

A Sermon by Rev. Eric Dillenbeck
Fairmount Presbyterian Church
July 26, 2009
A Home for God or at Home with God?
Text: 2 Samuel 7:1-16

Before long, King David made himself at home and God gave him peace from all his enemies. Then one day King David said to Nathan the prophet, "Look at this: Here I am, comfortable in a luxurious house of cedar, and the Ark of the Covenant sits in a plain tent."

Nathan told the king, "Whatever is on your heart, go and do it. God is with you."

But that night, the word of God came to Nathan saying,
"Go and tell my servant David: This is God's word on the matter: You're going to build a 'house' for me to live in? Why, I haven't lived in a 'house' from the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt till now. All that time I've moved about with nothing but a tent. And in all my travels with Israel, did I ever ask any of the leaders I commanded to shepherd Israel, 'Why haven't you built me a house of cedar?'"

"So here is what you are to tell my servant David: The Lord of Hosts has this word for you: I took you from the pasture, tagging along after sheep, and made you prince over my people Israel. I was with you everywhere you went and mowed your enemies down before you. Now I'm making you famous, to be ranked with the great names on earth.

And I'm going to set aside a place for my people Israel and plant them there so they'll have their own home and not be knocked around any more. Nor will evil men afflict you as they always have, even during the days I set judges over my people Israel. Finally, I'm going to give you peace from all your enemies.

"Furthermore, God has this message for you: God will build you a house! When your life is complete and you're buried with your ancestors, then I'll raise up your child, your own flesh and blood, to succeed you, and I'll firmly establish his rule. He will build a house to honor me, and I will guarantee his kingdom's rule permanently. I'll be a parent to him, and he'll be a son to me. When he does wrong, I'll discipline him in the usual ways, the pitfalls and obstacles of this mortal life. But I'll never remove my gracious love from him, as I removed it from Saul, who preceded you and whom I most certainly did remove. Your family and your kingdom are permanently secured. I'm keeping my eye on them! And your royal throne will always be there, rock solid."

Nathan gave David a complete and accurate account of everything he heard and saw in the vision.

“A Home for God or at Home in God”

I was riding in the car this week when I heard a familiar song on the radio. It was by Chris Daughtry, who rose to fame through the juggernaut that is American Idol. Now, I usually listen to NPR so I moved to turn the station, but for some reason his song, which I have heard a million times, caught me by surprise.

The song, called HOME, is on his first CD. The beginning of the chorus goes something like this:

Well I'm going home,
Back to the place where I belong,
And where your love has been enough for me.

I am not sure, but I think my vacation coupled with realizing that I have been a part of this family of faith for a year made me sappy.

As we pulled into the driveway of our green house after spending time visiting with family and friends in Atlanta I was struck by how our place of lodging has transitioned from feeling so strange and foreign to feeling like home.

When I returned to worship last week I looked out and realized that I recognized a lot of the faces and knew a lot of the names and some of the stories... Home... That is a good feeling in the life of a pastor.

And as I turned my attention to our text for today's worship I found that King David was dealing with very similar feelings. Here he was, surrounded by his "luxurious house of Cedar" – his palace – which was brand new in a land that was brand new to his people.

For David and the Israelites, the memory of wandering in the desert for forty years and then waging war to claim the land God promised was still fresh in their minds. As they settle in Jerusalem, peace has just broken out around them for the first time in a long time and now David, the King of the Israelites, was able to make himself at home. He was able to rest,
catch his breath
and take stock.

As he does, he realizes that while he is surrounded by the lap of luxury, his God, who made all this possible, resides in the same humble tent. David decides this has to change and begins to plan for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, a new more permanent home for God.

As David is dreaming about the creation of the temple in Jerusalem, the rest of Israel is getting nervous about the power being consolidated in this city. Jerusalem was already a center of commerce and wealth before David made this the home of the King. Now, not only was the city the center of wealth, it was also political powerbase for the region.

With David's dreams of the temple, a permanent home for God, Jerusalem would also become the most significant religious center for the Israelites. That's a lot of power consolidated in one place in a very short period of time. Biblical historians have helped us know that many saw this consolidation as a power play by David to ensure his future as king which threatened the continued peace in Israel.

As David dreams and others dread, the Prophet Nathan listens for the voice of God and understands that God has other plans.

God has no intention of allowing David to construct a temple, of allowing David to limit God's freedom. Don't misunderstand God here. God is not opposed to the temple. In fact God tells Nathan that David's son, Solomon, will actually build the temple. The point here is that David is not supposed to build the temple. As David is luxuriating in his palace, God is reminding David, and us, that we do not create a home for God, but find our home in God.

For as long as the people can remember, God has moved freely among and on behalf of God's people: first as pillars and cloud and fire, then in the Arc of the Covenant, which was carried with the people as they went into battle, and as they traversed the promised land.

Now we see, in this prophecy that God is at work again, promising and creating a home, a future for David and through David, for all God's people. Nathan tells David that God has promised to build him a house, not a physical home, but a more powerful home: a covenant to David and to all of David's descendents; a covenant in which God promises to "keep my eyes on them!" and preserve David's throne forever.

Many theologians consider this the most important theological claim in the book of Samuel if not in the entire Old Testament. From this covenant of love and grace with David and ALL of David's descendents comes our belief that we are saved, not because we somehow earned God's love, but because God first loved us. We

baptized Andrew today in that belief. Andrew did not earn God's grace, none of us have. It comes to us as a gift.

As David is busy dreaming about the home he will create for God, God is at work, reminding David that God's vision is bigger than him. God is reminding David that it is not up to us to create a home for God because God already has a home in the hearts and in the lives of all God's people. Yes, a temple will be built, but that will not be because WE have sensed a need, but because God desires the temple to be built. In this covenant, God is at work, making a home for us, making a future for all people everywhere.

Whether we know it or not, as we rest in our houses of Cedar, we have a tendency to, like David, search for ways to control God. We don't try and build temples, but we become comfortable with our surroundings and forget to trust in and listen for God's still small voice. We each have our own ways of controlling God's access to our lives. I won't pretend to list all of them

As a pastor and as a congregation we spend lots of time praying about and looking for opportunities to make use of and care for the temple, or church, we enjoy here in this place and forget that in this covenant made with David, we are reminded that God's true home is within God's people and that our true home is IN GOD.