

Every Christmas you can't help but catch a glimpse of the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." I know for some people it is a required Christmas tradition to watch this movie. This black and white movie is set in the 1930s and 40s and follows the life of George Bailey.

George Bailey is a young man with lots of dreams to travel and build big things. But when his father has a stroke and dies George is forced to take over the small Savings and Loan family business. George takes it over only after he convinces the board of directors to not sell the business to the powerful and rich Mr. Potter. Throughout the movie Mr. Potter becomes the adversary to George Bailey.

As the president of the Savings and Loan, George sets out to develop an affordable housing project to be known as Bailey Park. Mr. Potter, however, does not see Bailey Park to be in his best interests because he is opposed to any affordable housing project which may cut into his ability to charge higher mortgage rates. So Mr. Potter sets out to find a way to eliminate the Bailey Savings and Loan.

Mr. Potter invites George Bailey into his office. In this scene which we are going to watch, George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, has been asked by Mr. Potter how much he makes. George tells him that he makes \$45 a week. Mr. Potter then offers him a job in his company. Mr. Potter's goal, of course, is to dismantle the Savings and Loan so that he can have a monopoly on the mortgage business in town. Let's watch what happens.

Show clip of George Bailey being tempted with position which he turns down.

All of us face some type of temptation in our lives. In the clip which we just watched George Bailey has the wisdom and courage to stare down his temptation. But this type of wisdom and courage is not shown by the main character in the story which we will be reading this morning.

The story which we are about to read is a story of a very powerful and blessed man being faced with temptation. But it is more than temptation. The story we are about to read portrays the worst of human greed and cowardice and the extent that an individual will go to in order to cover up their wrong doings.

We have been reading over the past few weeks stories about the early kings of Israel. Today we continue reading about King David. One of the reasons I appreciate the Bible is because it does not cover up this story and pretend it never happened. This story is a pivotal turning point in the stories of Israel's kings. Let's read about what happens.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1 – 12:7a in The Message

This is one of those stories that just makes me disgusted. It makes me disgusted because it is a story we see played out over and over again in our culture where very powerful people, and it is usually men but not always, will do whatever it takes to cover up for themselves. And what should make it even more disgusting is that this person who does this is the person that God has chosen to lead God's people.

This story is as bad as anything that is out there today. A rich and powerful man seduces a vulnerable woman. There is no conversation between them. There is no hint of caring or affection or love but only lust. At the end of the encounter she is only "the woman." David "takes" this woman that we are told is named Bathsheba.

Through this act Bathsheba becomes pregnant. Only after the pregnancy do we hear any conversation between the two and that is her communicating to him that she is pregnant. David then tries to cover up that he is the father by arranging for the husband of Bathsheba to come home from fighting in a battle and sleep with his wife but her husband Uriah doesn't cooperate. Uriah is unwilling to do this while his fellow soldiers are in war. Uriah shows himself to be more moral than King David.

David then communicates to one of his military leaders to arrange for Uriah to be killed in battle which also results in the deaths of several other innocent men. The child born to Bathsheba by David's act of infidelity soon dies. The digression of this story then continues in the story which we will explore next week when one of David's sons rapes his sister. David's seemingly innocent act of giving into temptation and infidelity has deadly repercussions.

When we are faced with temptation it is easy to justify our actions by saying that it is no big deal. No one gets hurt. But as this story teaches us giving into temptation can lead to a path that is destructive for us and for other people.

When we are faced with temptations in our lives I invite us to ask ourselves if our actions have larger ramifications. David's seemingly innocent act of sleeping with a beautiful woman who was already married led to deadly consequences. It led to the death of a child. It led to the death of a husband. It led to the death of innocent soldiers. David's giving into temptation eventually led to a rape. All of this happened because one man gave into temptation to take something that was not his to take.

There is a reason why when we pray the Lord's Prayer we ask God to lead us not into temptation. Temptation can lead us away from God and temptation can have deadly consequences.

As you face your next temptation you are invited to ask yourself. Is it worth it? Who is being hurt and who is going to be hurt by my giving into this temptation? AMEN.

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