

Fourth Week of Advent

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Date: 24 December 2017

[0:00] Thank you.

And there is some key differences between Baptist preaching and Anglican preaching. One of them is that the average time for the Baptist sermon is about an hour.

Which means that that's the average. There's plenty of them that run well over. The other thing is that I've learned, I've developed the barriers, the strictures to actually staying behind a pulpit.

Which is not necessarily a Baptist tendency either. We had one gentleman, Brother Mike, who would often come and preach to us. And that man would, he was a shorter guy.

But he had a vertical leap of like, I think four feet in the air. The man would almost levitate. And he would jump up onto pews and run up and forth down the pews.

[1:28] And sometimes, maybe, and you can ask Corleen, am I telling the truth here? Sometimes he'd try to jump up a few rows of pews and get going and kind of proclaim the word boldly.

You were kind of sometimes baptized with saliva in a way that was reminiscent of some of the ways that Moses conducted worship.

But hopefully, when Caleb authorized me to preach, I said, you know, I'll fill in this for you. I didn't think about the fact that I think some of those limitations are lifted. And then we got an improvement.

There's wheels on this thing. Maybe Jim can probably jury-rig a motor up here. But this is a weird little service because it's a weird arrangement of the calendar.

For those of us that are in the anti-VA word that I'm not going to say until the sun goes down, and the ones, we are the Advent Police.

[2:32] We want us to make sure that everybody is penitential today until, you know, 5 o'clock in the evening. And then we'll cut loose.

But in a sense, it kind of feels like a lost cause because our minds are already kind of at the Christmas celebration phase. We're really minutes away from celebrating Christmas.

Most of our minds are on the cooking that we have to do, last-minute arrangements. There may be reports of reindeer hooves out there.

So our minds are a little distracted. But this is the last Sunday of Advent. And we're going to look at what I find to be a very interesting lectionary reading in 2 Samuel.

So if we can turn to 2 Samuel 7, if you brought your Bible with you. You know, I had an idea about the sermon that I wanted to preach. And then the Spirit spoke to me, which usually happens.

[3:38] I never get the sermon that I want to start out preaching. I always get something different. But the beauty of the lectionary is that it pulls from all parts of the Scripture to tell us the Gospel story.

If you're attending either our adult or teen Sunday schools, you've been hearing a lot about the Anglican practice of reading Scripture canonically. It means we read Scripture within its context.

We recognize that all books of the Bible come together to tell the same story about who Christ is. That's why as we come to today's Old Testament reading, we must remember two things.

We must remember it's part of the same account given in the rest of the Bible. It doesn't exist by itself. Secondly, we have to remember that verses 1-17 of chapter 7 don't occur in isolation from the rest of the story of David.

Here we see the chronicler in 2 Samuel prophetically recognize the arrival of a son of David whose kingdom will have no end.

[4:54] Yet there's always some problems with prophecy. Prophecy is a tricky business. Because usually, I know, it's one of the, for some, it is one of a preacher's worst fear kind of to touch on prophecy.

Because one of the issues with prophecy is that it's mysterious. Usually when a prophecy is given about future descendants of somebody, there's one prophecy given, but it touches on near

descendants and far descendants.

So you're stuck trying to figure out who exactly is being referred to with each phrase. This happens over and over again. So when we come to this section here, we understood, even as I read it, I could hear amens and see nine heads.

We understood that this is a prophecy about the coming of Jesus. We also recognize that there are passages, there are parts about this prophecy that cannot refer to Jesus. For instance, if you look at verse 14, you'll see God speak about what will happen when the son of David commits iniquity. And we know that that can't speak about Jesus because Jesus was perfect and committed no sin. Therefore, this part of the prophecy must refer to another son of David, maybe Solomon, maybe Rehoboam, maybe Abijah, maybe one along those lines.

[6:23] As I was preparing this, I actually took one of my boredom breaks, which is just when my mind locks down and I find myself browsing all over the internet. I'm sure that Cal is very disciplined and never does such a thing.

But the minute I did that, Sam Albury, a solid Anglican out of England, tweeted out this, Matthew's genealogy includes the outcast, the scandalous, and the foreigner.

These are the parts that we talk about when we see the son of David who will commit iniquity.

Albury continues, the family that Jesus comes from anticipates the family he has come for.

In the same way we see that there are parts of this prophecy that cannot refer to Jesus, we see that most of this prophecy cannot refer to Solomon, cannot refer to Rehoboam, cannot refer to Abijah, because there's no way they could ever fulfill them.

