

WE WORSHIP
Sermon for the 4th Sunday in Advent 2020
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading read before 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16: ¹ **When the king settled in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his neighbouring enemies,** ² **the king told Nathan the prophet, “Look! I am living in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God remains inside the curtains of a tent.”**

³ **Nathan told the king: “Go and do whatever you have in mind! For the LORD is with you.”**

⁴ **However, that night the Word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: ⁵ “Go and tell My servant David: ‘This is what the LORD has said: “Are you the one who will build a house for Me to live in? ⁶ For I have not lived in a house since I brought the Israelites up from Egypt, until this time. Instead, I have been moving about in a tent as a dwelling. ⁷ Wherever I have moved about with all the Israelites, have I ever spoken a Word to anyone from the tribes of Israel whom I had commanded to shepherd My people Israel, to ask: ‘Why have you not built a house of cedar for Me?’”’ ⁸ Now therefore, this is what you shall tell My servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of hosts has said: “I have taken you from the pasture where you were following the sheep to be a leader over My people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies who were in front of you. I shall make a great name for you, like the names of the greatest men on the earth. ¹⁰ I shall provide a place for My people Israel and plant them, so that they may live in a place of their own and not be disturbed any longer. Wicked people will no longer oppress them as they used to do at the beginning, ¹¹ since the time when I appointed judges over My people Israel. I shall give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also tells you that the LORD will make a house for you... ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will stand firm before you for ever. Your throne will be established for ever.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are coming close to the end of Advent. This coming Thursday, when the sun goes down, it will be Christmas Eve and Advent will be over.

It has been an interesting year with many struggles, but that hasn't stopped the world outside these walls from hustling and bustling, preparing for Christmas, especially this past four weeks. It has been reported that billions will be spent by Australians getting into the Christmas cheer. Business owners, of course, hope that we shall buy lots of presents for our loved ones. Since Easter was very quiet this year, there appears to be more enthusiasm to “make a better go at the Christmas cheer.”

Inside the church, Advent is different. Jesus has promised that He will soon come again¹ and so we wait. We wait with prayer. We wait with comfort. We wait with joy. Today, we are given a chance to learn about waiting with worship. Our text tells us about a conversation between King David, the prophet Nathan, and the LORD Himself. The topic of the conversation is God's house, and this conversation can teach us quite a bit about worship.

Seven and a half years after being anointed as king of Israel in Hebron, David had defeated the Jebusites, a Canaanite tribe. David had captured their capital city and given it a new name, Jerusalem. He made Jerusalem his new capital.

Before they were captured, when the Jebusites had lived there, they had worshipped Baal. Baal worship was an abomination of cultic prostitution and idolatry. How does one cleanse a city that has been defiled in such a way? David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and set it in its place inside the tent that David had put up for it. He brought in the name and the presence of the LORD of hosts (2 Samuel 6).

God blessed David's reign in Jerusalem. The Twelve Tribes united together under David. With the help of God, David had defeated the enemies of Israel, and soon there was peace. God had established the nation of Israel with David as its king.

¹ Revelation 22:20

One day, King David looked out of the window of his new palace in Jerusalem and was struck by the fact that while he lived in luxury, the Lord still dwelt in a humble tent. This was a theological issue, so David talked to the prophet Nathan. **The king told Nathan the prophet, “Look! I am living in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God remains inside the curtains of a tent.”**

³ Nathan told the king: “Go and do whatever you have in mind! For the LORD is with you.”

King David was a builder. He had built an army, a kingdom, a city, and a palace. He was also a gifted composer and musician. He wrote many Psalms. Anyone who has been privileged to be involved in the building of a new church knows the joy, excitement, and anticipation of being involved in such a worthy undertaking. One can easily imagine that David, being too excited to sleep, would busy himself with the work of setting out plans for the new temple. However, that same night, the Word of the Lord came to Nathan, instructing him to tell King David that he was not permitted to build the temple.

This indeed must have marked one of the greatest disappointments in King David’s remarkable life. The LORD Himself said that David would not have the privilege of building the temple. David, whose liturgical compositions are still sung in the Church today, must have been devastated. Through the prophet Nathan, the LORD told David, **“For I have not lived in a house since I brought the Israelites up from Egypt, until this time. Instead, I have been moving about in a tent as a dwelling.”** It wasn’t that the LORD was punishing David for something in his past. And it wasn’t that He had no use for David - it was just that it was not the LORD’s plan that David builds a temple for Him. He had other things for David to do. But these words also teach something else. These words teach David **and us** that it is God who determines how He reveals Himself to His people.

