

WORSHIP

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Covenant with David

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2 Samuel 2: 12-17, 22-29

We heard the word of God's covenant with David beautifully read by Debra Givens. God spoke through the prophet Nathan to David after David thought he knew God's will, but David was wrong. For various reasons, David wanted to build a temple a house for the Lord, but that was not in God's plan. Even though David has made a mistake and had assumed wrongly, God was ready to bestow more blessings upon the new King of Israel and make a covenant with him. Instead of David building a house for God, God would build a house, a dynasty for David. In response, David makes a bold prayer recognizing God's power and calls God to fulfill the promise. Let's listen to a portion of David's Prayer 2 Samuel 7: 22- 29.

²² Therefore you are great, O Lord God; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. ²³ Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another^[e] nation on earth whose God went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for



himself, doing great and awesome things for them,^[f] by driving out^[g] before his people nations and their gods?^[h] ²⁴ And you established your people Israel for yourself to be your people forever; and you, O Lord, became their God. ²⁵ And now, O Lord God, as for the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, confirm it forever; do as you have promised. ²⁶ Thus your name will be magnified forever in the saying, 'The Lord of hosts is God over Israel'; and the house of your servant David will be established before you. ²⁷ For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'; therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. ²⁸ And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant; ²⁹ now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you; for you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever."

This the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Gracious God,

May the words of my mouth and the mediation of all of our hearts be ever pleasing to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.



Let me ask you all a hypothetical question. If someone came up to you and proposed or suggested something for you to do that was completely against your nature or your character, would you turn around and make a promise to them that would benefit them greatly? If someone was so confident in knowing you but missed the mark greatly, would you in return promise to support them no matter what they did wrong in the future? If someone had said to me, “You know what, I am going to take you camping for the fourth of July, it’s a ten mile hike in to the camp ground, you have to carry the food and water you will need, and there have been a lot of bear sightings in the area this year. You are going to love it, I know this is your dream weekend.” I would have assumed that person had no clue what I liked and I would absolutely not respond with, “No, Thank you, but here is what I am going to do for you...” As humans we are not inclined to make promises with people whom we do not trust. If they do not know who we are then why would we enter in to an agreement with them after they have failed at understanding who we are. Thankfully, God sees beyond our misunderstanding and still promises great things to God’s people, to us.

God’s covenant with David arises when David believes he knows what is best for God and for the ark of the Covenant. In the Old Testament and to the Israelites, the ark represents God’s presence with the Israelites. The ark also symbolizes God’s freedom and mobility. I believe this is what worries David. By Chapter Seven in Second Samuel, David has united the lands of Judea and Israel and established his seat of power in Jerusalem, an ancient city on a hill. He has



done all of this by God's blessing, David owes all of his power, wealth, and land to God's favor. Yet, David still wanted one thing as he ruled, he sought the security in his claim to the kingship of Israel.

To do this, to secure his right to rule and his line, David brought the ark in to Jerusalem and wanted to build a temple for the ark and thus God to live in. It does say in scripture that David worried that the ark lived in a tent while he lived in a home built of cedar, the wood of kings. Yet to David, it may have crossed his mind that to have the ark in a permanent building meant that the presence of God would not leave the Israelites, him, or his reign. David had God's blessing so why wouldn't his idea be pleasing to God. A way to honor God and secure David's rule? God would be living amongst God's people. Like so often, when we view our will and our plan as God's own, we are wrong. Before David could begin the temple, Nathan the prophet, revealed God's real will and a greater promise to David and his legacy.

Nathan the prophet revealed God's covenant to David, that it would not be David who would build God a house but God promised a house to David. This house changes the course of David's life and also all of creation. In God's promise to David, the family that is to come is a family that serves God forever. God states, "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me." This explicitly refers to David's direct descendants, but alludes to and introduces the foundation for the promise of the Messiah. Jesus Christ will come from the house of David and with him bring God's grace to the world.



This covenant is like no other covenant before it.

When God made the covenant with Israel and Moses, there was a condition or conditions attached to it. In Exodus 19, God tells Moses to say these words to the Israelites, “ Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The promise begins with, “Now If.” If you keep this I will bless you and you will be a holy nation. But If you don’t.....well that is another story.

When God makes the covenant with David there is no IF. In fact, God is prepared for when the house of David falters and turns its back on the Lord. God says, “I will not take away my steadfast love from him.” Him refers to Solomon and the kings that follow, who almost all have their faults. But the Him can also be viewed as all the descendants of David, all those who are brought in to the house of David, like how we are brought in to this house by being engrafted in to the body of Jesus Christ at baptism.

The love and grace of God will never be removed from David’s son, from David’s descendants and then the world. David, who hopes to keep God near by placing the ark in a permanent structure a temple, receives a promise of everlasting love and presence of God. God know sthat when David’s descendants stumble and “confirm iniquities” God’s steadfast love will remain.

