

Sermon for The 4th Sunday in Advent

Date: December 22, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Epistle Reading: Titus 2:1-14

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Sermon Text: 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Sermon Title: Waiting with Worship



Hymns:

LSB 370 – What Child is This

LSB 340 – Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates (v.5)

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v.1,2)

LSB 348 – The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

Rejoice, Rejoice, O Zion's Daughter (Offertory)

O Holy, Holy, Holy Lord (Sanctus)

O Christ the Holy Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)

Lord Let Your Servant Go in Peace (Post Communion)

LSB 349 – Hark the Glad Sound

Distribution:

LSB 350 – Come, Thou Precious Ransom Come

LSB 343 – Prepare the Royal Highway

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship



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Text: 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a 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.”

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build 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 about in a tent for my dwelling. In all 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?”’ Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should 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 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 judges 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...

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”

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Grace and peace from the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

While King David was living in his house, the LORD gave him peace with all his enemies around him. So the king said to the prophet Nathan, “Look, I’m living in a house made of cedar, while the ark of God remains in the tent.” Nathan told the king, “Do everything you have in mind, because the LORD is with you.”¹

It has been twenty-three days since Black Friday. The day when businesses opened their doors to enthusiastic shoppers seeking early bargains on Christmas gifts. In many places Christmas commercials and music began filling the airwaves in late October, or earlier. And now here we are today, three days before Christmas.

Consider for a moment all of the Christmas images that fill the minds of Americans, young and old, from animated films like “*Polar Express*” and “*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*” to classics like “*It’s a Wonderful Life*” and “*Miracle on 34th St.*” and a whole host of touching Hallmark Christmas specials. Christmas in America is filled with jolly images of mythical elves, flying reindeer, sleighs and sleigh bells, all in a picturesque countrysides. Now there is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying such movies; many of them present Christian values and actions such as forgiveness, charity, love and traditional family values.

The point is with all of the last-minute Christmas chaos, you have chosen to take time, out of your busy schedule, to join this small group of worshipers before our Lord’s altar in this quiet and sacred place. It has been twenty-one days since the First Sunday in Advent, when we began our preparation for the celebration of the festival of the Holy Incarnation. With just three days to go, we have gathered to hear a remarkable, and very old record, that will prepare us to enjoy that festival day with joy and gladness.

On Christmas Eve and Day we will return to the Lord’s house to worship Christ the newborn King. Now you will probably not hear today’s Old Testament account on the radio. You will not see it on television or read it in a newspaper. It is a true account that took place about three thousand years ago. It is a touching record about King David, his pastor Nathan the prophet, and the king’s deep and genuine desire to give the Lord God the very best in worship. It is an account that looks forward to and anticipates Jesus, whose birth, life, death and resurrection bring eternal peace in a fallen world.

1 2 Samuel 7:1–3

So today we do not have images of candy canes and visions of sugarplums dancing in our heads, instead images of King David, a pious and righteous king with a desire to build the Lord a Temple fitting the worship God deserves from His people.

Seven and a half years after being anointed king of Israel in Hebron, David defeated the Jebusites and made Jerusalem his new capital city. How does one go about transforming a Canaanite city into the heart and soul of a nation that consists of twelve contentious tribes? How does one cleanse a city that has been defiled by false idols and pagan worship? With true worship. You do what David did. You bring in the big guns! You bring in the Ark of the Covenant and cleanse the sin and idolatry of that place with the name and presence of the Lord God of armies.

One day, King David looked out of the window of his new palace in Jerusalem and was struck by the fact that while he lived in luxury the Lord still dwelt in a humble Tabernacle, a movable tent. This was a theological issue so David spoke with the prophet Nathan, his spiritual confidant and pastor. The king said to Nathan the prophet:

“Look, I’m living in a house made of cedar, while the ark of God remains in the tent.” Nathan told the king, “Do everything you have in mind, because the LORD is with you.”²

King David was a builder. He built an army, a kingdom, a city and a palace. Some of you know what it is like to be involved in the building of a new church. You know the joy, excitement, the anticipation of being involved in such a holy undertaking. One can easily imagine David being too excited to sleep, busily working out plans for the new Temple. That same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, instructing him to tell King David that he was not permitted to build the Temple.

