

Good morning. I'm like the Titus. If I got down on the floor and stayed there for a while, I would have to have assistance to get back up. So probably many of you can relate to that.

Where you stand determines what you see. You've probably seen the 6 verses 9 meme. Maybe you've seen it, maybe we're not going to see it.

There it is. And so it's used a lot and I think it's misused a lot to talk about perception and judgment and perspective. I do think it's a good illustration though of where you stand determines what you see. And as I go deeper into life, one of the things I see more clearly is the struggle that some have, maybe many of us have about our value and our worth. Especially as we move along in life.

Do we matter? Do you ever feel insignificant? Do you ever feel like you don't have that much to offer the world or the people living in it?

Sometimes we stand in the wrong place and see the wrong things. Even about ourselves. And maybe especially about ourselves. In the book the Search for significance, Robert McGee talks about a false formula that many people live by. We're all influenced by.

And it's like this, self worth equals or is determined by performance and others opinions. In other words, my value is determined by what I do and what other people think of me. That's a really hard way to live. It's especially difficult if you're not perfect, which is probably all of us. And it's even harder if you've messed up somewhere along the way and people know about it because people are notorious of reminding you about the mistakes you've made, about your sins and shortcomings.

Just things like those ongoing flaws that we have. We all make mistakes from time to time. We all make messes and that's just the way it is. But sometimes. Have you ever been in a situation where you were just kind of innocent and then somebody just dumped a big thing on you, big problem and like suddenly you're in a mess that you didn't ask for, you didn't do anything to really create.

And now all of a sudden you're in it and people are looking at you, wondering what you did. And when things like this happen, it creates all kinds of questions. When we are aware that we're not doing too well and other people are wondering about us. Whatever the reason, it's easy to stand in the wrong place and wonder about life.

We can feel inadequate, we can feel down, depressed, discouraged. We may develop negative self talk. I know it's an issue for a lot of people. Self talk that says, there, I did it again. I just can't do anything right.

It seems like everything I touch just goes to nothing. And I just feel like a failure. In fact, I think I am a failure. And so we get that kind of stuff going on and we may withdraw from people. We may feel like we're just not worthy to be around other people.

They don't want us around. Where you stand determines what you see. And so when I think about this, I say, where do I stand to look at myself? Where do you stand? How do you view yourself?

And I think there are three places we can stand to look at ourselves. First, we can just look at ourselves through our own understanding, trying to evaluate, am I good or am I not good? Just looking at myself, figuring out, this is what I do, this is what people think of me. The second place is try to imagine how other people are looking at you. What's it like to experience me?

And we see a lot of this in social media. We throw things out. We're wondering, well, will people like this? Or if I put a picture of myself, will they say, oh, you're so nice looking? And blah, blah, blah.

And we kind of, kind of fish for compliments. And then we may adapt and adjust and say, oh, if I do this, people will like me more. And that's a second place to stand. But the third place to stand is to stand and see ourselves through the eyes of God. And this is the true place, the true view of me and you.

This is what really counts. And so when God looks at us, what does he see? That's what really matters. So today we do continue our series of faithful and fearless women who are a key part of the Christmas story. And today we consider a woman who could have easily stood in the wrong place to understand her place in God's story and even wonder if she had a place in that story.

So today we do talk about Bathsheba.

In the spring of the year when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Late one afternoon after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was. And he was told she is Bathsheba, the daughter of Elam and The wife of Uriah the Hittite. Then David sent messengers to get her and she came to the palace and he slept with her.

When Tim and I were in Jerusalem a couple years ago, we went to the place that supposedly is the palace of David, of the ruins. And it's

really fascinating, but the thing that struck me, it's way high on the hill and you can look down, literally and see roofs of all kinds of structures down below. And so David gets up from his siesta, from his nap, and he looks down, just looking out and he sees what he sees and he likes what he sees. And so he calls a servant and he says, hey, who is that woman who lives on the corner of evil and desire?

Well, your highness, that's Bathsheba. She is married to Uriah the Hittite, who is your loyal mercenary soldier, one of your mighty men, your highness. Bathsheba is his wife. Okay, thanks, thanks, thanks, thank you. David calls another servant and he says, hey, I want you to go down to the corner of evil and desire and tell Bathsheba the king wants to see her.

You can't say no to the king. You can't. And so the next thing you know, Bathsheba is with child.

A few weeks later, she sends a text to David, says, your highness, I'm pregnant.

I can't quote what David probably said, but he wastes no time in planning the COVID up. Very unusual activity. He says, hey, bring Uriah in from the front lines of the war. So Uriah comes in, it's a very unusual thing. And David says, hey, how's the war going, Uriah?

Uriah answers the questions like, why am I here? Why am I answering these questions? And David finishes his little game of manipulation and deception. And he says to Uriah, he says, hey, you know what, since you're here, you might as well go home and spend the night with your wife. David smiles, I think because he's thinking, yeah, this will be perfect.