Certainly we do not look over to Jerusalem right now and see a son of David sitting on the throne.

The dynasty of David does not rule in Jerusalem right now.

[7:42] If you look over in England you can see somebody from the house of Windsor sitting on the throne. You can see that that line has continued to this day from when it started. We can't say the same thing about David.

So the spirit here has to be speaking about one greater. When we read this within the canon we understand that this son is Jesus. It's so clear that the author of Hebrews actually pulls directly from this passage when in Hebrews 1:5 in order to establish that Jesus is the son of God he says I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

Now more about reading this canonically within the rest of the book of Samuel. The ESV and other translations when they look at this passage they do a very simple title says God's covenant with David which is accurate.

But I wonder if sometimes we especially those of us who are a little bit of theology nerds and enjoy studying the Bible kind of reduce this passage to a checklist in our way to memorize God's covenants to his people.

We're often guilty of not reading this within the context of Samuel and we forget that there are accounts that happened before Nathan's prophecy to David. I think sometimes we miss what the Spirit is trying to tell us in this passage.

[9:14] When you remember to read this with the events of the preceding chapter 2 Samuel 6 in mind we stop seeing 7 as a dusty historical fact that we rush through to get to our Christmas story and we begin to see the very gospel in the exchange between God and the king.

Now there's one thing about David that is so crystal clear. We know we remember the fact that it's said that David is a man after God's own heart and we see that but we see that David really specializes and majors in worship.

Worship fills every part of David's life. We see that from the beginning as he's playing as he's out in the field singing songs to God. We see him playing in the courtyard of Saul.

We know that he wrote the majority of the psalms that we use on a daily basis in our prayer. If there was a school of his time he would have a PhD.

As a matter of fact he'd be the master of his field. Now I'd like to do something that a preacher is not supposed to do but I have a bishop present so if he needs to bring out his crozier to hook me and bring me out that's fine.

[10:37] I'd like to speak about current politics in light of this passage. Keeping in mind that I'm not endorsing a platform a party or a politician but there are some similarities here when we're speaking about David as the head of a nation and how he deals politically with the nation of Israel.

There's some marked similarities between how he operates as the head of a country and how the head of our country operates. Don't assume that I support or disapprove of anything I'm about to chronicle and I won't bring any of my positions into it but we have a president who ran on a platform that platform was to make America great again and he had several steps on his platform in order to reach his goals and he set out various ones to raise success but this past week one of his major platform goals was tax reform first time it's been done like in 30 years and he achieved that successfully after a month of well more than a month but a month of really contention within on the Senate and House floors.

he took a successful step to making what his vision for the nation was and they celebrated one of actually the more humanizing quotes I heard from President Trump this week was he had the Senate House he had Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell and he spoke and he said we're a team we did this as a team and we won and it's a lot of fun to be on a team when you're winning which is true right I've had kids on sports teams and the teamwork the team aspect is a lot more apparent when there's a win going on David had a platform for the nation of Israel his was not make America great again clearly but his platform was make Israel gods again and part of his platform had to do with this

Ark of the Covenant business and worship so that brings us to the Ark of the Covenant the Ark was part of the furniture used in worship within the tabernacle it was built while Moses led Israel through the wilderness before they entered the land of Canaan this was part of the tabernacle preparations God ordained many special craftsmen to help put these things together in the case of the Ark it was a craftsman named Bezalel said specifically scripture tells us he was a man in whom God had placed skill and intelligence and he constructed it according to measurements given to Moses by God it was made of acacia wood with gold plated over it and two cherubs on the top symbolized the mercy seat in the presence of God maybe symbolism isn't the best word there because God's presence was there

God was sacramentally present within it we see him working through it in several places within scripture so much so that in the book of 1st Samuel Eli's wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas bring it out in battle against the Philistines at Ebenezer problem is like anything sacramental you don't play fast and loose with your own wickedness in the presence of Christ you don't seek to weaponize things like the Eucharist or marriage for your own gain because these are the mysteries in which Christ dwell and you didn't do that with the ark Israel fell in battle Hophni and Phinehas died and the unspeakable happened the Philistines captured the ark the presence of God they placed it the Israelites treated as a trinket they were going to treat it as a trinket they put it in their hall of pagan idols it didn't go so well for anybody involved and after seven months of plagues the

[15:06] Philistines said thank you very much but no thank you and they sent it back to Israel and you would assume that that would be the return immediately to Shiloh or Gibeah which was the capital of Israel at the time underneath Saul you would assume that they would immediately be returned to either the places of refuge or the places of power see Saul's platform was not make Israel God again that wasn't his platform Saul didn't have a concern for the things of God so he's perfectly fine having it languish in the city of Kirith Jerim for twenty years twenty years it sat but David was a different kind of king in second Samuel chapter six if you want to turn there let's look at verse five and you can scan with me as I summarize briefly

David made a priority of returning it to Jerusalem the city of David and he brought it back with a honor guard a full honor guard and he danced before it and worshipped before the Lord as returned!

