

Prepared by Pastor Sarah Sanderson-Doughty for St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Portland, OR

7 When the king was settled in his palace, and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, 2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "Look! I'm living in a cedar palace, but God's chest is housed in a tent!"

3 Nathan said to the king, "Go ahead and do whatever you are thinking, because the Lord is with you."

4 But that very night the Lord's word came to Nathan: 5 Go to my servant David and tell him: This is what the Lord says: You are not the one to build the temple for me to live in. 6 In fact, I haven't lived in a temple from the day I brought Israel out of Egypt until now. Instead, I have been traveling around in a tent and in a dwelling.

7 Throughout my traveling around with the Israelites, did I ever ask any of Israel's tribal leaders I appointed to shepherd my people: Why haven't you built me a cedar temple?

8 So then, say this to my servant David: This is what the Lord of heavenly forces says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over my people Israel. 9 I've been with you wherever you've gone, and I've eliminated all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great—like the name of the greatest people on earth. 10 I'm going to provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them, as they had been earlier, 11 when I appointed leaders over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

And the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make a dynasty for you. 12 When the time comes for you to die and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your descendant—one of your very own children—to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He will build a temple for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. 14 I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me. Whenever he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod, with blows from human beings. 15 But I will never take my faithful love away from him like I took it away from Saul, whom I set aside in favor of you. 16 Your dynasty and your kingdom will be secured forever before me. [m] Your throne will be established forever.

17 Nathan reported all of these words and this entire vision to David -**Common English Bible**

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David was sitting in his glorious house and it occurred to him that God's abode was a tent, and a tent that had seen better days at that. David, the youngest of his brothers, overlooked by his father, was God's choice as the second king of Israel, while the first king was still on the throne. He was a young shepherd boy when the Prophet Samuel, that boy for whom Hannah prayed, anointed him and God's Spirit filled him. God was with him through many battles, much danger, many hard days... and now God has established him as King in Jerusalem, in a very fine palace. And David is... thankful and wants to give something back to God. His house is pretty great, why not make a house for God, a glorious temple? Or is it rather that David is... anxious, remembering what

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happened to the first king, and trying to secure God in a fixed location to be at the disposal of his kingdom and him... and thereby to secure himself. So many possibilities.

The prophet Nathan initially thinks the plans of David's heart, vague as they were at the time, sound great. He is sure God will approve. After all David is filled with God's Spirit and seems to be thoroughly on God's side. But God has something to say about that. God makes it quite clear to Nathan that David's plans are not God's plans and that, in fact, David would NOT be the one to build a temple. God does intend to secure David, perhaps honoring the deepest desire of David's heart, God intends to build a house... an everlasting household descended from David. A house of people, not cedar nor brick. God's promise to David seems to be more about people than property. And God's word to David, through Nathan, is a reminder of all that God has done on his behalf. It seems that David's legacy is not to be a temple by which he is remembered for all time, but rather the witness of God's work with and through and for a people through a humble man. As David's story continues he gets a bit drunk on his power and claims another man's wife for his own, and arranges to have that man killed when he can't get him to go home and sleep with his wife to cover up her unplanned pregnancy. He falls far short of God's best intentions for people, and certainly for leaders of God's people. And he suffers as a consequence of his unfaithfulness. But God forgives him and keeps the promise made to him. A promise about the people that would descend from him, the dynasty or house that would succeed him. Again, David's story is a story about God, God's work with and through and on behalf of a sinful man. That seems to be the point really.

Now if you're really thinking about this you might be wondering if indeed God kept God's promise to David. Israel has only recently become a nation again and it is not led by a Davidic king. The Davidic line ended badly LONG ago. Many Christians believe that the promise to David, and indeed all the promises of the Hebrew Bible, were fulfilled in the sending of Jesus, that was suggested in our Gospel reading today— did you notice? Jesus the king of kings... though clearly not a king of human design, a Godly king who cares more about people than property. This is why emphasis is placed on David in Jesus' genealogy. Jesus came to initiate the everlasting kingdom promised to David.

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Maybe all this talk of kings and kingdoms is making you squirm. We Americans rejected kingship long ago. And we feminists are disquieted by patriarchy. And we who love our Jewish neighbors are uncomfortable with a Christian appropriation of promises made to Israel. We should tread carefully to be sure.

But I want us to absorb the heart of God's message to David, which, I think, resonates with the heart of God's message through Jesus— what matters most is what God does and who God is... It's less about David. And more about God. It's less about us. And it's more about God.

The scripture and my sermon started in David's house. And here we are in our houses. Comfortable and yet disquieted perhaps that the beautiful sanctuary, what we may think of as our house for God, lovingly constructed and cared for over many years thanks to the generosity and investments of faithful members of St. A's sits mostly empty, isn't being filled for God's praise, and we don't know when it will be safe to gather again. We long to gather in God's house, just as David longed to build God a house. But our building, as precious as it is, isn't God's house. Just as God promised to David to build a household for him, in Christ God has built a household, a temple, a dwelling place... in us, in our hearts, in our relationships with one another. We are that dwelling place, the temple of the Spirit, the household of faith. We, like David, wish things to be different than they currently are. We're grateful for our homes and our health, but it seems there should be more. We'd like to do more. And the message we are getting is, "Wait. And remember what I have done, what I am doing, and trust in what I will do."

And that may be disappointing. I'm sure it was for David. It probably is for us too. But friends, consider all that God has done and is doing, all the ways God has been building a home in and through us. Consider the ways we have been living stones in God's household as we have shared Christ's love with homeless and vulnerable neighbors in the past few months and when we have reached out to one another and neighbors in need in love, when we have done these things we have been the welcoming place in God's house. When we have fed the hungry, we have been the dining room for God's house. When we have offered and participated in learning opportunities, we've been the library. When we've cared for the wee ones, the nursery. Consider all the

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blessings of your lives.... All the struggles you have previously endured and conquered, all the gifts you have been given, all the hope that still flickers in your heart even on the darkest days. God's ways are not our ways. We can't know the mind of God. But we can know that God loves humanity and God's creation. And we can trust that God is working for the good of humanity and creation. And we can set aside our timelines and plans, and let God work through, and in, and for us. We can live by the promise of God.

This sermon was influenced by:

Amy Robertson and Robert Williamson, Jr. "Episode 207: The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:1-17)" on the Bible Worm Podcast. [https://www.biblewormpodcast.com/e/episode-207-the-davidic-covenant-2-samuel-71-17/?fbclid=IwAR3sKmeeSoU7F4KApnEyte6GJcFrItAU1cNIap4\\_HCnp45icFcQf\\_7-l7YQ](https://www.biblewormpodcast.com/e/episode-207-the-davidic-covenant-2-samuel-71-17/?fbclid=IwAR3sKmeeSoU7F4KApnEyte6GJcFrItAU1cNIap4_HCnp45icFcQf_7-l7YQ)