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HOUSE HUNTER 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Are you weary of the election noise yet? Personally I admit that this election has been mostly aggravating to me and far from being a source of hope it almost causes despair. Maybe you saw that at one point Hillary changed her campaign logo to rainbow colors in support of marriage equality. Of course she defines marriage equality as both partners get to be President. It's amazing to have someone who says she can't manage two email accounts wanting to run the whole country. At one point Donald Trump said if he is elected President he won't talk as much, which I take to mean if he gets elected it will even leave him speechless. Why shouldn't Republicans worry if they lose the election as polls say is certain to happen? Because depression is covered by Obamacare. NASA recently reported a large upsurge in applications for the astronaut training program. They said it shows a growing interest in space exploration. But the people said, "No it doesn't. We just want to get off the planet after this election."

Perhaps you are weary of this election and like many concerned for the state of our nation. I have good news for you. Today we are going to see an exchange between God and David that holds great hope for us today. David is going to have an idea about something he wants to do for God, and God completely reverses it. The subject of this conversation with God was houses. David was seeking a house, only it was a house for God. He was a house hunter. Maybe you've seen that show on television where people are looking for houses to buy. It's sort of like that. But it has a very surprising outcome, one that has great implications for our lives today, though we might not see them at first glance. Let's look at 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

DAVID HAD A GREAT IDEA

2 Samuel 5:11 says, "Now Hiram, king of Tyre, sent envoys to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David."

That was important because it tells us that the king of Tyre recognized David as the king of Israel and set up diplomatic relations with him. But it also tells us that he helped David build a really nice palace for himself.

The fact that cedar was used in the construction of the palace tells us that it was an expensive home. Cedar is a highly desirable building material. We had to fumigate our home just a few years ago because it was being used as a buffet by termites. We were personally offended that they didn't even ask to be invited into our home

for a meal. They just helped themselves. So we said, “We’ll just see about that.” We gassed them. There’s nothing quite like pumping toxic gas into your house to make it feel like home, sweet home. It solved the problem, but not forever. To our dismay we recently learned that our uninvited guests are back for a return visit, so we are going to need to evict them again, only this time in a less nuclear fashion. The thing about cedar is not only does it look and smell good, it is naturally resistant to rot and insect damage. Termites can eat cedar but it has oils and resins in it that repel them, along with other insects. It also is resistant to temperature and humidity related stress. So it is an excellent material for building. So why aren’t all wood frame homes built using cedar? Because it is also very expensive. Building a palace using a lot of cedar wood meant it was a luxury home, big time.

When David was settled into his nice new palatial residence he enjoyed it, but something kept nagging at him. He had been so excited when he brought the ark to Jerusalem, but now it was placed in a glorified tent. David did the calculus on that deal. Let’s see, which is better, camping out in a tent or staying in a nice palatial house loaded with luxury upgrades? People have said to me, “Camping is a tradition in our family.” Look, camping was a tradition in everyone’s family until we invented houses. I agree with comedian Jim Gaffigan who says, “My parents never took me camping, because they loved me.” Just think about the expression “happy camper.” We use it when someone is really unhappy. David had spent a lot of time in his life camping out, living in caves and the wilderness and he knew that living in a palace was way better. In verse 1 David said, “Here I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God remains in a tent.” He figured God was not a happy camper.

David was bothered by the comparison. For him it sure looked like he was a lot more interested in making himself comfortable and in maybe bringing some glory on himself by having such an impressive house, than he was in bringing glory to God. He was bothered about the fact that God didn’t have something that was more impressive than his place. I think he wanted to do something that would glorify God. He wanted to build a “house” for God that would make a statement. He wanted this new house to say that the most important thing in his life and the most important thing for all of Israel was the glory of God..

I don’t want to step on any toes here, and I am not referring to anyone in our church. If this is uncomfortable for you please forgive me, for I don’t intend it to be. But David’s attitude here is quite a contrast with something I encountered occasionally in my 37 years of pastoral ministry. I remember a woman once who had an old couch that she offered to our church to use somewhere in the facility.

