

Being the Church at Brentwood

Glorifying God in Faith

2 Samuel 7:1-11 & 16
(Hymns –119, 575, 135, 122)

December 18, 2011 – Advent 4 - Love

Prophets have an important role in the Old Testament.
They witness to people what God is thinking.

People often don't want to hear that.
They ignore prophets.
They send them away.
They toss them into jail.
They stone them.

Anything to stop that persistent, provocative voice
ringing in their heads and troubling their complacency.

But the Scriptures,
written and compiled to help us understand
how God wants to relate to us for the salvation of the world
contains a lot of sections
that record what the prophets said.
That means they are worthy of careful consideration.
We should read what they say
and consider it carefully.

In this morning's passage, the prophet is Nathan.
He was a court prophet in the time of King David.
He was the one who called David to account
for his adultery and murder.
In this passage, he is witnessing to David
about the ways God will continue to act
in creating and protecting a people to serve God's kingdom.

That's really the focus of this passage.
It's not Nathan and it's not David.
It's God.

This passage is about the glory or energy of God
and what it is doing in the world
through people like Nathan and David.

That's where I want to focus our attention
for a few moments this morning –
where is God's energy focused in this world
and what does that mean for us?

Nathan reminds David of several key aspects
of God's work in the world.

First and foremost, there is the Covenant.
That reference takes us back to Abraham
and God's promise to be with his descendants
as they lived with God in order to be a blessing to all nations.

Nathan reminds David that this God was to be with his people,
not confined and controlled in a temple,
surrounded by temple rituals and priests.
This is a God who moves with his people,
who travels around in a tent
ready to move forward to meet the next opportunity
to bring peace and prosperity to his beloved creation.
His people and their leaders
are his companions in that mission.
They are blessed in order to be blessings.
They are loved in order to be loving.
They are freed from oppression in Egypt in order to free others.
They are protected in order to be a protection for others.

David is God's agent in bringing about God's kingdom in the world.
He stands in a long line of leaders God has chosen
to guide his people wisely in their mission,
reaching back to Abraham.
The experience of the Exodus,
when God chose leaders like Moses to lead his freed people,
is recalled.
David's own calling from the fields while a shepherd
is recalled.

In all of this, Nathan emphasizes,
it is God who is acting,
God who is guiding,
God who is the establishing the kingdom.

And the promise to David,
a promise that arises from God's faithfulness to his original covenant,
is that the kingdom David is helping establish will last forever.
David's descendants will continue to help God establish that kingdom.

For the Biblical writers,
this kind of continuity of God's work in the world
was of first importance.

Scholars have called it salvation history.
It is the awareness that God has been active with us
from the very beginning of time,
working with and through people to bless the creation.

That salvation history reaches its climax in the coming of Jesus Christ.

He is a descenant of David,
of the house and lineage of David.
In Jesus Christ,
God's promise of David's dynasty having no end
reaches its fulfillment.

And the church,
including this congregation here at Brentwood,
all of us who gather here for worship and learning and fellowship
in order to go back into our communities to serve,
are the body of that Christ in the world.
We are, as Peter writes in his first letter,
"the chosen race, the King's priests, the holy nation,
God's own people, chosen to proclaim
the wonderful acts of God,
who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light."
(1 Peter 2:9)

We glorify God by receiving the energy of his love
and sharing that love with others,
with all who we meet this coming week,
by blessing them with our compassion and care.

We do this in faith.
Not just, or even first, by our faith in God,
but first and foremost, through God's faith in us.
We have been chosen, just as David was chosen,
because of God's faithfulness to his covenant,
because of God's faith in us to be his people.
Our own faith, then, is a gift
that enables us to respond positively
to God's gift of faithful, everlasting love.

That is the true gift of Christmas.

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