

October 22, 2017

Lesson 8: God's Covenant with David

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7: 1-6, 8-10, 12-16

Context:

Today we move from the early covenant of God's people in Exodus to God's covenant with those who ruled God's people. Of all the kings recorded in Israelite history, David is perhaps the most celebrated and well known. His rise to power started in the pastures leading his father's flock of sheep to a palace in Jerusalem where he lived in wealth and luxury. The story cannot even be qualified as a "rags to riches story" like Horatio Algiers or the "self-made men" of the Gilded Age in America. Instead, David is chosen by God to be the king of God's people.

As such, David wanted to give back to God by building a temple. This temple would show his legitimacy as king and would also give glory to the reign by associating him with the grandeur of a temple. In the midst of this discussion with God's prophet Nathan, there is the revelation that God does not want this to happen. God will be with David throughout his reign, and his heirs will be the one that establishes a throne forever. David doesn't have to build a temple for God; instead God will bless him and continue to bless all the people God has created.

It has been said by scholars that this chapter in 2 Samuel is one of the most important in the Old Testament. In the Mosaic understanding of the faith, it was believed that Israel's obedience would impact God's inclinations towards them.¹ Here, God makes the covenant with David that God will always take care of David and David's family. God will even raise up someone from David's house who will reign forever and establish God's kingdom. There is a clear articulation that people will be "justified by grace" in which the "works" or "promises" of David and Israel are not the deciding factors about God's love.² Instead, God's love is unconditional and will always be with the people.

Another interesting note about this passage is that we never hear that the descendant is Solomon. Of course, the story is recorded to tell of why the temple is built and how even Solomon's "wandering" did not lead to God's abandonment. But we know of another descendant who came from David's line and established a kingdom; our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He came so that all may live and that all may know God's unconditionally love. God established a permanent temple through Jesus who wandered about and taught that God's grace and mercy is available to all people.

Application:

When I read this story, I was struck by David's zeal in wanting to build a temple for God. Of course there was personal devotion mixed in with some political zeal. David knew that some of his own political authority needed legitimacy in being a divinely appointed king. Otherwise, he was just another king who took the throne from the king God had chosen. A grand temple built to honor God would certainly render him as loyal

¹ Walter Brueggemann, "First and Second Samuel," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 1990), 257.

² *Ibid.*, 257.

to God and establish his reign as successful.

As I read this passage, I thought about all the times we do things that we think will impress God. If I make this step, take this position, or work hard enough I will please God. It's a little game we play with ourselves thinking that somehow we can earn God's love or put another jewel in our crown. It comes even in some ways that we do ministry. We think that it's about the exotic foreign mission trip to go teach others about Jesus or the plans we have to "bring others to Christ" by this or that ministry. The focus isn't so much on what God is doing, but on what we can do through our own focus.

In this text though, we are reminded that thankfully our worth is not measured in what we are able to do or in what we think is pleasing to God. God will love us in spite of ourselves. And God will always be with us and with those who come after us.

It is also a reminder to us that we don't bring God anywhere. God is at work all around us and sometimes even in spite of us. I am always humbled to hear moments in which people realize that doing ministry is just as much about receiving as it is giving. And I myself have been a recipient and realize that maybe what I just need to do is receive. God will work out the rest.

Do you take times to rest in God and trust that you are enough? Sometimes I think I struggle with that and hear others do the same. We could always do more, look better, or try to be the best in our field or workplace at the expense of others. Maybe the best thing we can do is simply take stock and remember that God is at work around us. We aren't called to save anyone or think that we are in a contest to show who is the most loyal to God. God will use us just as we are and may even use us as the foundation for whatever comes next.

I recently had a good conversation with a colleague on our ministry team about how we trick ourselves into overanalyzing our own ministry and how sometimes we think what people are looking for is perfection. When in reality, what binds us to others is our vulnerability and humanity. Not that we shouldn't prepare or do our jobs well, but sometimes we need to trust that God is at work through us. Perfection isn't as important as it is to show up and see God even in the mistakes or things that don't go according to plan. In fact, that's even where God may do the best work of the Kingdom.

Rev. E. Hunter Pugh

Associate Pastor
First United Methodist Church
1380 W. Main St.
Dothan, AL 36301
Office (334) 793-3555 ext. 240
E-mail: hunter@fumcdothan.org

