



The Son of God

2 Samuel 7: 4-17

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It's been quite a year, these past three weeks. From insurrection, to impeachment, to inauguration, I can't help but wonder, what does the coming week have to offer?

As if 2020 didn't offer enough of a shift in life, even with a significant transfer in governmental direction last week, I still find myself tense with anxiety wondering, what's next?

I am grateful for our time of after worship fellowship on Sundays, our Midweek Check-ins, and our new Thursday night conversation groups, these times of shared ministry, as together we're able to ask and process such questions in community with one another. What's next? How do we take our *next* step of faith, because, well, some days it seems like taking one step is a significant accomplishment.

In this first season of 2021, in these weeks following the Epiphany, we are walking these steps with Christ down the Emmaus Road. We're expanding upon the gospel of Luke, when, in chapter 24, it tells us that Jesus, in his resurrected form, walked with the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. As they travelled, Jesus explained to them how the Hebrew Scriptures pointed to Jesus as the Messiah – as the Son of God.

Luke does not tell us which texts Jesus used, and so we're considering possible texts Jesus might have used from the Hebrew Scriptures that seem to point to Jesus as God's consummate leader for the people of faith. We've looked at the prophets Micah, Malachi, and Isaiah, and today we turn to the prophet Nathan, who offered guidance to King David.

Let me offer a quick recap of David's story, just to be sure we're all on the same page when we are thinking about this text:

David is the second king of Israel, who succeeded King Saul. We often think of David as the one who, having been the youngest son of Jesse, was brought to the front line of war with the Philistines where he was able to kill Goliath with a simple stone and his slingshot. However, following this show of brain and brawn, King Saul became jealous of the young David, and Saul sought to have him killed. David fled and became the leader of a group of outlaws, before he was invited to come back as Saul's successor after Saul died in battle with the Philistines. David was able to maintain this position as King even through a civil war against Saul's surviving son, Ishbaal, who felt the throne should have been his.

David was hailed as God's favored King, and was praised for his success as a warrior and empire builder. Under his leadership the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was established as the capital city of Israel. David is sitting high as the favored one, as the faithful king of Israel when we arrive at our text for today in 2 Samuel 7.

In the first few verses of this chapter, David is lamenting that the Ark of the Covenant is being housed in a tent, while he, David, lives in a new house of cedar. He believed the Ark deserved a better home. As a prophet, Nathan is seen as the go-between for the King and God. So David has rightfully gone to Nathan to inquire about God's thoughts on the next steps regarding the Ark. Nathan affirms David's thoughts, and says to David, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." This affirmation is not just one that says the Ark deserves a home, it also affirms David's standing in the eyes of God.

And yet, following this permission granting by Nathan, we pick up in our text for today in verse 4. That very night following Nathan's saying to David, "Go and do as you please," God's word comes to Nathan and says, "Go and tell my servant David, Thus says the Lord, "Are you the one to build me a house to live 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 about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

Nathan seems to have spoken out of turn in verse 3, for here, in the following verses, God says, "No – David is *not* to build a home for the Ark – or for me."

Scholar David Jensen suggests, "The impression from these verses is that a house for the Lord is antithetical to God's actions in history. To build a house for the Lord would represent a vain attempt to contain God's spirit or domesticate God's presence."ⁱ Yet, as we keep reading, it doesn't seem the only problem is the wrongful attempt to contain God's presence. It seems that David might have confused his name for the name of God.

Beginning in verse 8, we read, "Say to my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts: "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and 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. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies."

Along with an attempt to perhaps reign in God, it seems David has fallen prey to one of the worst of ancient temptations. Theologian Walter Brueggemann offers, "The obvious answer to the problem of legitimacy characteristic of every ruler in the ancient world is to build a temple. Give God a permanent residence that will solidify the regime." David's suggestion to build a temple seems to be a mixed combination of genuine piety and self-serving legitimation.ⁱⁱ

God must not only tell David, "don't build me a house," God must also remind him, "I am the one who will build your house. I will make your name great. This will be my doing, not your own."

Picking up on this promise, God says, when the time is right, one of your offspring, one who comes from the house I build using your name, will then build me a house.

This is where I think Jesus might have picked up, here in verse 13, when Jesus speaking of himself while walking the disciples down the Emmaus Road.

Verse 13, with God speaking to David through the prophet Nathan, reads, “[Your offspring] shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.” Now, without hesitation, every scholar who’s ever read this text will immediately name this text is first and foremost pointing to Solomon. We know that Solomon is David’s son, and that, as King, Solomon is the one who will build the great Jerusalem temple. Solomon’s temple was the First Temple, built in 957 BCE.

