

**Pentecost 9, Year B**  
**July 22, 2018**  
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My cousin Greg in Colorado, my friend Mike from Michigan, and I are all pun lovers. We share our favorite groan-inducing puns through Facebook, bonding over the best of the eye rolling phrases. When I asked them for a couple of their favorite religious puns, they shared these with me:

**\*How does Moses make his coffee? Hebrews it.**

**\* I read the other day that the 10 Commandments were the first bits of information downloaded from the Cloud to a tablet.**

**\*What kind of man was Boaz before he married? Ruthless.**

**\*And this amusing back and forth: Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible? Samson, he killed using just a jawbone, and he brought the house down.**

**\*Okay, Okay, Samson wasn't really a comedian, but now we're just splitting hairs.**

**\*And finally: I don't know about Samson being a comedian, but I bet he slayed 'em.**

God, it appears, is a punster, and a much better one than we are. King David was safely ensconced in his royal home and had moved the Ark of the Covenant with God to dwell in the midst of God's people once again, when it occurred to him that perhaps he should build a temple for God in place of the tent where the Ark resided. This sounded like a good idea to Nathan the prophet, at least until God had something to say about it: **“Are you the one to build me a house to live in?”** God then uses the Hebrew word *bayith*, which we translate *house*, to explore all three meanings of the word: a palace, a temple, and a dynasty. King David

lived in a *palace*. He wanted to build God a *temple*. Instead, it was God who would make of David a *dynasty*. God took David from serving as a shepherd to become the king through whom God would lead God's people saying: **"It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel."** Yet David was simply the designated human king and shepherd, for God is the ultimate king and shepherd, as is articulated in the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm: **"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want."** It is through David that God promises to raise the one who **"...shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me."** And while David's son Solomon did build a temple for God, there was someone who would come long after Solomon who would build a different kind of house for God and be a different kind of Son.

Who might that someone be? The Bible is rife with clues, if only we know the promises well enough to recognize the images and echoes. God makes it clear that the one we seek to fulfill God's promise will be a son of David. Matthew tells us in Jesus' genealogy that he is a son of David. God says Jesus will be a son to God. All four Gospels repeatedly identify Jesus as Son of God. Theologian and Episcopalian Elizabeth Webb highlights the theme of shepherd applying to Jesus, pointing out that when Mark's Gospel reading for today describes Jesus responding to the crowd with **"compassion for them, because they were like sheep without**

**a shepherd,”** it is a deliberate echo of Moses praying for God to send a successor to lead the people, **“so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd.”** In our first reading God says, **“I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.”** In the Prologue to John we hear the poetic statement of God’s incarnation in the person of Jesus, **“And the Word became flesh and lived among us....”** The word we interpret as *lived* is the same word translated as *tented*, or *tabernacled*. God’s portable dwelling place became the flesh, the person of Jesus.

Why does this trail of literary and theological crumbs matter to us? It matters because while Jesus is the one in whom God’s promise to build a different kind of house was fulfilled; God’s promise did not end there. The promise continues by integrating us as a part of that house. That is what Paul is trying to say in the letter to the Ephesians, telling them that whether people were insiders or outsiders, Jewish or non-Jewish, in Jesus that which has separated us from God and each other has been broken down and something new has been created. That something new came through Jesus offering his life so that we might have new life, his body so that we might be part of a new body, his self so that we can be new selves, as Paul says, **“...so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross....”** While we, like David, might think we are

building a house for God when we create a lovely sacred space like Christ Church, the mind bending surprise is that God is actually building a house—a temple, a dynasty, an everlasting kingdom—in the Body of Christ, of which you and I are each a part. God’s focus is not on the building, although buildings can be wonderful things. God’s focus is on the relationships: our restored relationships with God and each other. With each person baptized into Jesus we grow more inclusive. Each time we receive the Holy Eucharist we are renewed with the presence of Jesus. Together we become more fully the Body of Christ, the true house of God. As Paul says, **“In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.”** Folks may need to hear that again: you are a dwelling-place for God.

God has called us together, with our differing gifts and talents, flaws and foibles, needs and strengths, to work in and through us as the Body of Christ in the world. God has called us, in this place and at this time, to share the presence of God with each other and the communities in which we live and work and play. God has called us to participate in the work of reconciliation and redemption, of sharing good news and giving hope, of offering what we have and seeking to grow into who God would have us be. What is it that you need to be able to humbly accept this gift, as David did? What is it that you can contribute to building up the

Body of Christ as the unique person that God has made you? Who is it that you can welcome or invite or include? We are the Body of Christ at Christ Church. What is God calling us to do, to be, to offer as a community of faith? There is no indication that David envisioned himself being called from his everyday role as youngest son and keeper of the sheep to being King of Israel and the shepherd of God's people. God is the one who called David, who used his gifts and talents for the benefit of others, and who filled him with the Holy Spirit so that he might do and be more than he could ever accomplish on his own. God likewise calls us, desires to use our gifts and talents for the good of others, and fills us with the Holy Spirit. Today, when the worship service is over, the adventure begins. Say yes to God's call, and see who you might become, where you may be led, and how you can be a part of living into our shared mission: ***Transforming ourselves and our community through the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.***

Amen