One of the greatest disappointments in King David’s remarkable life was to be told by God that he would not have the privilege of building the Temple. David, whose psalms are still sung in the Church today, must have been devastated.

Through the prophet Nathan God told David:

“I have not lived in a house from the day I took Israel out of Egypt to this day... Now this is what you will say to my servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of Armies says: I took you from the pasture where you followed

sheep so that you could be the leader of my people Israel. I was with you wherever you went, and I destroyed all your enemies in front of you. I will make your name famous like the names of the greatest people on earth. ³”

Then the God told David what would be done for him in the future:

I will make a place for my people Israel and plant them there. They will live in their own place and not be troubled anymore. ... When the time comes for you to lie down in death with your ancestors, I will send one of your descendants, one who will come from you. I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... Your royal house will remain in my presence forever. Your throne will be established forever.⁴”

3 2 Samuel 7:6-9

4 2 Samuel 7:10-13,15-16

That promise was fulfilled in the Gospel lesson for today where we heard:

Joseph went from Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a Judean city called Bethlehem. Joseph, a descendant of King David, went to Bethlehem because David had been born there.⁵

The Lord's promise of an eternal kingdom, and steadfast love, would ultimately be fulfilled in this Child of Mary, who bore the sins of us all, and in our place was tortured and crucified.

So what did David do on hearing these words? He went back to that humble tent in which was kept the Ark of the Covenant. He sat down before the Lord and prayed a beautiful prayer that was both a prayer of thanksgiving and a confession of faith. Remarkably the contents of David's prayer⁶ are almost identical to what God told the prophet Nathan. So David simply said back to God what God had just said to him.

David thanked God for being with him in his life as king. He thanked God for redeeming His people Israel from Egypt and its false gods, with the promise that they would be His people forever. David thanked God for promising to establish an eternal house for him. On the basis of God's words David found the courage and strength to end his prayer by asking the God to bless him and his house, so that it would remain in God's presence forever.

We remember King David for many things, but on this day we remember him for how he responded to the disappointment of being denied the right to build a beautiful Temple worthy of the Divine Service of the one true living Lord God of hosts. He sat down before the Ark of the Covenant in which had been placed the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, a jar of Manna and Aaron's Rod, and he prayed.

Looking at himself in humility and amazement he accepted God's promise that somehow from his sinful self would come an eternal kingdom in which the Lord Himself would forever remain.

So now here you sit before the Lord's altar. Like King David you have come before the Lord in this high and holy place bringing your list of disappointments, worries, sorrows, regrets, sin and guilt, mixed with a list of joys, praise and thanksgiving for blessings you have received. Here you sit in God's house where His Word and Spirit give you the courage and strength to pray, give thanks, confess

5 Luke 2:4

6 2 Samuel 7:18-29

the true faith and ask the Lord God to bless you, your family and His Church so we may dwell in His presence forever.

In our Advent and Christmas worship, like David, we will say back to God what He has revealed to us through His saving work and Word. In creeds, prayers, hymns and liturgies we confess and praise God for sending His Son to live, die and rise again to pay for our sins and give us eternal life.

As our society becomes increasingly secular, forgetting the reason the Christmas⁷ season exists, we join David in the Lord's presence before His altar. Black Friday is past. Advent blue, symbolizing the time of preparation, repentance and joyful anticipation, will soon turn to a truly white Christmas, when white paraments will adorn our sanctuary.

(White because it is a pure and holy celebration of our divine and holy Savior who brings to us His righteousness, His holiness and life eternal. White like the robe each of us will be given upon our entering Heaven's gates. The promise will be fulfilled. It will not disappoint us.)

From Christmas we look forward to a dark day, another symbolized with black, but a day called "Good" on which the infant, whose birth we celebrate, will shed His blood and die for the sins of the world. On that day altars will be clothed in black, but we won't call it Black Friday, we call it Good Friday, and for good reason. It will not disappoint us either because on that day we will get the bargain of the ages. Salvation with a tag that reads, "Paid in Full." Rejoice and be glad in Jesus' name!

Amen.

7 'Christmas' is Latin for 'Christ-Celebration' or the 'Celebration of the Christ.'