

# 2Samuel 7:18-29

December 23, 2018

Willoughby Heights CanRC

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Read: 2Samuel 7:1-17

Psalm 132:6,7,8,9,10

Text: 2Samuel 7:18-29

Amen-song: Psalm 89:1,2,8,10

Dear children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, and guests, today is the last Sunday of Advent. Remember what Advent is about, boys and girls? Advent is about the coming of Jesus Christ, looking forward to His coming. In the Old Testament many people looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. He came: Christmas marks the end of Advent. Yet we today look forward to the coming of the Messiah as well, His last coming. The expectation of the Christ in the old covenant era warns, comforts and encourages us in our expectation of the Christ during this new covenant era.

Two Sundays ago we paid attention to God's work through Abram. A man who was plucked out of his context to live with God, to live by faith, to trust and obey. There he stood, an old and childless man, at Shechem in the middle of Canaan, by the great tree of Moreh, in the devil's playground. That's where God said: "To your offspring I will give this land." Here the LORD would continue to fulfil His plan of Salvation.

That was around 2000 years before Christ. After then the river of Salvation History hit obstacles, even dams. Israel ends up in Egypt, there's 40 years of wandering in the desert. There's the depressing time of the Judges. The hopelessness of the situation as sketched in the first chapters of Samuel. But some 1000 years after Abram God raised up another special man. David. With David the river of Salvation History flows fast and deep. Things were looking up for God and Israel. The task God had given Israel through Moses and Joshua, of making the land promised to Abraham a holy land, had been completed by David. The Canaanites and Philistines had been subdued. David's sphere of power and influence went from the Euphrates River all the way to the border with Egypt, and from the desert beyond the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. The worship of God is restored as well. The ark is in its rightful place in Jerusalem. The priests are serving as they ought. David is served by prophets who bring him God's Word. Things are looking up.

As David takes stock of the situation he's struck by something. "I live in a palace but the ark is in a tent." That isn't right! God's ark should be in a wonderful temple as well. Moreover, great kings always built a temple for their divinities. It wouldn't be proper for David to be king and not build the LORD God a temple. But David has learned to be careful when it comes to the worship of God. He'd once made a mistake with the ark, having it on a cart instead of having it carried. So David shares his thoughts with Nathan. One might see this a bit like David talking to his elder or minister about some big plan he has. At first, the prophet Nathan figures it's all good. What objection could God possibly have to David's plan?

But then the Lord speaks with Nathan during the night. "Nathan," said God. "Go back to David and tell him this. He's not to build a house for me. I've never asked for a house. Mind you, the plan is good. But his son should build the house. As for David, rather than he build Me a house, I'll build him a house. A royal house that will last forever. A son of his will always be king." Beloved, here Salvation History really begins to flow along. The waters of God's promises and deeds run swift and deep. There's no sin damming the river. Instead, there's faith, accelerating the waters. The grace of God, who made the loyal and trusting David king, is rewarded with the grace of God: a child of Abraham is pin-pointed as the bearer of the Messianic Promise.

Brothers and sisters, understand this well: what we've read is more than the story of a loyal, trusting king who listens to God. It's much deeper. This is not about David but about God. It's about God using this opportunity of faith and dedication to speed on to the moment of reconciliation. Just as sin has God (in our experience) delay things – think of the desert wanderings for example – so faith has God (in our experience) speed things up. And in our text God takes a huge step, a huge leap forward towards the

coming of the Messiah.

And, as we marvel at how God moved forward, so we should also take note of how David reacts to this. That helps shape our own expecting – our pondering, conduct and experience of God’s presence – in life.

**We listen to the Word of God summed up with this theme: Our expecting is shaped by God’s plan and activity. We’ll pay attention to how (1) God’s sovereignty shaped David’s attitude; (2) God’s promise shaped David’s requests; and (3) God’s faithfulness shaped David’s certainty.**

### **1) God’s sovereignty shaped David’s attitude.**

One of the first things that may strike one in our text is how it refers to David and God. Note the narrative section of verse 18: “Then *King David* went in and sat before the *LORD*.” Note the title for David, *King David*. He is an important man. He is king of an empire, an empire he’d not inherited but conquered. We’re not sure of the date of our text, though it would seem that 1Samuel 7 tells of a time later than 1Samuel 8. Some scholars even figure that, by the time of our text, David had been king for some 30 years already. We don’t really know. But the wars are over, there is peace, David lives in a house.