He'll go home, everybody will think the baby is Uriah's and it all will be good. Well, the problem is Uriah, out of respect and loyalty to his fellow soldiers, doesn't go home. He won't go home. And he says, listen, I'm going to stay with the king's servants because it just wouldn't be right with my fellow soldiers out there roughing it, sleeping on the ground for me to go and spend the night in my own bed with my wife. I'm not going to go home.

Well, David finds out. Oh man. So he comes up with A plan B. He invites Uriah in and gets him drunk, basically. And so I'll get him drunk, and then I'll send him home to his wife.

And then everybody will think the baby is Uriah's. But Uriah again does not cooperate. He won't go home. And so David comes up with plan C. And plan C is deadly.

David sends orders to the commander and essentially says, I want you to put Uriah on the front line of the war. I want you to have

everybody withdraw. Don't tell Uriah. And he'll be out there and he'll be left for dead. So David writes the orders, he seals them.

Uriah unknowingly takes his own execution papers to the front line, and there he dies. Plan C works. Uriah the Hittite is dead. Bathsheba's husband is dead.

You imagine what Bathsheba felt. She mourns, and the seed of David's sin continues to grow in her womb. After an appropriate amount of time, Bathsheba moves in and becomes David's wife and has David's baby. But the Lord was displeased with what David had done. So the Lord sends Nathan the prophet to tell David a parable.

Now, David's a creative, of course. He's an artist. He's a composer. He loves. He loves creativity.

And so Nathan the prophet shows up and says, your Highness, I have a story for you. Oh, good. I love a good story. So Nathan says, once upon a time, there were two men. One man was exceedingly rich.

He had all kinds of sheep and cattle. He just had everything. He had it made. But the other guy was very, very poor, just barely made it. And he scraped up enough money to buy one little lamb.

And this little lamb was so precious to him. He raised it as he did his children. And the lamb would eat off his plate and drink from his cup. He played the lamb, played with the children. It was like a little daughter to him.

Well, one day an important guest came into town. And the rich man was going to host him. And so the rich man, instead of taking one of his own cattle or sheep, he sent a servant to take that poor man's only sheep. And he had it killed and served to the guest. David was livid.

He was furious. He said, that man deserves to die for such a thing.

Nathan pauses, and he looks at David and he says, you are that man.

Nathan continues. And he explains, tells David. He says, listen, God, this is what God says to you. I've given you everything you need. I've given you almost everything you want, I would have given you even more.

Why then have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and have stolen his wife? To his credit, David responds quickly with the right answer, I think from the heart. He confesses, I have sinned against the Lord. Nathan says something that's almost unbelievable, so remarkable.

He says to David, your sins are forgiven, but there will be consequences. David's fling with Bathsheba caused him to break three of the Ten Commandments. He coveted his neighbor's wife. He committed adultery, and he committed murder.

Now, while there is to me very surprising mercy, surprising grace and forgiveness, there will be consequences for David's sin. He will experience family conflict, extreme humiliation, and children will die, including the baby that he conceived with Bathsheba.

We're here to talk about Bathsheba, though. So I wonder about Bathsheba in all this sometimes. And I think this is way, way off, way wrong. Sometimes people say, well, Bathsheba was asking for it. I don't think so.

She was involved in a ritual straight out of the law of Moses. And I don't think where she was bathing was that unusual.

David was supposed to be at war. He wasn't supposed to be on his rooftop looking around. He wasn't supposed to be spying on women who probably didn't even know he was there. The text clearly blames David and nobody else. Women had few rights in those days, and no one had any rights when it came to the king.

So how could she refuse anything that David was offering and suggesting and forcing upon her? I'm guessing it was all a terrible, miserable, horrible experience for her. I believe she loved her husband, and I believe she likely felt extreme guilt for what David did to her. It must have been hurtful and confusing in so many ways. And if we step into Bathsheba's shoes, then we see the story from a different place.

And when we stand in that place, we have to wonder how Bathsheba felt about all the stuff that happened to her. I'm guessing there was a lot of grief. I'm guessing there was a lot of guilt, confusion, and sorrow. And then, to make matters worse, the baby that David fathers, it dies at about a week old. Sorrow upon sorrow, grief beyond comprehension.

And as she stands there in that mess, burying that baby, I wonder what she thought.

I wonder if she questioned her value. I wonder if she questioned her worth and her place in the world. And I wonder if she questioned God. Why did this happen? Why did this happen?

Why was she brought into this messy story? She didn't ask to be there. Why did her husband have to die because of David's lustful sin? The same sin that produced a baby that died. I'm sure there were and still are lots of questions.

Now, what's interesting is as Bathsheba's life goes forward, continues to unfold, she has another son with David. His name is Solomon. And Solomon, of course, turns out to be a very special person. He becomes the third king of united Israel, after Saul, David, and then David's son, Solomon, ascends to the throne. And you know a little bit about Solomon.

He was amazingly wise and powerful, blessed directly by God. But if you read the story, it was an easy path to the throne. Solomon had brothers who were trying to take the throne. And guess who steps in to correct the situation? Bathsheba.

