

**Dec. 20, 2020**

**First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16**

Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in?’”

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The answer is... NO. No, you will not build ME a house. But I will establish your house, and a kingdom for you that will reign forever and ever.

Eventually God will commission the temple to be built, but it will not be built by David, a man of blood. But rather by his son, a man of peace.

David, as king, fought many wars and spilled a lot of blood. And in the temple there will also be blood spilled and sacrificed, so I’m just a little perplexed why it has to work this way, but only a little bit perplexed.

After all, Moses would not be allowed to take God’s people into the Holy Land. It would fall to Moses’ successor, Joshua (Yeshua), a type of Christ who even bears the same name, Jesus. (Jesus is the Greek for Yeshua/Joshua.)

Solomon, too; his name translates literally into “Man of Peace” and as he is also known for his wisdom, and as he too is “a Son of David,” we can see in him a type of Christ. And that might be the very reason that the temple will be established... But NOT by David... but by David’s son. The man of peace.

But for our message today, I don’t wish to push David aside and focus too quickly on the Christ figure because I think there is a lesson for us in this story as it stands.

David is looking out of his palace windows, and down on the rock of Mount Moriah, where the tabernacle houses the ark of the covenant. And he ponders the situation. I think David’s thoughts are noble... “Here I am living secure in a

palace of stone and cedar, while the Ark of the Lord dwells in a tent. A very beautiful tent to be sure, but... a tent, nevertheless.”

Perhaps with the same enthusiasm of St. Peter (when on top of the mount of transfiguration, he thinks that it would be a good idea to build shelters for Moses and Elijah), David arrives at the idea that it’s probably high time that we should give the Ark of the Lord permanent residence in a temple that would rival all other temples and even all other palaces. For the Lord deserves our best work.

I think you will find that later on, too, when David does what he can to get the building project underway. David secures for the Temple project 100 thousand talents of gold, 1 million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood, and stone... and you can add to it... You have many workers, masons and stone cutters, as well as those skilled in working with gold and silver, bronze and iron. Craftsmen beyond number. Now, begin the work, he tells Solomon. And the Lord be with you.

So yes, I think David had in mind a good thing. And when he runs it by Nathan, who was high priest, it’s clear that the idea appealed also to him... Great Idea! God’s going to love it... I can certainly understand Nathan’s reaction. THIS is a GREAT IDEA. It seems obvious.

But even Nathan jumps the gun, so to speak. That phrase comes from racing and the use of a starter’s pistol. If you anticipated the “bang” and took off too soon, you “jumped the gun,” meaning you started the race before you were allowed to move. This usually meant you were disqualified.

I’ve got to say, the problem seems to be more Nathan’s than David’s. Both men make assumptions about how God would receive the idea. But David takes the idea to Nathan, who welcomes it without actually conferring with God on the matter.

When Nathan falls asleep that night, Nathan gets a theophany... God shows up in his dream and asks him... If “I’ve ever, in all the time since I took you out of Egypt and dwelt with you, have I ever-- spoken to any of Israel’s leaders or even hinted that I would like to have a house of stone and wood to dwell in? hmmm?”

Aaaa...

“No. That's right. I don't require such things,” God says. “Now... tell David this: You are not to be the one to build me a house. I have other plans.”

I think it makes Nathan look a little sheepish when he has to return to David with a “stop work order” in his hands.

What I want you to take notice of is how David handles the news that his plans have to be put on hold. Not just on hold... but cancelled.

How do you handle those times when your plans are frustrated, and you don't get what you want? Even when it seems to you like a great idea, so that even God should approve?

David handled his disappointment with humility, I think. “I don't deserve to be in this privileged position. Not me, nor my family. We were humble shepherds. Now I dwell in a palace and you tell me that you shall do even more for me and even for my name's sake and family... I would have been glad to repay you with the grandest of temples. But that is not what you want from me.”

What is it that God wants from us?

When things do not go the way we hoped or planned, then what? When God closes a door, then what?

We continue to rejoice. Praise God and move on in a new direction. Rather than complain about what we can't do, we should focus on what we *can* do and give glory to God.

Ultimately even the temple made of stone and wood came to an end. But the fragile and mobile tabernacle of *our hearts and minds* is where God has chosen to dwell -- making us the most secure of all people.

Believe.

AMEN.