

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, ‘I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.’ Nathan said to David, ‘Go, do all that you have in mind; the LORD is with you’ (2 Sam. 7:1-3).

Nathan, the prophet, encouraged David; but that night God spoke to Nathan saying that God did not want David to would build God’s Temple. Instead, God promised four things to David: 1) I will make for you a great name; 2) I will give you rest from all your enemies; 3) I will raise up a son after you and establish his kingdom; and finally God promised that 4) David’s house and kingdom would be made sure forever, David’s throne established forever. Those are some pretty astounding promises: fame, peace, a dynasty, and an eternal kingdom.

God initiates this covenant with David, not because David is better than anyone else, but simply because David is *a man after God’s own* heart: God loves David. That love will be tested when David meets Bathsheba a few chapters later (2 Sam. 11-12), but remember that God makes covenants with faithful people, not perfect people. David was far from perfect, but he was faithful to God: when confronted with his rebellion, David repents and seeks God’s forgiveness, which God grants.

God is faithful to David, fulfilling three of the promises while David lived. David’s name is great: his own people praised David as Israel’s greatest king, and we still study him 3,000 years later. During David’s lifetime, Israel knew peace: God “planted” Israel in her own land and Israel’s neighbors did not “disturb” her or “afflict” her anymore (2 Sam. 7:10). God raised up David’s son, Solomon, to succeed David as King of Israel. At the time of his death, David reflects on God’s faithfulness to him: he has a great name, a peaceful and prosperous nation, and a son to follow him.

But what about the fourth promise that David’s kingdom would endure forever? The clue to the fulfillment of the fourth promise comes at the end of our text. 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. 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 for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever* (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

The pronoun “he” throughout this passage makes it possible for us to read this in two ways. It might be that God speaks of Solomon, David’s son and successor, who built a glorious Temple for God in Jerusalem. God served as a father-figure to Solomon: God gave Solomon guidance and when Solomon made mistakes (marrying foreign wives and worshipping their gods), God punished Solomon, saying: *‘Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your*

servant. Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen’ (1 Kings 11:11-13). God, out of love for David, pledged never to take God’s steadfast love from Solomon, but the kingdom could never be secure in the hands of a sinner: the promise to establish David’s kingdom forever could not happen as long as the descendants of David were rebellious and disobedient.

So, we must consider another interpretation, a more far reaching understanding of the “he” to whom God refers: Jesus Christ. According to Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is a descendent of King David through his earthly father, Joseph. According to Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is a descendant of King David from his mother, Mary. What’s more, seventeen verses in the New Testament refer to Jesus as the “Son of David.” But is it possible for Jesus to be the Son of David if he lived 1,000 years after David? It’s possible because the title “Son of David” is more than a statement of physical genealogy. It is a Messianic title. When people referred to Jesus as the Son of David, they meant Jesus was the long-awaited Deliverer, the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenants and prophecies.

King David himself gives us a forward-looking clue in Psalm 132, as he recalls the everlasting nature of God’s covenant promises: *The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, forevermore, shall sit on your throne.’ For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation: ‘This is my resting-place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless its provisions; I will satisfy its poor with bread. Its priests I will clothe with salvation, and its faithful will shout for joy. There I will cause a horn to sprout up for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one. His enemies I will clothe with disgrace, but on him, his crown will gleam’* (11-18).

This Anointed One who will establish the eternal throne of David. The Anointed One, the Messiah, is Jesus Christ in whom God came to dwell with us and to secure the throne of David as the beginning of God’s eternal kingdom. It is Jesus, God’s Own Son, who would “build a house for God’s name” within the heart of every believer. Although sinless, Jesus did suffer the “blows inflicted by human beings,” dying on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and rising again on Easter morning to give us the promise of a new and eternal life with God. In this way, Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God which has no end, fulfilling the promise that the line and house of David would reign forever.

Moreover, this eternal Kingdom is open to all who hear and believe and obey God’s Word, not just the people of Israel. In Acts 15, after Paul’s testimony of wonders wrought among the Gentiles, James addressed the council: *Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: “‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent [Tabernacle]. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will*

restore it, that the rest of humankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ — that have been known for ages” (15:14-18). The question before the Council was one of Gentile participation in the church of Jesus Christ. James states unequivocally that it is God’s purpose to bless the Gentiles as well as Israel, but in their order: God will visit the Gentiles first “to take out of them a people for God’s name” and then God will rebuild the “fallen tent,” God’s holy nation, the Tabernacle that is the people of Israel.