She had apparently inherited it from her family, but she really didn't want the old thing in her house. She had very nice, basically new furniture, including sofas and that the old one really didn't fit in her very nice home. Her house wasn't built with cedar, but it was *really* nice. But when it came to her old couch, a couple of the staff members looked at it and said, "Uh, thanks, but no thanks." It was not a piece of furniture any of us felt would enhance the ambience of the facility. She was a bit offended that none of the staff at the church wanted to use her old couch in the church building. I marveled at the fact that she couldn't seem to notice the statement she was making. The couch was not good enough for her home, but it was good enough for the church, and she was even sort of offended that we didn't think so. Do you see what that says? It says exactly what David didn't want to say. I deserve the best, but God deserves only my leftovers and hand-me-downs. Ouch. I actually have run into that all too frequently in my years of ministry. David wanted no part of anything that sent that message.

David wasn't trying to earn anything from God. He wasn't trying to build a legacy for himself. He didn't care about calling the new building for God the King David Worship Center. He simply had such awe and love for God that he wanted to declare it in a visible way that could not be missed. He wanted a visible statement that he and all Israel loved God and that he was the most important thing to them.

GOD HAD A MUCH BIGGER IDEA

God told David it was a nice idea, but he was not the man to carry it out. In 1 Chronicles 28:2-3 David told his people, "Listen to me, my fellow Israelites, my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'" David had not only killed Philistines, but he had killed fellow Jews during the civil war that finally ended with him becoming the king. God wanted his name and his house associated with peace more than war. He didn't want his temple to be a source of division because some in Israel might have been offended by it if it had been built by David, who had killed their loved ones.

But God's first comment to David was that he didn't need a house. In verse 6 he said, "I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day." In verse 7 he said, "Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of the rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

Isaiah 66:1 says, “This is what the Lord says: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?” Stephen quoted that verse in his speech in Acts 7 and said in verse 48, “The Most High does not live in houses made by human hands.” Paul made the same point in Acts 17:24, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.”

Ancient superstitions about supposed gods viewed them as being localized. And particularly they tended to see them as actually inhabiting the temples built for them. I have a suspicion that most religions have some sort of professional leadership that has historically wanted to encourage that kind of thinking. The message is that people had to come to their temple if they wanted to make their gods happy and convince them to be nice. Of course that also meant giving money to keep the temple going and to enable the priest class to do their thing.

Meeting in a rented facility as our church does has some negatives. We’re not on the radar of the school, so they at times will do things that inconvenience us. We are never sure what we’re going to encounter when we come to set up on Sunday morning. For our sound guys it’s always an adventure because the sound setup is always different. We don’t always have access to the facility when we want to have events. However, this arrangement has one big plus. It is very clear that God doesn’t live in this room. We know that this is just a building that we use to meet in. God goes with us wherever we are. Jesus said where two or three of us gather, he is there. Ephesians 2:19 says that believers in Jesus are members of God’s household. Then in verses 20-21 he says, “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.” It is God’s people who are the temple, the house where he resides.

So David said, “Lord I want to build you a house.” God answered, “I don’t need a house.” But then God turned the whole conversation around. Instead of David building a house for God, God promised to build some houses. He promised in verse 10, “I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed.” In other words, he would continue to enable them to have their own homeland. Then he also promised to build a “house” for David. Of course he didn’t mean a literal, physical house. He meant a dynasty. Verse 11 says, “The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you.” In verse 16 he said, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

God also tells David that one of his sons who will succeed him as King will be the one to build a “house for my Name.” There will be a temple of God that glorifies him, but the temple will be built by David’s son, whom we now know was Solomon. God said when this son does wrong he would punish him, but “My love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul” (verse 15). This is one of the great promises of the Old Testament. It shows up a lot in the Bible. Psalm 89:3-4 says, “You said I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to David my servant, I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.” One of the most familiar prophecies in the Bible is Isaiah 9:6-7. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” David’s descendant, Messiah, Christ, will rule on David’s throne and his kingdom will never end.