I would love that if this part of the story was a straight Jerusalem but unfortunately they weren't as respectful about the ark as they were commanded to be by the Mosaic law instead of making the proper preparations to carry it between priests so that nothing would happen to disrespect God's presence they put it on a cart to rush it back to Jerusalem as the cart stumbled a man named Aza reached out and touched it and was immediately struck dead that sat at a place called the house of Obed Edom for three months when David discovers that the house of Obed Edom is blessed then he says well maybe God's not angry with us anymore and he sees the wrath of God is not still being poured out upon them says God's blessing is of us and they bring it back to Jerusalem this time they do it by the letter of the law after having seen what happened last time so

David brings it back he dances gloriously before his people just giving honor to God which makes me wonder if maybe David was a member of the Anglican church of Nigeria because they know

how to dance I matter fact when I go to synod I try to get the dancing down but it's not genetically in me it just doesn't exist I'll learn eventually but David pours his heart out before the Lord this is a success for his team remember what we spoke about it's really fun to be part of a team when you get a win in and this is a real win for David this was you could see the manifestation of his heart's plan for the nation of Israel but as often happens in ministry when we experience the highs we kind of get addicted to them and this has just been a danger!

no matter what level you're a bishop a Sunday school teacher a director prayer table runner we really get hooked on seeing successful ministries happen sometimes our focus becomes more on duplicating successes that we can put in our annual reports our Christmas newsletters how many of you guys got the Christmas newsletters from your over ambitious friends who give a report about the Rhodes scholarship given to their son Johnny and the vice president promotion given to the husband we really like to take these wins and be able to talk about them or import them we pour ourselves into visible signs of successes and the ark was definitely a visible sign of success David sits in his camp wondering what the future of his reign will be and his eye wanders over the ark and he sees it sitting in the tent and the wheels start turning and slowly his platform changes from make [19:50] Israel gods again to I'm going to make God great again and there's a real problem with that God never stopped being great and he didn't need David to work on his behalf getting back that ark was pretty awesome and it's a memory of his team and his successes and he's thinking how can we build on this now don't think that building a temple was wrong it clearly wasn't wrong since Solomon did it with God's blessing and enablement what was wrong was David's reason for doing so he was going to work at it and his efforts were going to bring glory to God that little extra measure that David thought God was lacking let's look at a couple things let's turn back to chapter 5 verse 24 one phrase from there I want to stick out as David is one of these great battles that's attributed to David we find and when you hear the sound of marching on the tops of the balsam trees then rouse yourselves for then the

Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines David didn't win his battles the Lord fought it for him even the chronicler in in Samuel in our opening verse of our reading says here in verse one the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies David's works were never David's works so as we come to our passage today we read now when the king lived in the house in his house and the Lord had given rest from all his surrounding enemies the king said to Nathan the prophet see now I dwell in the 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 Nathan is a great friend to have Nathan is like one of the unspoken heroes of the old testament that we don't often talk about but he has a really solid head on his shoulders he in this case did not have a word from the Lord and he used sanctified common sense to say David you want to build a temple that sounds like a great idea go build a temple it's not till later that night that Nathan receives the word from the Lord says David is not to build me a temple Nathan doesn't fear about his political standing before the king he's not afraid of what David is going to say to him he's not even afraid of countering the king he says no this is a mistake David is willing to relate God's will for David to David and he's also willing to admit when he was wrong for telling David to proceed with his plans so the Lord comes to Nathan and has a message go and tell my servant David thus says the Lord would you build for me a house to dwell in I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day but I have been moving around in a tent for my dwelling in all the places where I have moved with all the people of Israel did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd my people

Israel saying why have you not built me a house of cedar the answer is of course God never said that to him question is David you want to build me a house what about your house that house of cedar who placed you in that house you didn't place yourself in that house that was my work the work of God that gave that to you see even taking credit for the work of our own hands and not blessing God for it is a sin it places ourselves in a bad spot it takes glory from God and places it on ourselves where it doesn't belong what David is doing here in his request is not just a less than optimum choice it is offensive to God God does not need a house because God does not need anything God is holy perfect and complete unto himself but we all struggle with this particular sin the idea that we can do something to help

