

2 Samuel 7:1-14a  
Psalm 89:20-37

Ephesians 2:11-22  
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

### **Movement: David cannot house God**

For about six weeks now our Old Testament passages have been about the rise of the monarchy in Israel. Israel had been a loose confederacy of twelve tribes. But the people wanted to be like their neighbors, they wanted a King. Saul became the first king, and very early in Saul's reign, we are introduced to David. David killed the giant Goliath with a slingshot and a stone, rescuing Israel from the Philistines. David became a member of Saul's court, playing the lyre whenever Saul had one of his fits of madness. Saul is killed in battle, and David becomes king. David was quite a shrewd politician. He unified the northern kingdom of Israel with the southern kingdom of Judah, and picked Jerusalem as the capitol. Jerusalem was not a part of Israel or Judah. David, by picking this location, was able to remain neutral, and avoid any sense of favoritism to one or the other. David brought the Ark of the Covenant, the holy box that contained the Ten Commandments, to the capitol city of Jerusalem.

Today's story begins with "Now the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him." Things are finally coming together for David. His kingdom has been unified. He looks for the next thing to be done, and he does not have to look far. He decides that God needs a home and decides to build a Temple. Here was David, living in a plush palace, but there was no home for God. Did not God deserve a home just as glorious as David's palace? More than likely David was sincerely pious and wanted a Temple for God, but it was also a shrewd political move. By moving the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and building a Temple in Jerusalem, it

would go a long way to legitimize David's reign. He announces his building plans to his pastor, the prophet Nathan, and Nathan gives his approval and blessing.

However, after a night of prayer, Nathan withdraws the building permit. Nathan being a prophet, a messenger for God, receives a message from God, a message to relay to David. Tell David I am not about to let him build a house for me. I never told him I wanted a house. It is not about David, it is about me. If David does all the building here, then everyone is going to get caught up with his building campaign, his kingdom, and not my kingdom. Before we proceed with your kingdom, we have to get the concept of my sovereignty established in the people's minds. David's kingship is under my kingship. Not so fast, David!

You are also trying to control me. You are mortal; I am immortal; you are creature, I am the creator. I am God. You cannot confine me to a house, in a Temple. I have not lived in a house since I freed you from your slavery in Egypt. I myself moved around in a tent. You cannot limit my movement. You cannot enshrine me. You cannot domesticate me. Your assumptions about who I am, about what pleases me and does not please me, limits me. We need to be careful about linking God's purposes with our political or religious agendas? God is too great for our small assumptions.

Because we are mortal, and God is immortal, we cannot know God's purpose, God's plans, with certainty! Yes we have scripture to guide us in knowing God and God's purpose. But we dare not believe we can know it with certainty. Today we still have enough examples of those who have no doubt as to God's purposes and plans. Every time there is some kind of disaster, some kind of tragedy, there seems to be someone who confidently will declare that this is God's punishment for some kind of sin.

When Katrina destroyed New Orleans, one pastor declared it was because there was going to be a gay parade in New Orleans. When Haiti was destroyed by the earthquake in 2010, a television pastor declared it was because Haiti had made a pact with the devil. Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, claims that God hates gays! This passage warns us against having such a confident reading of the will of God. Abraham Lincoln, in his second inaugural address asserted that "the Almighty has his own purposes." We dare not domesticate God, enshrine God, limit God, with our own ideologies, our own assumptions, for by doing so we control God. God is bigger than our assumptions and our ideologies.

God is constantly surprising us, surprising even the faithful. We are learning new things about God. In the American slavery days, portions of the church declared that there was nothing wrong with slavery. In fact, they claimed that African Americans were not fully human; that it was God's plan that they be slaves. We have changed our minds about divorce in the church. It used to be that if someone was divorced, they could not hold a leadership role in the church. We have changed our mind about women in the church. Again, there was a day when women could not hold leadership positions in the church. Luke Timothy Johnson wrote in his book *The Living Gospel*, "If faith responds to the living God, then faith is an open-ended enterprise, for the living God always moves ahead of us. If theology articulates faith, then theology also is a matter of constant catching up with the work of the God who acts before we do and most often catches us by surprise."

God does a surprising act in this passage. I would imagine that David was disappointed that God did not agree to David's wonderful decision to build a glorious

Temple for God. However, God did surprise David even something greater. God was going to make of David a house, a dynasty, a family lineage of kings and queens. Queen Elizabeth II, the current queen of the United Kingdom is of the House of Windsor, the dynasty of Windsor. God will make of David's lineage a dynasty, the Davidic House.

The surprising part of this promise of a house, for David, is God's declaration, "But I will not take my steadfast love from him." This Davidic Covenant is different from the previous covenants that God had made. If you read the book of Deuteronomy, you will discover the Deuteronomic theology. The Deuteronomic doctrine was: "obey God and all will go well; disobey God, and hardship will come. It is an oversimplification of the ways of God. Nonetheless, it is in the Bible. It is an "if"/"then" thinking. If you obey God, then all will go well. If you disobey God, then hardship will come.

But in this new covenant with David, it is no longer if/then. It is not an obey or else covenant. Rather it is a but covenant: "But I will not take my steadfast love from him." God is making an everlasting covenant, a covenant that is not dependent upon our obedience.

**Tension between "if" and "then," and "however"**