This *King David* “went in and sat before the LORD”. Went in where? Obviously, some place that could be considered a place “before the LORD”. In all likelihood, David went in to the tent where the ark of the LORD was. Now the ark of the LORD stands symbol for the throne of God. And what sort of a person sits on a throne, boys and girls? A king, right? So note it well: King David has an audience with King Yahweh. A by human standards mighty king comes before an even greater King.

Now note that in the presence of the LORD David is no longer “King David”. Notice how he addressed God in his prayer. Seven times we read in the expression “Lord GOD”, that’s with “GOD” all in capital letters. That’s a translation of the Hebrew expression “Adonai Yahweh”. If you translate that more directly, we’d say “Lord Yahweh”. “Adonai” is the Hebrew word you use if you address someone with seniority or authority over you. The way you might say “sir” to a teacher, a police officer, or a border guard. In saying “Lord”, David acknowledges that God is greater than he. There might be, so to speak, two kings in the room, but they are not equals. David refers to God as his “lord”. And he refers to himself as God’s “servant”. That’s “servant” in the literal sense of the term: one who serves. One might even translate here with “slave”.

David’s demeanour is determined by God’s sovereignty. The very first words of the prayer bear that out. “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house that you have brought me thus far?” Yes, by the standards of Israel, David’s house, David’s family wasn’t much to brag about. Let’s go back five generations. Back to David’s great-great grandparents. Boys and girls, do you know who David’s great-great grandmother was? It was Rahab of Jericho. A Canaanite woman. Now David’s great grandmother. Do you know who that was? It was Ruth of Moab. Outsiders had been prominent in the family of David. Then David himself. The eighth son. So unimportant that when Samuel came to anoint David king, he wasn’t even called in to see Samuel. By all human accounts David was a nobody.

But look at what God made of him. He is king of a large empire. In his time the promise of a land stretching from the River to the Sea as made to Abram was fulfilled. And now God promises him every king’s heart’s desire: descendants on the same throne. What David said regarding this as found in verse 19 is not easily understood. The ESV translates it as an exclamation of amazement: “And this is instruction for mankind!” There is a mysterious depth to these words. At one level they would mean “God has spoken of the future of David’s house; it will continue along the way of biological law for humanity.” In other words, a biological descendant of David will always sit on the throne. But at a deeper level they point to the fixed nature of God’s plan: through David’s family God will execute His plan.

And thus David, as he sat before the LORD, pondered these overwhelming truths. The LORD, the God of Israel, is a very special God. There is none like Him. He rescued Israel from Egypt in a most wonderful manner. He conquered Canaan. The gods of the land have perished: the Baals, the Asherah, Dagon of the Philistines. None compares to the Sovereign LORD of Israel. He is an awesome God. A God beyond words.

Doesn't it often happen that, when you ponder the greatness of God, your thoughts begin to tumble one over another? If you're praying in words, it becomes somewhat mixed up. You begin to stammer. It happened to David. David began to understand that something very, very special was happening here. David is not just a person with an assisting role in the history of God's plan. An Abel, a Job, a Melchizedek, a Moses. No, he receives a place in the centre, along with Seth, Noah, Abraham, and Judah. David is more than just the king of Israel. Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, had once upon a time been lord of Israel. But the promise of the Messiah had gone to Judah. And now David, the last son of an unassuming family, is to Israel both a Joseph and a Judah. Both king and bearer of the Messianic promise. We who live some 3000 years later realize it's even bigger yet. For the little town of Bethlehem, the hometown of David, would one day be the hometown of Jesus. David wouldn't have realized yet how far it would all go, but his name would be known around the globe. One of the titles of the Messiah would be "Son of David." What had David done to deserve this? David can but stammer.

