

## Content Warning

### Scripture Reading: 2 Samuel 11:1-15

Whew, the things that get said about me. Forgive me. I find it hard to keep things well ordered in my mind anymore.

There are some stories we just don't tell. Not here. Not anywhere. Because there are stories that we don't want to know.

I am a woman whose story you probably don't want to know.

Or I am a woman whose story you think you know already.

Mine is an uneasy story, not suitable for every audience. Hard to adapt into a Sunday school curriculum. So more often than not, it doesn't get told at all. I wonder if my story belongs here. For here is where I am.

I am Eliam's daughter.

I am Uriah's wife. I ... was Uriah's wife. He was a Hittite, that husband of mine. He came from power, from people who know Iron and worship the gods of storms. People who write and keep record of their world and keep their stories. People with deep history. Uriah was a good soldier – a great soldier -- loyal, to a fault. A trusted warrior to battle alongside David's men, conquering. As God wills it.

And now... I am here. I am David's latest ... conquest. At least he asked for my name first, if only so he could have me summoned to his chambers.

The morning after... I had no appetite. Nor in the days and weeks that followed. I ate, but food didn't nourish. It turned to ash in my mouth. For days and days and days afterwards I was numb to the world. I could sleep, but I never knew rest. All I wanted to do was sleep, to shrink and hide from my waking self. My maidservants kept close at hand, whispering, wondering what was the matter. My temper shifted and flared wildly as if the wind determined my mood and being. I moved from room to room, aimless, listless. Lost. Then one morning I knew. I was once again not alone in my body.

So now this. Even if you've experienced carrying a child in your body, few of you can know what this feels like. I hope none of you know what this feels like... to be pregnant by someone you didn't choose, and had no option to refuse.

I'm not... nobody. I am a woman of some power, some station. One of only a few women whose names will be recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Most of us are just... so and so's wife.... So and so's daughter. I am that too but at least my name is my own. I am Bathsheba.

And I am David's conquest. That is my story and location in all of this. Yet all these men who are used to describe my life and define my existence are not, in fact, the shape of me. My story is mine. I am Bathsheba. Should a person not be the main character in her own life story?

People will argue for centuries about what happened to me.

Scholars of a distant age will theorize about me. I will become synonymous with temptress to some, as if taking a bath was somehow an act taking aim at a man who was not my husband. As if

David wasn't the architect and ... executioner of this whole thing. Well, we know, I suppose, that boys will be boys.

These scholars ... these people with their books and translations and dim understanding of a history millennia past will make this story about a mutual moral failing.

That somehow this was adultery chosen, a decision we shared. Some will write that my acquiescence can be assumed because the text that gets to you doesn't say I cried out or tried to run or fought hard enough or refused the king. You try refusing the king.

I won't stay here. I will be more again. I will be Solomon's mother. I will be in the lineage of the one who will be called the King of Kings. Right after Jesse, David's father, and then my son who will father Rehoboam, who will father Abijah, who will father Asaph, who will father Jehoshaphat and so on for the mere 14 generations between Abraham and the Christ child. My son will carry his piece in that story well. My sons will do amazing, powerful things.

Most of my sons...

I will regain my strength but I doubt I'll ever be whole again.

Yet one day, I will be a queen mother. The wisest of kings, my son, my Solomon, will have a throne placed at his right-hand side for me to sit beside him and give counsel, and he will bow, he will lie flat on the floor at my feet in honor and obeisance of me. God is good. Or at least ... God will be.

Right now, I don't know where God is. I shout at the heavens. I lament. And... nothing. I am alone, with this little being growing inside me, and my husband killed, and I do not know what will happen next. I am just here. With a story to tell.

I like to imagine I am more than a plot device.

Knowing all, God knew ... God has to know there would be so many who endure what I endured, survivors, and perhaps by my presence they wouldn't feel God's absence so keenly. They'd see this story matters too. That what happened to me most definitely matters, and is also not the totality of who I am.

You're still there, after all, aren't you? You're hearing this story, my story, removed by thousands of miles and years from what happened to me. Who could imagine such a thing? Who... but God?

I am the living story of what happens when all you can do is take one breath after another and every next step and no matter the brokenness of your heart or your body or your mind, you refuse to stop living. You, we, live on as resistance.

When you say "she is someone's daughter" or "she is someone's sister" I want you to stop. Reconsider that her only worth is in her relationship to someone else. Who is it your impulse to protect? And why? I want you to stop and think of me. I belong to no one. I am Bathsheba. I am a person and I am surviving circumstances beyond my control, things I never would have chosen, and I am still. Right. Here.

I am here with my sister Rahab. And Tamar. And the Levite's unnamed concubine. And Hagar. And Dinah. And all the rest.

All of these things have happened before, or will happen someday, and will almost assuredly happen again and again and again. But today, in this moment, my story lives. I am survival.

And yet even when I am so very certain I am alone, I sit in the darkness of my garden and wait for word on what will happen to me next, there are still these moments. I hear something on the wind. God's voice coming back in whispers. The softest but unmistakable reminders that the Lord is still here. Still listening. Promises that my story doesn't die with me but rather lives on... in you, who

are listening, and it lives on in pages and pulpits and the heartfelt, heartbroken prayers of every utterance of “me too.”

And together, we survivors, we insist this with courage that comes from someplace bigger and deeper than any one person’s pain – there is no place so proper, no setting so sanitized, no corner of this life where God does not hear our stories. There is nothing that has been done to you that could separate you from the love of God. There is nothing you have done that can separate you from the love of God. God stands beside us. God weeps with us. And promises us once again that we are loved, and cherished, and never, ever alone.

I know because I am proof of that persistent, mysterious, miraculous, inexplicably steadfast love. Because Here I am.

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Sermon preached by Reverend Dr. Laurie Lyter Bright at First Congregational United Church of Christ, Appleton, Wisconsin  
Sunday, July 25, 2021 at 9:30 AM

## **2 Samuel 11:1-15**

11 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup> and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” <sup>4</sup> Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.”

<sup>6</sup> So David sent this word to Joab: “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent him to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants and did not go down to his house.

<sup>10</sup> David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home?”

<sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, <sup>[a]</sup> and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

<sup>12</sup> Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.

<sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In it he wrote, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”