

Lutheran Church of the Master
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor
December 20/21, 2008
4th Sunday in Advent
“Walking in the Light: Building the House –
Brick & Mortar OR Flesh & Blood?”

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 (New International Version)

God's Promise to David

¹ After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ² he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."

³ Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you."

⁴ That night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: ⁵ "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?' ⁶ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. ⁷ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" "

⁸ "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. ¹⁰ And 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. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders ^[a] over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

" ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me ^[b] ; your throne will be established forever.' "

Luke 1:26-38 (New International Version)

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He 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, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called ^[a] the Son of God. ³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. ³⁷For nothing is impossible with God."

³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

We may not realize it, but Scripture has permanently recorded for us some disagreements that existed among God's people. Today's reading from 2 Samuel is one of those. And, when it comes right down to it, the disagreement from way back then is related to some common misunderstandings that still exist in the Church today.

David had a great idea ... he wanted to build a place for God to dwell ... something worthy of God. I suppose as he looked around at other great nations, he noticed that they had built great and magnificent temples for their gods ... and he wants to do no less for his God. So he tells the prophet Nathan of his plans ... and apparently Nathan says "good idea."

There is only one problem ... the idea didn't start with God! So that night God speaks to his prophet Nathan and says: "Ah, Nathan ... remember that conversation you had with King David ... ichs-Nay on the emple-Tay!" And then God says – you know, I have always enjoyed being out among the people as we've been travelling around ... I like the tent idea ... something temporary and mobile ... I don't recall asking you to build me a temple of cedar or brick and mortar. As a matter of fact, instead of you building me a home with cedar or brick and mortar ... I'll tell you what I want to do ... I want to make you into a house ... a living house ... made up of people.

In other words, instead of a building FOR a family I'm going to BUILD a family from you. Kind of like the British idea of their Royal Family. Instead of the building in which sacrifice is made ... I'm going to create the family who will be the sacrifice.

To this day, the People of Israel love that building ... which is why Eileen and I stood at the Western Wall in Israel last March ... amongst the Rabbis and the men and women

of Israel who pray there daily and long for the temple to be rebuilt so that sacrifices can be offered again and worship can be complete.

You and I believe that promise was fulfilled not when the temple was dedicated ... but when the angel Gabriel came to Mary and said: "you will conceive in your womb and bear a son ... you will name him Jesus ... he will reign over the house of Israel."

With the birth of that baby Jesus, the House moved from being a building in which to worship to a person to be worshipped. That House is now called the Church ... which is the Body of Christ.

The Church is not a building ... it is the people who gather in such buildings.

If this building were to be blown away by a tornado ... The Lutheran Church of the Master would be inconvenienced but not be diminished.

The Church is not a place to which we go ... the Church is who we are.

The Church exists to let the world know who Jesus is ... and that is where this week becomes so important.

A few things as we come to Christmas Eve:

- (1) Remember that Evangelism begins in the parking lot ... if people can't find a place to park, they'll never come into the church to hear the story. IF you are physically able, park far away from the door so that the unchurched and the dechurched who might come to worship can find a place ... easily.
- (2) Remember to be kind and gentle ... if someone comes back this week don't say something like "Wow ... look who is here ... let me help hold the roof up so it won't collapse now that you are back." That is a guaranteed way to help someone leave and never return.
- (3) Remember ... when folks come ... the most important thing is NOT to get them to come to a committee or choir or council meeting! The most important thing is to greet them and let them know how happy you are and we are to see them!
- (4) And remember ... have a sense of humor ... which is why I have prepared a test for you today.
 - a. There is a heresy present in this room right now ... can you figure out what it is?
 - b. If we were true to Scripture ... the wise guys would be on the other side of Kuhn Road right now ... according to Scripture, the shepherds and the wise guys were never at the same place and the same time!
 - c. We might assume the wise guys (and we don't know how many ... there were three gifts ... but there could have been two, twelve, or two hundred magi) were on their way ... but Scripture says when they arrived Jesus was in a house ... not in a manger.

- d. Before Scripture became the basis for argumentation, it was always written to provide people a basis for celebration.
- (5) If you ever forget WHO or WHAT the Church is ... remember the simple illustration from years ago. Remember how you spell "church." Just leave out the two middle letters ... so you have C H __ C H ... and then ask, "who is the Church? What are the missing letters? U – R." (That came a long time before text messaging!)