The pagans who had lived in the city before David had come along and with the LORD’s help had conquered it, thought that worship was all about what they did for their god – how they could get closer to their god – how they could earn his favour. They even tried to entertain their god with obscene actions in the hope that gods and goddesses would in turn bless them with fertility.

The worship of the true God is totally different. It is about what God does for us. It is about how God comes to us and reveals Himself to us. It is about how God Himself has paid the price that has earned our favour with Him.

In our text, God tells David that He will be with him in an unusual way. At first, the reading seems to be all about how God will bless David, but eventually, there is more. It is not only about how God had blessed David but about how God blesses the entire world.

Through Nathan, He said, **“I shall make a great name for you, like the names of the greatest men on the earth. ¹⁰ I shall provide a place for My people Israel and plant them, so that they may live in a place of their own and not be disturbed any longer. Wicked people will no longer oppress them as they used to do at the beginning, ¹¹ since the time when I appointed judges over My people Israel. I shall give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also tells you that the LORD will make a house for you... ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will stand firm before you for ever. Your throne will be established for ever.”**

When God speaks of a throne being established forever, He is speaking of much more than the dynasty of King David. He is talking about bringing His gifts to us in a most unusual way. Remember these familiar words? *“⁴ Joseph also went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to the city of David in Judea, which is called Bethlehem, because he belonged to the house and line of David, ⁵ to register himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him and who was expecting a child,”* (Luke 2:4-5).

God’s promise of an eternal kingdom and steadfast love would ultimately be fulfilled in this Child of Mary, who bore the iniquity of us all and in our stead was disciplined with the rod of men and crucified. This is the One who is both David’s Son and David’s Lord.

God determines how He comes to us in worship. He once came as a baby in order to take our place. He lived the perfect life on our behalf and died so that we may live forever.² He has risen so that we may live with Him.³ Now we wait for Him to come to us one last time. As we wait for that final day, He comes to us in Word and Sacrament to be with us. We would not choose such simple means. We would have Him come in a manner that is more impressive – more to our liking. Nevertheless, it is God who determines how He reveals Himself to His people.

² 2 Corinthians 5:15

³ Romans 6:8-11

How did David respond? He understood that God had chosen to reveal Himself in the Tabernacle and Ark. He went into the humble tent where the Lord GOD had revealed Himself. There he sat down and prayed God's own words back to Him. David thanked the Lord GOD for being with him thus far in his life as king. He thanked the Lord GOD for redeeming His people Israel from Egypt and its gods with the promise that they would be His people forever. He thanked the Lord GOD for promising to establish an eternal house for David. On the basis of the Lord GOD's words, David found the courage and strength to conclude his prayer by asking, "*Please proceed to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue in Your presence for ever! For You, O Lord GOD, have promised it and, with Your blessing, the house of Your servant will be blessed for ever*" (2 Samuel 7:29).

From this event in David's life, we learn that God comes to us in ways that **He** chooses. We learn that somehow from David's sinful flesh will come forth the sinless One of God. We learn that the sinless One of God will establish an eternal throne.

We who now sit before the Altar of the Lord know that this sinless one is Jesus. We know that He has established an eternal throne with His suffering and death on the cross. We know that true worship is about Him coming to us with His gifts. We know that while we wait, this sinless Jesus comes to us in, with, and under bread and wine. He comes to us in His Word.

Here we sit in God's house, where His Word and Spirit gives us the courage and strength to pray, give thanks, confess the faith, and ask the Him to bless us, our families, and His Church so that we may dwell in His presence forever. In our Advent and Christmas worship, like David, we shall say back to God what He has revealed to us through His saving deeds and Word. In creed, prayers, and hymns, we confess and praise God the Father for sending His Son to live, die, and rise again to atone for our sins and give us eternal life.