God out you know I struggle about it we're starting a Sunday school program here and I would love to next year come back and say we've got 60 children attending our camp because it really feels

good that's a victory we must be doing something to help God out love to call up the bishop and say you won't believe what happened we have all these people coming in and this has been a really a constant struggle that people who work in ministry have it seems like a good request it seems like a good thing we want but our heart motors are in the wrong place Nathan's message though is from God and it's not just one of condemnation it's not complete God being rich in mercy corrects David but then raises David up and look at what God does here it's amazing it's how God works over and over again David wants to go on and on about what he will do for

[25 : 25] God and God kind of lets him state his case and dig his hole and then he simply says no but let me tell you about the grace I'm going to heap upon your shoulders he first reminds the king what he has done for him in the past looking at verse 8 now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David thus says the Lord of hosts I took you you little shepherd boy from the pasture from following the sheep that you should be prince over my people Israel I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you and I will make for you a great name like the name of the great ones of the earth this is how God works over and over through scripture he looks at the people of God and reminds them of his good deeds in the past you see this for the people about to enter the land of

Canaan for the first time you see this for the exiles and the refugees you see this even in the early church when the first martyr recounts the glorious things God has done for his people in the past God likes to remind his people about the good things he has done for them in the past next God promises safety and security for the kingdom of Judah in the future and these should sound familiar to you because they're the exact same promises given in last week's sermon on Isaiah verses 10 11 I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them so they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more and violent men shall afflict them no more as formerly from the time that I appointed judge over my people Israel and I will give you rest from all your enemies moreover the Lord declares to you that the

Lord will make you a house now moving on to verse 12 don't miss this God makes a point that the goodness poured out on David will continue even when David is in the grave now what good deeds can anyone do from the grave to earn God's favor no God David is helpless in the grave to earn God's favor as he is when he is living to earn God's favor verse 12 when your days are fulfilled and when you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body I will establish his kingdom David made the fatal flaw where he thought works and accomplishments would bring him closer to God or maybe a better way to state it is he thought that if he worked hard enough he could bring

God down closer to his level the reality is though there's only one way to grow closer to God God and to God that is through relationship and not works and that relationship only happens because God is the one that instigates the first move and I worry for us especially as a liturgical church how many times do we come to God and completely miss the point do we instead of abiding in the presence of Christ think that our works our trappings our programs our buildings somehow build us up to a place we're more favorable to God so I did actually preparing this Bishop Dave preached a sermon last year about the mountain transfiguration which had to be about round about this time the disciples were in the very presence of their Savior and immediately thought their fix was we'll start building you stuff to build the open monument to you instead of enjoying the very presence of Christ in their midst this is exactly what David's doing this is a problem that has plagued those who serve God since the beginning so the question I have for us here at Church of the Holy Trinity today in this building today do you somehow think you are closer to God now than during the time where you met just as a Bible study in the living room do you think you're closer to God now than that time when you moved from borrowed!

[30 : 17] location to borrowed location do you think you're closer to God now than the time you had to worship without a priest and don't walk away the wrong impression these things are not bad things we've been blessed by our building we've been blessed by the leadership God has given us they have not lifted us closer to God and they have not pulled him down to our level no matter our works or our accomplishments God sits on his!

on high with Christ's right hand and his spirit indwelling his church the only way that God can become any close to man is all of God's doing and they are the exact events related by Nathan to David given from God and that we will start celebrating tonight turning to verse 12 when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your offspring after you you shall come

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 to him a father and he shall be to me a son when he commits iniquity I will discipline him with the rod of men with the stripes of the sons of men when my steadfast love will not depart from him as

I took it from Saul whom I put away from before you and your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me your throne shall be established forever Jesus the word is the one who became flesh and dwelt amongst!

us and you may recall when he came to us he was not particularly welcome in the temple he was not welcome in the courts of kings he had a manger waiting for him no temple with gold not even the ark of the covenant which was a shadow of the temple instead he lay in a manger the apostle John wrote that which was from the beginning which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life that life was made manifest and we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the father and was made manifest made real in front of us that which we have seen and heard we will proclaim also you so that you too may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the father and with the son Jesus Christ all hail King Jesus the son of David whose kingdom will have no end that and and you