God's greatness makes one small. David had a wonderful plan: to build a temple for God. It would have made him famous. It made Solomon famous. But descendants forever, a family that would not die out. That's so much more. The sovereign LORD continued with His plan, using what in the eyes of the world was weak and insignificant.

We live today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sons of David would reign forever. Indeed, there's a son of David right now, a man of flesh and blood, with David's DNA, whose title is "King of kings and Lord of Lords." He not only has an audience with the Sovereign LORD, He is seated on a throne at God's very right hand. He is our King. You understand: I'm speaking of Jesus the Christ, our Saviour and Lord. The angel would say a thousand years later to a David's daughter, to Mary: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33). He was born, He lived and died and arose from the dead and ascended into heaven to take that throne. And He is coming again to bring us into His perfected kingdom. The Sovereign Lord raises the insignificant to importance. And when those who are insignificant are raised to importance, they will not insist on their significance or boast of their glory. Rather, they will say, as David did: "Who am I?"

Acknowledging God's sovereignty shapes our attitude. As we look forward to the final return of our Saviour and as we are instruments in His church gathering work, let's stand amazed at the high calling given us by God. And do God's bidding.

## **2) God's promise shaped David's desires.**

Remember what started all this? It was David's desire to build a temple for the Lord. He had a beautiful house, and the ark was in a tent. A tent is less than a house. And the LORD is more important than David! If anything, God should live in the palace and David should live in the tent. David wanted to build the LORD a house. But God wouldn't let him. David's son would do it.

Does it strike you that there's nothing in David's prayer about the temple? Nothing? Not a word? It's as if David has forgotten all about the temple. We know that's not true. For David will yet make all sorts of preparations for the building of the temple. He made sure his son had the financial resources and materials to build the temple. But for now, the temple went unmentioned. David has understood what is truly important. And that's not the temple.

David had wanted to build God a house. But God would build David a house. A son of his would be on the throne, forever. David knew this runs deeper than just perpetual kingship in David's family. This promise of God reached back to the patriarchs. Had God not promised Abraham that from Sarah kings would be born? Had Jacob not spoken to Judah about a scepter? Had Balaam not prophesied concerning Israel that a star would rise from her to slay Moab? Promises made in the context of that huge promise that related, not just to Israel, but all of mankind, all of creation. David understood that the promise God was making to him connected back to that mother of all promises: the crushing defeat of evil by a descendant from the woman. Yes, David understood that he would be father to the Anointed of God, to the Messiah, to the Christ. As we know today, the last king to be born to the house of David would be none other than the Saviour of the world.

David doesn't quite know what to say. Verse 21. "Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it." David didn't earn this great privilege. He didn't even deserve it. It's all, it's all God's doing. All David is to do, is to be a willing instrument in God's hand.

A willing instrument. When David had decided to build God a temple, it had seemed a good plan. But David is careful, he'd learned his lesson. He asked Nathan for advice. Nathan first said "Go ahead." But then had to tell David: "You're not allowed." Imagine that, being told you're not allowed to build God's temple. One could imagine that David was disappointed. But we don't see that in his prayer. Rather, David adjusts his sights. The temple is out of view. God's plan comes into view.

We see it happen in verse 27-29. David acknowledges what God has promised to him. David didn't really know what to ask of God, what to do for God. But now he does. And so he asked God to do as He had promised. He asked God to bless the house of David.

At first I found that odd. To pray God to do what He has promised to do. My thoughts then tend to be: If God has said He'd do something, well, then He does it. Right? David was convinced of that. Verse 28: "And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant." Why request what you've been promised?

But my initial reaction evidences a more pagan view of prayer. Prayer is not just asking for things and hope that you'll get them. Prayer is first of all profession, a profession of God's promise. It's the articulation, the acknowledgement of God's Word. Such acknowledgement is also expressing agreement with God. And asking God to do as He has promised is an expression of faith in God. For God gives upon prayer. Remember, sin can throw up a dam in the river of God's plan of salvation and faith speeds the flow of the waters along. Prayer is the expression of faith. It is man seeking to meet his responsibility in the power of God. David – one might be inclined to think of him in our text as a hero of faith. But David knew himself how miserably he could fail. God would have to give the energy to do the work that needed doing.