In Luke 1:32-33 when an angel announced to Mary that she was going to have a child he said, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” In Matthew 12:23 after Jesus had performed a miracle “all the people were astonished and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’” When he entered to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday Matthew 21:9 tells us the crowds shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David.”

Descendants of David ruled for 400 years before Babylon finally conquered the remnant of the Davidic kingdom. That’s not eternity, but consider the longest dynasty in Egypt was the 18th dynasty and it lasted 255 years. The longest dynasty in Imperial China lasted 316 years, so 400 is kind of a world record. But the much bigger news is that David’s dynasty will last longer, for some day Jesus Christ, the son of David, will reclaim his throne and his rule will never end. God will keep his promise to David. He will build his house and it will be forever.

IMPLICATIONS

HONORING GOD IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA

One thing I appreciate about David is that through all of his victories and failures, and he had some spectacular examples of both, he always had a passionate love for God and truly wanted to declare his praise.

Years ago our daughter, Carissa, had to move into a new apartment when she was still single. She planned to make the move on a Saturday. The weekend before someone we know was with us as we were talking about the move with her. This person said he would help. He was quite enthusiastic about it. He talked about how with enough of us working we could knock it out in no time. He really wanted to help. Less than a week later moving day came and it was the hottest day of the year. Our enthusiastic friend never showed up. We found out he went to the beach instead because he thought it was just too hot. The inescapable conclusion was that his own comfort trumped loving another person. David never, ever wanted to give only lip service to God. “Hey, I love you Lord, but right now I’m pretty busy taking care of me.” He hated any hint of an idea that he would provide for his own comfort but ignore glorifying God.

We take care of ourselves. We always make sure of that. But are we claiming to love God, and then giving the lie to our claim by being mostly obsessed with our own comfort and glory? This passage challenges us to extravagantly express our love of God. How do we do that? We do it by being anxious to gather just to worship him. We do it by giving our best effort in worship. We do it by looking for every opportunity to give him thanks and praise as we go through our days.

Many of you have been to some of the great cathedrals of Europe. They stand as a testimony to the fact that someone wanted to declare the glory, majesty and worth of God. In the church today we have a tendency to downplay such grand statements and have replaced them with buildings that range from utilitarian to ugly. On the one hand that saddens me. I fear most of us live in homes that are considerably more attractive than the church buildings in which we meet. On the other hand I console myself with the thought that maybe it is because we understand that the building is not God’s house, the people are. Wouldn’t it be cool if we could make our church, this group of people, be the equivalent of a magnificent cathedral? If we live beautiful lives, lives characterized by love and grace extended to each other, by graciously and sacrificially serving one another, by integrity and faithfulness to God and unfailing gentleness to others, wouldn’t that be a thing of greater beauty than any building? Most of those great cathedrals stand empty, a sad testimony that the glory has departed from those place. How much better to be a testimony to the glory of God that is alive.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

One thing that shouts to us in this story is that God is faithful. God promised David that he would build his house. He would make David’s family a dynasty that would literally be eternal. It is now 3000 years later, and God is still keeping that promise.

We have already seen that David did not earn that. Yes, he was a man after God's own heart, but he was far from perfect. He had panicked on a couple of occasions and ended up lying, and his lies resulted in innocent people dying. He had a significant problem with marital faithfulness. Later he is going to fail in that regard in spectacular fashion. His attempt to cover up that ugly failure will be despicable. Yet God has kept his promise to David and has not taken his love from him. He has not taken the throne from his descendants.

David's descendants on the throne are going to have a spotty record, at best. In fact a number of them will be pretty crummy guys who have no interest whatsoever in obeying God. Because of their unfaithfulness judgment will come and for a long time there will be no descendant of David on the throne because there is no throne. Only when Jesus Christ shows up will a Son of David take the throne, but even now he rules in heaven, but his future reign on earth is still waiting to happen.

The point is that there has been a lot of unfaithfulness on the part of the family of David. There has been so much that God has had every right to say that this covenant has been fatally violated thus is null and void. But he has not done that. He made a promise to David, and he is keeping it. David's subsequent ugly disobedience would not bring the covenant to an end, nor would that of future Davidic Kings.

