

A House of the Lord
Rev. Nicole Farley
First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
December 18, 2011

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I 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. ⁷Wherever 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?” ⁸Now 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 to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and 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. ¹⁰And 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, ¹¹from 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.

¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Jesus’ ancestor, David, was a simple shepherd who eventually became a great king. Living in comfort and protected from his enemies by God, David, in thanks to God for God’s providence decides to build a permanent structure to house the ark of the covenant, to house the spirit of the Lord. But the Lord makes known to David that it is God who provides, not God who is provided for. God reminds

David of all he has done for David and then tells him how much more he is going to do. God cannot be claimed by one man or one people or contained by human constructs.

God operates outside of our limits and beyond even our greatest imaginations. God takes a boy, a shepherd, and makes of him a great king, known even to this day and credited for the writing of the 150 songs and poems which make up the book of Psalms. An unlikely outcome for a boy skilled with a lyre and a slingshot. So, too, for the heroes such as Moses and Jacob and Esther. And most unlikely? A baby born to become a king as the world had never seen. A baby born in the lowliest of places, a stable. A baby born to a young virgin. A baby whose birth was heralded to, of all people, shepherds, people who rarely entered town, who rarely made contact with others. A baby whose birth was celebrated by wise men, astrologers respected for their understanding and recognizing of the signs of change written in the stars. A baby whose birth threatened a king. A finite and fragile baby whose birth revealed the love and care and judgment and forgiveness of an infinite and omnipotent God.

Unlikely, yes? Just as unlikely? The miracle that this same God has chosen to make each of us in God's image and who has chosen to love us just as we are, flaws and failings, ignorance and impotence, without condition. The God who sees us when we are angry and loves us. The God who sees us when we are selfish and loves us. The God who sees us when we are mean and loves us. The God who put in each of us a spark of the infinite that we might know a connection to our maker and strive to behave more like we were created to behave. And maybe more unlikely than being born in a stable? Christ is born in each of us. We were all created to be houses of the Lord. So, as we join next in the pageant, marvel with Mary that you, too, carry Christ; stand with the shepherds in awe that Christ is near you; rejoice with the angels in Christ's presence; be humbled with the wise men by the change Christ can bring to your world. So may it be with you and with me. Amen.