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# God's Faithfulness

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 21 July 2024

2 Samuel 7:1-14 • Ephesians 2:11-22 • Mark 6:30-34,56

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May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

King David has had a long, difficult path to the throne. Anointed by the prophet Samuel, he serves King Saul for a while, but Saul tries to kill him several times. David is forced to flee with a few supporters, but God is with him. Saul, who has not obeyed God's will, sees his fortunes crash around him, and when he is killed in battle, David is made king of Judah. Even then he still has to fight to gain control over Jerusalem and become King of Israel. Among his first acts as king, he brings to Jerusalem the ark of the covenant, the sacred

chest which holds the stone tablets Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, the tablets which bear the Ten Commandments.

Now David is established, his kingdom secure, himself and his family settled in the royal palace. His thoughts turn to God, who has blessed him so greatly, and he conceives the idea of building a great palace for the Lord to live in. But through the prophet Nathan, God tells David that it is not for him to build such a palace; that task will be for David's son. And David gives thanks to God for all God has done for him.

What does this teach us about God?

First, God has his own plans, and we don't know what they are, unless God tells us. It is possible for us to know God, and indeed God encourages us to come closer to him, but our knowledge (while we live on earth, at least) will always be incomplete. In this case, David remembers that during the Exodus, God spoke to Moses from a tent, which moved ahead of the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert. David knows that God is too big to live in any tent, or indeed any mansion, but he looks around him and comes to the not unreasonable conclusion that if he, David, can live in a palace made of cedar (a very fine and costly wood), then so much more should God live in an even grander house; so he's going to build one. But God has other plans, and they do not involve David building the house.

God's plans do not address only the "what" but the "when". David will not build a house for God, but Solomon will. The time was not right when David asked, according to God's plan. And I think we see this in our own lives sometimes. I have said in the past that I sometimes regret not having come to faith in my youth, rather than in my 40s. I think about the many years that I might have served God in his church. But clearly, that would not have been the right time, for reasons which I don't understand, but which must be God's will.

Second, what is David's motive in this wish to build God a house? Is he truly humbling himself and seeking God's will? Or is he perhaps thinking that if he builds God a house, it will bring glory on himself? "Look at me — *God* lives in a house *I* built." Will the house be to God's glory or only to David's? And does David expect God to stay where David puts him? We cannot contain God, or define God according to our own wants and limited ideas. To David's credit, after hearing God's message through Nathan, David prays to God in humble fashion, thanking God for his great favours to him.

And David has it completely backwards: David will not build a house for God. God will build a house for David! God is establishing the throne in Jerusalem for all eternity, starting with David and his offspring, whom we see later is the great King Solomon. David will be great, and his family will be great, and God

will keep his covenant with David and his family as long as they continue to worship God. If David and his family are faithful, God will be faithful, for God always keeps his promises.

This passage teaches us a lot about how God relates to humanity. God is love, and a vital and inseparable part of true love is faithfulness — so as God's love is perfect, so is God's faithfulness perfect. Operating in faithfulness necessarily leads to the idea of covenant or promise. God establishes covenants, or promises, or you might say agreements with humans. Simply put, God makes deals with us. God made a deal with Abraham when he promised that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars or grains of sand. In return, Abraham was to trust in God and follow God's ways and guidance. Here, in today's Gospel, God makes a deal with David, promising that his kingdom will endure forever, through his offspring. You may recall that God had previously had Samuel anoint Saul as king, but Saul disappointed God by not obeying his commands, and so God took the kingdom away from Saul and now gives it to David. And there is a difference in God's promises to the two kings, as we see in God's words (through Nathan) to David:

[Your son] is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. <sup>15</sup> But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me<sup>[b]</sup>; your throne will be established forever. (2 Sam 7:13-16)

God will not do to David's son what he did to Saul, taking his kingdom (and life) away, no matter what he does. God will punish David's son if he does wrong (and we find out later that Solomon does indeed act sinfully), but God will not abandon him. And as we find out much later, in historical terms, a Son born in the line of David indeed still sits on the throne — God's own Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. David's line is not abandoned or disowned by God, through all the history from David's time to our own.

God's promise holds true from that day to this. And for us today, this is a guarantee of God's faithfulness to us. For we also will not be abandoned by God, even if we sin, for we may always turn back in repentance and God will accept us. We who are in God's family are truly blessed. Amen.