

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 29th 2016

In the 1951 film, *David and Bathsheba*, the romance between Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward leaves the audience breathless, with Bathsheba portrayed as the neglected wife who discovers David as her true love. Today's reading, however, neither romanticizes violence nor the abuse of women. David is really the fallen hero guilty of adultery and murder; he abuses his power for his own selfish desire.

After David "takes" (implies force) Bathsheba, she becomes pregnant. To cover up, David tries to get her husband Uriah to sleep with her, but Uriah will not go to his wife as long as his mates endure the hardships of the siege at Rabbah. Adultery leads to deception and then to murder. Joab carries out his king's orders; Uriah is killed in the frontlines of battle, but other servants of David are slaughtered in the fight as well. David, succumbing to the illusions of power, has committed evil in the eyes of the Lord.

In this year of mercy, this episode of David's life is not provided for us to point fingers. Rather, we are offered Psalm 51 to understand that the focus is not David's sin, but God's abundant grace. He forgives David and allows him to continue as king. The psalmist invites us to meditate on three Hebrew words that describe God's character—*hanan* (mercy), *hesed* (steadfast love), and *rahamim* (compassion). Perhaps when we truly experience God's mercy and forgiveness we may stop hurting ourselves and others.

How about a quick prayer for today?

Lord, help me be aware of your love for me and let me be more merciful today.

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