In this, then, we discover the sign of God’s promise to us. David had his throne and Solomon had the Temple in Jerusalem to remind them of God’s enduring faithfulness; but after the Romans destroyed the palace and the Temple (70 A.D.), the people of Israel had no sign and no sense that God remained with them. They had only the words of the prophets. Ezekiel looks to the future of God’s people and speaks God’s word when he says: *I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them and that shall be my people and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall have one Shepherd* (Ezek. 34:23). Jeremiah stresses that the coming king will fulfill the condition of righteousness: *Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely.*’ (Jer. 33:21, 25-26).

Isaiah saw the glory of the Son of David more clearly than anyone and virtually identified him as God’s Own: *For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called ‘Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’ Of the increase of his government there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness rom this tome forth and forevermore* (Isa. 9:6-7). The surety of the covenant with David lies ultimately in the fact that God Himself came as king to sit upon the throne. This is confirmed when the angel announces to Mary that she will conceive and bear a son: *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* (Luke 1:32-34). The Bible teaches, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the promise to David that his descendants would rule forever is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As the Son of David (Rom. 1:3) and the Lord of David (Matt. 22:45), Jesus now reigns as king in heaven (1 Cor. 15:25) over the true house of Israel, God’s people, the Church.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for my church and for the people who are part of it. I’m grateful to be reminded each Sunday of who I want to be, who you want me to be, and who you want us to be together. Keep us faithful to you and to the mission you have given us. Help our lives better reflect your love, both as individuals and as a community. Let our lives show your love and caring so that many people who need you will find you. Help my living always be a credit to my church and a sign of my faith in you. Amen.

The Covenant with David

Sunday, October 9, 2016

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

2 Samuel 7:1-17

King David wanted to build God a house, a magnificent temple! David himself, lived in a splendid palace, but the Lord God still lived in a tent; it had been that way since God brought God’s people out of slavery in Egypt. By day God went before the people as a cloud, to shield them from the desert sun, and by night God appeared as a pillar of fire over the tent of meeting, also called the Tabernacle. For forty years God lived among God’s people until finally they reached the Promised Land of Canaan. This is the land God promised to Abraham generations before, and now the Israelites, a strong and unified people thanks to the Law, crossed the Jordan River, ready to claim their inheritance.

But the Canaanites lived in the land of Canaan, and they didn’t really want to give up their land. So Israel fought its way through the Promised Land, led first by Joshua and later by a series of Judges whom God raised up to lead Israel when she needed help. God remained their faithful King throughout this time, and the Israelites remained God’s special people even though their faithfulness to God often wavered. God supported the Israelites as they claimed the land God promised them, and provided them with Prophets who spoke God’s Word to God’s people.

Over time, as the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, they began to trade with them, associate with them, learn their customs, and even to intermarry with them. And so it was that one day the people approached the prophet Samuel with a request: they wanted a human king *like all the other nations* (1 Sam. 8:5; 20). God had been for generations; but now they wanted a real live, flesh-and-blood king that they could see and speak to, a king to govern them and lead them into battle. They wanted a king like their Canaanite neighbors.

So God chose Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, to be Israel’s king. Samuel anointed Saul, and Saul ruled well for a time. Saul fought many battles and made Israel strong: but soon Saul, feeling rather confident and full of himself, forgot God and started doing things his own way. For this disobedience, Saul lost the throne to David, a shepherd boy from the tribe of Judah.

David is called *a man after God’s own heart* (1 Sam. 13:14), for David loved the Lord and followed God’s ways. Samuel anointed David as Saul’s heir, and Scripture says that the Spirit of the LORD fell “mightily” upon David (1 Sam. 16:13). David succeeded Saul, and with God’s help David conquered all of Israel’s enemies and made Israel a great nation. Our text begins when Israel is finally at peace, her borders expanded, her enemies at bay, the nation at the height of its power. *Now when the*