David had learned to pray, as his great Son Jesus would teach us all to pray. "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be *Your* Name, *Your* Kingdom come, *Your* will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It's all about us, as servants of God, desiring what God has promised, and asking God to fulfil His plan. And when we pray for ourselves, we'll put that in the context of God's plan. And yes, we may even come to that point of no longer praying about what we had initially desired, just like David dropped the whole temple thing. We have faith, not in our plans, but in God's plans.

### **3) God's faithfulness shaped David's certainty.**

At various points in the prayer of David we can see that David has understood the nature of the promise

he has received. One might say, David has been allowed to observe a few more pieces of God's plan of salvation. God has made clear: David, it is through your family that I will save the world.

David knew the value of God's Word. The promise of salvation, that's what all of world history is about. What we read is not a personal reward for David's faith. That's part of it, but that's not it. It's all about God's Name, God's honour, God's deeds. The words that straddle verses 25 and 26 typify it: "do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever"

David knew of God's promises in the past and how they had been fulfilled. The promise of land and offspring to Abraham: it had happened. The offspring of the patriarchs would be in Egypt for four generations, and then be rescued. That's how it had gone. The boundaries of David's kingdom are those that were mentioned to Abraham, a thousand (a thousand!) years earlier. God's Word comes true. Indeed, sometimes there are hindrances, dams in the river of Salvation History. But the water keeps flowing, God keeps heading towards that moment when the time would have fully come.

David has become part of God's plan. David knew, God will accomplish His purpose. Even the worst sin cannot undo the promise of God. That's what left David speechless. Sin might cause the fulfilment of the promise to halt. We know how it went, how during the exile the Davidic line ended, how in the days of the Romans Joseph the crown-prince was but a poor carpenter who couldn't even live in his hometown Bethlehem. It's the lamentation of Psalm 89.

And yet, look where things are at today. The promise became reality. By human standards the house of David is already remarkable. Did you know that measured from David to Zedekiah, the last king before the Exile, the house of David lasted twice as long as the longest dynasty of Egypt? By human measurement, 450 years of royal rule by one family. But we measure further. For Jesus the Christ was the Son of David. And He sits enthroned on the cosmic throne. His throne is the throne of David. He governs Israel. He governs the Church. He is Lord of the universe. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. The angel said His Kingdom shall have no end, the angel said. And we echo it with the Nicene Creed.

Fulfilled promises in the past guarantee absolutely the fulfilment of God's promises in the future. God's faithfulness gives certainty. We hear David speak in that way. Today we are much further, we've seen much more promising and much more fulfilling of promises. God will continue to fulfil His plan.

Not that it comes automatically and smoothly. Sin can throw up a dam in the river of God's plan while faith has the water speed on. Not all of David's sons sat on his throne. The exile shows us how delays can happen. But those who trust and obey should not doubt that God will fulfil His promises to them. For no sin is powerful enough to block the flow of Salvation History forever. On the cross our Saviour, the Son of David, conquered Satan. He arose, conquering death and the grave. Things are looking up as we head to the fullness of God's Kingdom. Brothers and sisters, join David in confessing God's greatness, and find your certainty in your God.

**Our expecting is shaped by God's plan.** David had a brilliant idea, but it was not to be. God had a much bigger, much better plan. David acknowledged God's greatness, it shaped his attitude. David acknowledged God's promises, it shaped his desires. David acknowledged God's faithfulness, it shaped his certainty. The faith David displayed, given him by God, allowed God to go full speed ahead with the plan of salvation.

How is that for us? We look forward to the second coming of our Lord. Regarding this second coming, the apostle Peter wrote the following. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). Sin causes delay. Faith speeds things up.

In a sense we are richer than David. We've seen more than he did during his earthly life. Does it fill you with awe? With a new longing? With faith? Ponder the wonderful deeds of God, put into practice what you learn from the saints in Scripture, and the God of peace will be with you. The Christ is coming!

Amen.