Do you see what a powerful message this sends to us? Jesus would promise that whoever believes in him would not perish, but would have eternal life. That is a promise. God has made that promise to all of us. He will keep it. But what if we are unfaithful? Was David faithful when he disobeyed God and took a bunch of wives and mistresses? Was David faithful when he slept with another man's wife and then had her husband killed to cover up the whole thing? No, he wasn't. And my suspicion is in whatever ways you have failed they aren't as bad as what David did. Yet God kept his promise to David. And he keeps his promises to us.

When I was young I received Christ as my Savior a bunch of times. I heard all about Jesus in Sunday school and church. I'd ask Jesus into my life, but I wouldn't feel any different. And I could see things in my life that didn't match up with being a follower of Jesus, so maybe it didn't work. Maybe I'd better try again. I lived in that miserable gray no man's land of wanting to know I had eternal life and God accepted me, but fearing there was something wrong with me, maybe I wasn't sincere enough and that for whatever reason it just didn't work. And maybe it never would! Then I heard a simple talk that made the most obvious of points. God

does not lie. God keeps his promises. He promised if I put my faith in Jesus he would forgive me, love me and give me the gift of eternal life. His promise does not depend on my feelings, my being sincere enough or my being good enough. He keeps his promise because his character is to be true to what he says.

What a relief it was to know that I couldn't mess up God's promise. It depends on him, on his faithfulness, not on me and mine. If it was about me being faithful enough I would fail. But someone might object that this means I can believe in Jesus and live a horrible life and God will still keep his promise. Where is the motivation for living anything like a godly life? There are two aspects to the answer to that question.

First when we understand God's faithfulness and grace to us we won't want to let him down. No one chooses to disappoint people who really love them. And second, we will know that living without regard to God's will only hurts us. It doesn't damage God, but it does huge harm to us.

WE HAVE A KING

Notice at the end of verse 13 speaking of David's son the Lord promised, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Then verse 16 says, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." You always want to pay attention to words or ideas that are repeated when you are studying the Bible. In those verses what repeated word do you notice? The word "forever" jumps out. God emphasized to David that his kingdom would be forever.

Daniel 7:13-14 says, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." Revelation 11:15 says a time will come in which it will be announced from heaven, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever."

The great line in Handel's Messiah quotes that verse. "And he shall reign for ever and ever." The kingdom of this world has not yet become the kingdom of our Lord. But his kingdom is here. Jesus defeated sin and Satan when he died on the cross. He defeated death when he rose from the grave. Then he ascended into heaven

where he has taken his throne. There he rules, biding his time until he comes and establishes his rule on this rebellious planet.

The point is that Christ, the son of David, has a kingdom. A kingdom is defined as that territory where a king rules. Where a king's word is law is his kingdom. Christ's kingdom exists in heaven and it will continue to do so forever. His kingdom will someday exist on this earth. But it exists right now in the lives of all those who claim that he is Lord. If Jesus is Lord of our lives then we are in that forever kingdom right now.

Maybe this year more than ever we are aware that while we are ordered by our Lord to obey our governing authorities and to show them respect, whoever our next President is will not be someone with whom we share much in the way of values. We may well not have a leader whose kingdom we would normally choose to be a part of. But that's all right, because we have a king. Our King is Jesus. Whatever loyalty we give to our human government, it is always subordinated to our loyalty to our real King. That is one truth that this election is bringing home to me vividly. My king is Jesus, and I am more than anything a subject of his kingdom. His kingdom will never end.

Here is a way you might think of this. Perhaps when you were young there was a time when your parents went out for the evening and left you in the care of a baby sitter. It might well have been a teenage girl. Your parents would have instructed you to do what the baby sitter told you to do. Hopefully you did as instructed, but one thing would have been clear. That baby sitter did not take the place of your parents. Your sense of identity and security did not come from that baby sitter, but from your parents. That baby sitter played a temporary and very limited role in your life. If the sitter ever told you to do something that violated your parents' will you would have known that your allegiance was to your parents. Because our eternal King is Jesus we can see governing authorities as being like baby sitters. Their role is temporary and limited. Our identity and security come from our king and it is to him that we owe our allegiance.