How does David respond? He responds in a bold prayer. A prayer that shows his corrected understanding of who God is and who he is, what God’s role is and



what his own role is. A prayer that reveals David's brazen faith that almost rivals God's faithfulness to God's people.

David recognizes God's uniqueness and all that God has done for Israel in its history. David reminds us in a rhetorical question, what other God has redeemed a people, claimed them for his own, and accomplishing such wonderful things for them, freedom, land, promises, and steadfast love? David now fully trusts in the Lord. He doesn't need a temple to keep the ark and God near him as assurance of God's presence with him and with Israel. He has such faith in God's promise that he calls to God to fulfill the promise God has just made. David asks that his house be blessed forevermore. God has spoken it and so it will be. It is as if David uses our familiar words, "Thy Will be Done." David is bold because he realizes in this covenant God's faithfulness is sure and great. Who would be so bold as to pray this way to God? Only one who now realizes what God's will is, who has heard the words of God through a prophet, who see the truth that God is living and steadfast and loving. A God who makes promises to his people and does not take them away. A God who has removed the IF, the contingency in covenants and sees us for who we truly are and can be.

We just observed July 4th yesterday. And I have heard from many people that it felt different. Despite COVID, I still saw people getting together for cook outs and I heard fireworks late in to the night. For many people, this was a difficult 4th of July. It is a holiday that celebrates the independence of our nation, a nation founded on ideals of freedom and democracy. In years past, we claimed



that no matter who you were we could come to celebrate America, the country we call home. But it didn't seem that way this year. I am reminded of the words of Frederick Douglas, the former slave and famous abolitionist. He was asked to give a speech on July 5th in 1852. His speech entitled "What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?" probably shocked some but i bet there were many people nodding to the truth he spoke. In this speech, Douglas states, "above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them." I think this rings true today. The pain that so many of our fellow citizens and residents feel and experience is now being seen and heard.

This holiday was difficult for many different reasons. For some people the past few months have shown the reality that our founding principles were only limited to a privileged few based on race, gender, and class. A reality that many of our non-white brothers and sisters are reminded of daily. For others, it continued to show the deep political divide facing our nation and in each decision we make. And for others, it was a holiday of separation because of the continued efforts to stay safe as numbers of COVID-19 cases rise.

This makes me feel as though we are the nation of IF, a nation of the conditional. To be honest, we were founded on IF. You have rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness IF you were white and a man and you owned land. Now we say if you vote this way I will listen to you. If you agree with me we can



be a community. If you act better we will listen, If you ask nicely we will change. The Ifs are piling up and the divisions grow deeper. We forget that God has removed the IF between us and God... so why can't we remove it between ourselves.

When we interact with each other with contingencies, we are presuming things of the people that are around us. And whenever we do that it breeds misunderstanding, resentment, hurt, and violence.

A nation like a covenant is made up of the people and the ideas that are involved. So if we were to be a nation of no Ifs, what would that look like? It would mean that love between neighbors would be steadfast. It means that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness would truly be inalienable rights. We would not presume to know the hearts of those we encounter because that is when we get it wrong. That is when progress and healing and conversation ends. We would be open to seeing each others as individuals who are flawed like ourselves but also held in God's unending love.

Then we would be able to pray boldly like David. Our prayer would be words to God, but also life and action. We would be confident in God's promise to us that grace abounds and it is not reliant on our impossible perfection. That if we are striving to be better to one another and a better nation, that grace abounds for us when we stumble. Or grace abounds for us who have work to do after 243 years of Ifs, of restrictions on who gets to experience freedom and security.



In his speech Frederick Douglas, concludes that despite and I quote “the dark picture I have painted this day....I do not despair of this country.” Douglas elaborates and shares that he had faith in the founding ideals of America but also in God’s forgiveness of the sins that separated us from God. Just like God’s covenant with David, God is not forsaking us. God is remaining with us and never removing God’s love. Like David, we have confused our will for God’s will. Instead of rejecting us, God makes a promise with us, showing us that even in our sin, grace and love is still available.

So let us immolate this. We realize we have wronged each other, misunderstood each other to the detriment of ourselves and our home. We tried to and continue to try to make something perfect by building upon IFs and stipulations. Yet, as we have seen, God is prepared to remain with us, so we must do the same for our neighbor, our country, and our world. We will then be able to pray boldly, like David, sure of God’s amazing presence and might, Praying to a God who blesses us and remains faithful to us to the end of the age. Our prayer to God will be asking God to fulfill the unconditional promise for all and allow us to share this covenant with everyone. Because we know this truth to be self evident from God’s own words, “When you commit iniquity, I will not take my steadfast love from you.” Nothing we can do will change this, There are no IFs, in all ages God’s grace and love remains.

Amen.

