times* in the few verses we heard tonight from Matthew, he says: **Have no fear of them . . . do not fear . . . fear not.** We do, fear, because of who we are. But we don't have to because of who God is.

So Matthew goes on to say, *everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.* But what does that mean? How do we do that? How do we acknowledge Jesus before men? It is *to confess Him as Saviour.* And how do we do that? *By confessing our sins.* And not just to God - to one another as well. For if we can deal with our sin ourselves, or think we can, we don't need a Saviour; we don't need Him. We **deny** Him and who He is and what He has done. And you don't want to go there! But to confess our sins is to **acknowledge** Him and who He is and what He has done for me. And then He **acknowledges me before his Father in heaven.** *He confesses me!* This one, Father, is mine.

And what could be more wonderful to hear than that?

For did you hear what Paul said tonight in the reading from Romans? Who did he say is blessed?

***Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.***

Blessed is not the man who has no sins! Blessed is the man who has sin, but whose sins are forgiven, whose sins are covered, who sins the Lord does not count against him. So **better is to have your sins covered-up by Jesus, really covered-up, by His blood and forgiveness, than to try to cover them up yourself.**

That's the lesson King David learned. Even so, there were still consequences for his sin. Nathan would go on to tell him that because of his sin, his son would die. And he did. **But here is Jesus in this story for us.** We found Him as the *mercy seat* last week; He is the *sin offering* this week. For while Nathan's prophecy came true seven days after David's son was born, the true Son of David who would die for David's sin would come about a thousand years later, when the Son of David died for David's sin *on the cross.* He had to because of David's sins, and your sins and my sins and all the sins of the world. Jesus is the sin offering whose blood was shed to atone for our sins. And because He did, He now says to you and me: **Fear not.** I have covered your sin with my blood. So you don't have to cover it up. You can confess it. *This one, Father, is mine.*

And so our second *icon of repentance*: **King David**. Blessed is the man whose sins are covered - not by himself - but *by Jesus*.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.