This truth has a couple of effects. First it brings us comfort. There was an article in Popular Mechanics magazine in July that revealed something I did not know. It is that the continent of Australia is moving. It moves 2.8 inches to the northeast every year. There are some things that you count on, and one of them is that the ground is solid and stays where it is. It turns out this is not necessarily so. This movement of Australia has created a problem. That 2.8 inches doesn't sound like much, but Australia's GPS system has not been updated since 1994. In that time the continent

has moved 5 feet! This is becoming a big problem, so next year they will shift their GPS system by 5.9 feet, which will keep them aligned until 2020, when they will install a new system that automatically adjusts every year.

What can we count on to stay stable in a world where even the ground is moving? We can count on the fact that Jesus Christ is King, and that he will be king forever. I know Christians who are freaking out because of what is happening in our nation. Here is what we need to remember. Jesus Christ is King, and he will be King forever. So we can relax. We can rest. We can be assured that nothing will defeat our King. Remember the words of Psalm 2:1-4. "Why do the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, 'Let us break their chains and throw off the shackles.'" We see that happening. So many are conspiring against the Lord and his Son. They are rebelling. But look at verse 4. "The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them." God just laughs. We can do the same.

But there is another effect of being subjects of the one who sits on David's throne forever. It presents us with a challenge. The challenge is to live like it. Jesus is our King. What is his kingdom like? It is a place where people follow his edicts, and maybe even more they follow his example. They will live like him. 1 John 3:2 says that when we are in his presence at last we will be like him.

Jesus' kingdom is a place where people do not ever take advantage of each other or do any harm to each other. Rather, like their King they always seek to love and bless others no matter who they are or what they are like. They exude grace. They are always at peace because the King is there and they know they can trust him. They rejoice in knowing and being with the King.

Last Saturday Laurie and I were at Mission Bay. We staked out a spot on the grass where we planted our beach chairs looking out at the bay where we planned to spend a few hours reading and relaxing. We noticed a couple of people setting up chairs for a wedding about 100 yards away. They had about half the chairs set up when they stopped. The woman was talking on her cell phone. Laurie said "I bet she is talking to the bride and she wants a different location." She was right. They began taking the chairs down and stacking them on a dolly. They moved them right in front of us so we had front row seats for the next round of events. They decided to work smarter. They put the remaining chairs in their van and drove up onto the grass in front of us and began unloading them. Then a woman driving a parks and recreation truck pulled up on the access road behind us. She called to the chair people and said, "You can't have your van on the grass. You must move it onto the

road.” The woman setting up the chairs said, “Oh, all right.” Apparently she didn't move quickly enough for the Queen of Parks because she said in an imperious and demanding voice, “Stop what you are doing and move your van right now!” The chair woman was trying to comply, but the back doors of the van were open so she had to go close them before moving the vehicle. As she was closing them the parks lady drove onto the grass you aren't supposed to drive on and said, “If you don't move right now I am going to call the Ranger.” By this time I was thinking, “Wow, must be that time of the month for somebody.” The chair people graciously did not comment on the obvious problem of the Queen driving on the grass that she was so uptight about them driving on, they just moved their van. As they once again started unloading the chairs a Ranger showed up after having been radioed by the Queen, even though there was nothing for him to do. Then a police officer showed up, driving on the grass! I was expecting the Marines to arrive next to deal with this dangerous incident. It was like something out of a TV sitcom. Had it been up to the Parks Queen they'd have cuffed those offending chair people and hauled them off to Gitmo for doing something she herself did.

It was an appalling display of officiousness, overkill and lack of respect. It was about someone's overinflated ego and the abuse of a tiny bit of power. She apparently lost sight of the fact that her job is to serve the people. She is a public servant. Her own personal needs for a sense of importance or power overrode the much greater need to treat people with kindness, respect and love, to bless them. That is not how anything is done in Jesus' kingdom. Our little church is part of the kingdom of God. More than anything else here King Jesus is present and rules. The challenge for us, then, is to live as though this is really true.