

Sermon for Sunday, October 20, 2024

2 Samuel 7:1-17

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

In order to allow today's Scripture reading to speak to us, it seems appropriate to break it up into three parts. If we try to think of it in its totality it gets confusing. Therefore, I'm going to ask B-J to read a portion and then I will fill in gaps that will help us answer the question "What is this text telling us today, in this time and place?" Because that's the whole point: Scripture is important as it describes the relationship between God and humans BUT, it doesn't help much if we don't let it guide our lives in the here and now.

2 Samuel 7:1-17 *Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."*

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

The first section continues through the end of verse 7. In this section it seems that King David wanted to honor God for all that God had done for him in making him king. Remember that David had lived a nomadic lifestyle for much of his life. He was a shepherd wandering with the flocks, then lived for a time in King Saul's palace, then went on the run fearing for his life. During that third period of his life he fought several groups that were attacking the Israelites and their villages. It was essentially guerilla warfare. But now he was living the settled life of a king in a palace in his capital city. We gather from listening to the text that he wants to honor God with the same kind of dignity that he is enjoying.

To be candid, the prophet Nathan doesn't appear to have given David's suggestion of building a Temple much thought. He seems to assume that since David has been so continually victorious that any idea that he comes up with must be a good one: God ordained, if you will. As such he gives his approval. But Nathan is slowed down pretty quickly as "the word of the Lord came to him that very night."

God points out that God has never lived in one place. God was a God that moved with the people. By being a God on the move it prevented people from looking back with longing for their old home "because it was where God lived." No one could say that they had left God behind. God was with them everywhere that they went.

Sometimes it seems that people are always constructing something solid as a dwelling place for God. They seem to like to pin God down in a particular place as if God is up here on the top of Vasa hill and not two miles down the road. The irony is that in the Bible God is always tearing those places down. In Israel's history a temple was built and rebuilt and eventually permanently destroyed. Where was God? In 2 Corinthians 6:16 the apostle Paul writes, "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live **in** them and walk **among** them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." You, my friends, are the temple of the living God. God is within you by virtue of God's Holy Spirit residing in your hearts and minds.

2 Samuel 7:8-11b *Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies.*

As God continues to talk to the prophet Nathan God changes the subject. God reminds both Nathan and David all that God has done for David. That God took him from work as a shepherd (a very humble task) to being the king of the Israelites. God accompanied

David and brought him success and was able to banish enemy tribes through success in battle. He was also able to unite the many tribes of Israel into a united kingdom. After years of warfare it could be said that "the Lord had given him rest." But it wasn't just David who had rest. It was also the people. The memory of danger and invading enemies was fresh. They knew what David had accomplished and his reward from them was loyalty.

2 Samuel 7:11c-17 *Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.*

The final section of the Scripture lesson can be viewed in two ways: a short term promise and a long term covenant. Here's what I mean. When God says, "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." These words make many of us think of David's son Solomon. He was successor to David and he is the one who built the Temple in Jerusalem. He fulfilled the short term aspects of God's promise.

The second way to view this Scripture is to see the long term covenant or promise. And who is the one that God is father to? Who is the one who is punished with blows inflicted by human beings? Who is the one who continues to abide within God's love, whose house and kingdom stands forever sure, who sits at the right hand of God, whose reign continues forever?

The answer to that question comes from **Luke 1:30-33** *The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne*

of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Yes, my friends, you know the answer: it's Jesus. Most every reading that we have heard this fall, and those we will encounter in the next few weeks point to God's long-term intent. God's intent is to establish a chosen people whose existence is defined by worship of the one true God. This chosen people also has a task and that is to share the good news of God's saving grace with all the world. It was God's intent that the Old Testament chosen people, those that we call Israelites were to share this good news. It was and is God's intent that we followers of Jesus are also called to share the good news of God's saving grace with all people.

Let's wrap it all up. What is today's text telling us?

- In the first section we are reminded that God isn't located in one specific place. And while worship of God is appropriate and there is nothing wrong with having a building in which to praise and worship God. We need to remember that worship can occur anywhere. No single place of worship is preferred by God.
- In the second section we are reminded that God saw the leadership potential within David and eventually brought him to the position of king of a united Israel. God sees us. God knows us and sees potential within us. We may not be called to be a king or queen, but God has claimed us and has an intention for each of us.
- In the third section we hear hints of the coming messiah. This prophecy was spoken 1000 years before the birth of Jesus. The Israelites had to wait a long time for the unfolding of God's purpose.

As we follow the narrative lectionary (our Scripture readings) this fall, we are being prepared for the coming of the Savior. But like the ancient Israelites who were longing and waiting for the one God promised to them through the prophet Nathan, the time is not yet. It's always hard to wait but in the waiting we become more appreciative of the gift that we are given and that gift is Jesus. Amen