Bathsheba, along with Nathan the prophet, go to David and say, hey. And David says, yes, Solomon is the king. Solomon, of course, goes on to build the temple, this amazing temple in Jerusalem. Stunning structure that represents the intersection of heaven and earth. The place where God has his presence.

God used Bathsheba. God used Bathsheba to bring that about. Think about that. From where she stood and from where other people stood looking at her. How could have anyone seen how this was going to play out?

How could such a messed up story of adultery and murder be turned into something so glorious?

There's a lesson there for all of us. Wait, there's more. There's more to the Bathsheba story that reveals how God can see things that we cannot see, knows things that we do not know, and works in mysterious ways to bring good out of bad. And in it all, God is sending us a message. He is subtly inviting us to view our lives from his standpoint.

Perhaps one of the most surprising things about Bathsheba is that she shows up in the New Testament right at the very beginning. When Matthew writes his genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1, he includes four women, which is just unheard of. You just didn't do that in the first century in a patriarchal society. But Matthew does. And the women he includes are quite shocking, really.

Two of them are prostitutes, two of them are Gentiles. And then there's Bathsheba, a woman objectified, I think, seemingly forced into a situation she did not want. But there she is. There she is in the lineage of Jesus. Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah. Many believe Matthew is making a point with his genealogy, and I'm one of them. The Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, is inclusive. Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, foreigners, sinners of

all stripes are welcome. They.

And we are invited to be a part of this story of transformation. So we can move from positions of anxiety and grief and sadness and confusion about our purpose and value in this world. We can move from that to a place of peace, joy, hope, confidence, because we are a part of God's plan, even when we don't understand it, and especially when we don't understand it. We are invited to move from searching for significance by our performance and other people's perception of us and searching for significance in all the wrong places. We're invited to move from that to a place where God tells us who we are, to resting in the identity that God gives us as his beloved children.

I'm a beloved son. You are a beloved daughter. He invites us to stand with him, to see us as he sees us. And if you know who you are, then you know what to do. And what we do is we look at ourselves from God's view.

And where you stand determines what you see. And God invites us to see us as he sees us, fragile but forgiven. And he makes a move to take away our sins through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus so that we become his beloved children.

We are children. I am anyway, and I think you are too, who bow before the mystery of how God works. I don't understand. I often don't understand. But by faith, take a long view and ultimately stand with God and view ourselves as participants in his story.

I don't know why some things happen. I don't know why good things happen sometimes. I don't know why bad things happen to me and to you. I don't understand a lot of things that happen. But by faith, we learn to trust him.

We learn to trust that he is working in all of it, good and bad, to make good happen, even in the worst situations, because we are deeply valued and deeply loved. Here's the thing about that six or nine meme. Is it back up there? Yeah. Someone wrote that.

They wrote the number and it's either a six or a nine, right? If they wrote a six, then it's not a nine. If they intended to be a six, then it's not a nine. Even though somebody else says it's a nine. No, it's not.

It's a six. Because the true view is what the author intended. The true view is the way the Author meant it. And so the author of life, God looks at you and me in a certain way, and his view is true. You may look at yourself in a certain way and it could be absolutely wrong.

Other people may look at you in a certain way and it could be

absolutely wrong. It could be the same way you see yourself. What really matters is how God sees us, how God sees you. And that's where, by faith, we need to stand. And when we see ourselves as God sees us, then guess what?

Other people start seeing us the same way. It's called integrity. Integrity. They see us as people of faith who trust God with all the unanswered questions. They see us as people who derive our significance, our worth, and our value from God Himself.

He loves us as we are. He loves us where we are, but he loves us too much to leave us there. He invites us to follow him and his beloved children. We follow him through the good. We follow him through the bad.

We follow him through the grief and the confusion and the frustrating things of life. We follow him through it all. We know who we are and we know where we're going. We're moving closer to the heart of God. And eventually we'll be in his presence where there is no more death, no more mourning, no more grief, no more confusion, no more pain.

All that stuff's going to go away.

As we prepare to take communion, we remember that communion really is all about remembering who we are. Where we stand determines what we see. And in communion we stand with God and we look at ourselves. The bread reminds us of the Incarnation, the body of Jesus, who he literally came and took on a body. And the juice reminds us of the blood.

The life is in the blood. And Jesus poured out his life so that we could have life. Jesus himself took the bread, took the cup, and said, hey, I want you to eat and drink these things and I want you just to remember. I want you to remember this story and I want you to remember who you are in light of who I am and who I'm calling you to be. So we don't have to search for significance by performance or by other people's opinions.

We don't have to despair when life is confusing and not fair. By faith, we believe God is working. So listen to Romans 8. The Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children.

Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co heirs with Christ. If indeed we share any sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Let me pray. Father, thank you for these words of encouragement and promise.

God, it's so easy to see ourselves in the wrong way and just help us

to see ourselves as you see us dearly loved, beloved children who are fault and blameless in your sight because we've been clothed with Jesus Christ. So, as we take this bread and this juice this morning, help us to remember the story of Jesus and who we are in light of it. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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