While we wait, we worship. Worship is not about what we do for God. It is about the God who reveals Himself to us and serves us. He serves us with the means of His Word and Sacrament to strengthen us in our faith until that day when the world ends, and our Lord Jesus reveals Himself to take us home with Him. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Heavenly Father, all things in heaven and on earth reveal Your glory and show clearly what You have done. But we now thank You in particular for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the salvation You have provided for all people through His sacrificial obedience. We confidently bring our prayers before You in His loving name.

We stand before You with repentant hearts. We acknowledge our many sins. Forgive us for Jesus' sake. Make us more alert to both right and wrong before You. Deliver us from our pet sins, and from those that continually cause us to fall. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, purify the words we speak, and guide everything we do in obedience to Jesus. Heal and renew us. Assure us of Your forgiveness through Jesus' holy, priestly work, that we may possess Your peace, which is beyond all human understanding.

We pray for all people everywhere. Let Your Holy Spirit rule in every home and school, in every shop and office, and in every area of labour and industry. Open the eyes of the nations that people everywhere may see Your glory. Overthrow those who oppose the Gospel of Your Son. Support all who are persecuted for His sake, and prosper all who love Your truth. Be with the fatherless, the homeless, and the comfortless, and lead them to trust You in all their troubles. Send them help that will draw them to You, and will lead them to confess the name of Jesus.

Make Your face to shine on the wounded in spirit, the sick in mind, and the distressed in heart. Protect and bless with Your presence all travelers, and all who are away from home in any service or calling. We pray for captives and prisoners, for the depressed and the lonely, and for all in danger of body and soul. Comfort them with Your presence and help. Be gracious to those among us who are sick and aged, to those who are suffering, to those who are bereaved and those who are dying. Give them all the perfect peace that Jesus has won for them.

Make our hearts a fit dwelling-place for Your Son, that we may know the joy of His presence, and the blessing of following in His steps. And finally give us the glorious crown You have promised to those who cling to Him in firm and patient faith, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

¹ When the king settled in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his neighbouring enemies, ² the king told Nathan the prophet, “Look! I am living in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God remains inside the curtains of a tent.”

³ Nathan told the king: “Go and do whatever you have in mind! For the LORD is with you.”

⁴ However, that night the Word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: ⁵ “Go and tell My servant David: ‘This is what the LORD has said: “Are you the one who will build a house for Me to live in?’ ⁶ For I have not lived in a house since I brought the Israelites up from Egypt, until this time. Instead, I have been moving about in a tent as a dwelling. ⁷ Wherever I have moved about with all the Israelites, have I ever spoken a Word to anyone from the tribes of Israel whom I had commanded to shepherd My people Israel, to ask: ‘Why have you not built a house of cedar for Me?’”’ ⁸ Now therefore, this is what you shall tell My servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of hosts has said: “I have taken you from the pasture where you were following the sheep to be a leader over My people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies who were in front of you. I shall make a great name for you, like the names of the greatest men on the earth. ¹⁰ I shall provide a place for My people Israel and plant them, so that they may live in a place of their own and not be disturbed any longer. Wicked people will no longer oppress them as they used to do at the beginning, ¹¹ since the time when I appointed judges over My people Israel. I shall give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also tells you that the LORD will make a house for you... ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will stand firm before you for ever. Your throne will be established for ever.”’

Romans 16:25-27

²⁵ To Him who can make you strong according to my Good News and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that has been kept in silence for long ages, ²⁶ but has now been revealed and made known through the writings of the prophets, as the eternal God has commanded, that all the nations may be

obedient by believing, ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be glory for ever! Amen.

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called “Nazareth,” ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man by the name of Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ When the angel entered her home, he said, “Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ She was greatly troubled at what he said and was wondering what kind of greeting this was. ³⁰ The angel told her: “Stop being afraid, Mary! For you have found favour with God. ³¹ You see: you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a Son and you shall call His name ‘Jesus.’ ³² He will be great and will be called ‘the Son of the Most High.’ Moreover, the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ He will reign over the family of Jacob for ever and there will be no end of His kingdom.”

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, “How will this be, since I am not living with a husband?”

³⁵ The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the Power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, also the Holy One who is conceived will be called ‘the Son of God.’ ³⁶ In addition, look! Your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month for her, whom people used to call barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

³⁸ Mary answered, “Look! I am the Lord’s servant. May it happen to me as you have said!”

Then the angel left her.