



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### December 24, 2023

#### **The Grandmothers: Bathsheba**

Recap of sermon from December 24, 2023

Scripture: 2 Samuel 11:1-15

Bathsheba was a survivor. Her story is told in two distinct and independent passages. In the first, which we share today, she is a voiceless victim of King David. The second comes in the first two chapters of 1 Kings, when David is near death. In this passage, she is a clever strategist who ensures her son Solomon becomes David's heir.

The difference in Bathsheba in these two passages is striking, which has led commentators for centuries to describe her in one-dimensional either/or terms. Either she is a plotting seductress or she is a naïve patsy.

As Baylor University scholar Brent Nesler wrote, "If Bathsheba is interpreted as intelligent and resourceful in 1 Kings 1–2, she is thereby assumed to be slyly complicit with the king in 2 Sam 11. If Bathsheba is interpreted as naïve in 2 Sam 11, she is assumed to be oblivious to the machinations of men in 1 Kings 1–2" (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, 142, no. 1, p. 91-109).

In the story we shared today from 2 Samuel, Bathsheba falls victim to King David. The first sentence of the passage tells us all we need to know about David. "In the spring, when Kings go off to war, King David sent... his servants." Kings are supposed to lead the people to war, instead he sent others off. His power has already corrupted him. When he sends for her, she has no agency to say no. Some have argued that the phrase "When she came to him," implies her consent, and paint her bathing seductively to entice him.

This is utter nonsense. A little later in the story, David calls for Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. The Scripture uses the same phrase as before: "When Uriah came to him." This doesn't imply Uriah's consent, it reflects the fact that when a King asks someone to come to him, they come. Or die. Another important fact of the story is that Bathsheba's actions are never condemned. David is the one that faces the punishment of God. It is David that the prophet Nathan calls out. Bathsheba, in the first story, is a voiceless victim.

Yet something changes in her. The next time we find her, the nation is on the verge of civil war. David's different sons

are vying for the crown. In fact, another has declared himself King. David, old, and mired in inaction, is about to let his kingdom crumble into chaos. Instead Bathsheba emerges with Nathan. The two make sure that David names Bathsheba's son, Solomon, as the heir.

The stability of the nation is saved. Bathsheba is saved. Solomon becomes king and goes on to build the Temple (with his own set of pitfalls and failures).

Bathsheba is neither a foul temptress or a voiceless patsy. Instead, I propose something more complex happened with Bathsheba. When reading her story through the lens of trauma recovery, something wonderful is revealed: She healed.

She is a victim of abuse who survived, healed, found her strength, and asserts her control and self-determination. Bathsheba, the last grandmother mentioned (but strangely not named) in Matthew 1, is a survivor. She falls prey to powerful men, but rises up and finds her strength.

Bathsheba, when understood properly, is a model for so many women who have been traumatized. We don't get to hear enough of her story, but she is remembered by Matthew. She is an important part of the line that brought us not only the Temple, but Jesus himself.

These are Jesus' remarkable grandmothers: Tamar the persistent widow, Rahab the Canaanite strategist, Ruth the loyal and courageous friend, and Bathsheba the one who rose up. Their stories must be told and retold. All of them Gentiles, reflect that Jesus came from the world to save the world. He came from strength to reveal God's strength. It is a strength forged in courage, loyalty, faithfulness, and love; not violence, coercion, or fear.

Jesus was born on Christmas as the Word of God made flesh. He was born to a woman and a man who adopted him as his own. He was born as a part of a long line of survivors. He was born into a long story of God and God's people who were both flawed and righteous. He was born to save the world though love.

**Next Sunday:**  
**Epiphany Sunday, Matthew 2:1-15**