I don’t want to hesitate in naming that, through the prophet Nathan, God is speaking of David’s direct lineage to Solomon, and that Solomon will be the one to build this temple – this house of God. And yet, the promise of God in this text is not a promise that will end with Solomon. We know that the temple Solomon built will fall around 400 years later to the Babylonians. And while future temples were built to replace Solomon’s, historians and archeologists have still yet to find a single stone from Solomon’s Temple. So, surely, this text can’t specifically and only speak of Solomon.

“There is a far greater range to [God’s] covenant, for it promises that the kingly line, begun with Solomon, will extend through the ages.”ⁱⁱⁱ And, while Solomon might have been the initial focus of these texts, the covenant of God in this promise with David makes a major shift in the way God will relate with God’s people, and this invites curiosity regarding a larger, lengthier, more eternal visioning of divine relationship.

Not only will God raise up from the line of David one to build a home for God, but let’s pick back up in verse 14, which reads, “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.” The one to come will be the Son of God.

Going back to our text last week, we named that Jesus is said to have been born of the line of David – being born the son of Joseph in the city of Bethlehem, David’s city. This connection becomes all the more important when looking at this prophecy of Nathan. David’s royal line, at least in the role of king, ends with the fall of Solomon’s temple. Zedekiah was the last of David’s line to fulfill the role of king before he was taken off into captivity by the Babylonians. The gospel making clear that Jesus is “of David” allows Jesus to be associated with this text in 2 Samuel 7 – it allows Jesus to fulfill the prophecy of one to come who is not only in the line of David, but who also be known as the Son of God.

And this connection, this shaping of a new covenant, becomes all the more significant. See, in verse 15, the text offers, “I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”

I like how Walter Brueggemann sums this up. He offers, previously, there was a divine “if,” and this led to Saul’s demise. But now, with David, there is a divine “but.”^{iv} It’s been a few years, but for those who have been around a while, perhaps you’ll recall this sermon from 2017, “I like God’s but, and I cannot lie.” Unlike with Saul, whose leadership was terminated by God because of his unfaithfulness, when God said, you can be a leader *if* you’ll be faithful, in this new covenant that God is establishing, “There

are no acts of disobedience in purview which can make [God] terminate this profound commitment. ... [God] has signed a blank check to the David enterprise and has radically shifted the theological foundations of Israel.”^v

So again, while I do not think Nathan was intending in the midst of this prophecy to point directly to Jesus, as we reflect back on the history of God and God’s people, I can’t help but think it *possible* Jesus would have referenced this text when pointing to himself as the fulfillment of God’s promise in the establishment of this new covenant. Because there is no greater “but” in God’s promise than in the person of Jesus Christ.

Not only does Jesus hail from the line of David, not only is Jesus the one who is called the Son of God, not only is Jesus the one who calls God “Abba,” “Father,” but it is Jesus that proclaims the divine “but,” which refuses to give sin and death the final say. It is Jesus who establishes a new house of God that is no longer confined to the walls of an Ark, or the walls of a Temple. Jesus comes and breathes the gift of the Spirit who roams without walls or borders to proclaim God’s unconditional love throughout creation, and it is Jesus who is hailed by the apostles to be seated on the throne for eternity.

The disciples walking the Emmaus Road were defeated. Christ had been given over to the Roman cross. He had been taken from his grave. They were in dire straits, for they felt the promise of God had failed. And yet, that is, *but* Christ had not been taken from the grave, he had been raised. God’s unconditional “but” said he may have died, *but* the grave cannot hold him. The Romans may have crucified him, *but* his life has not ended. Pain has come upon this people, *but* joy comes in the morning.

This is the radical statement about the very kind of god the Lord is: “a God who binds God’s very self to God’s people forever, and that means that the people will endure, whatever comes.”^{vi} This is the promise of God in Jesus Christ – this is the promise Jesus reminds the disciples of on the Emmaus Road – and we would do well to listen. Come whatever may, we are God’s people; God has gifted us with an unconditional love – a promise that goes from ever-lasting to ever-lasting – a glory that cannot be overcome – an assurance that declares, so long as there is work to do, God will surely lead us through.

Set let us have ears to hear, and hearts to receive, as we walk with Christ and hear the promise of God’s continual love that still leads us today. For the glory of God, we give thanks. Amen, and Amen.

ⁱ David H. Jensen. *1 & 2 Samuel: Belief: A Theological Commentary On the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

ⁱⁱ Walter Brueggemann. *First and Second Samuel: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert Barron. *2 Samuel: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2015.

^{iv} Brueggemann.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Jensen.