

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 20, 2020

Second Samuel 7.1-11, 16

Now when King David was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the 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." Nathan said to the King, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I 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. Wherever 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?" Now therefor 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 the prince over my people Israel; and 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. And 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, from 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.

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

Luke 1.46b-55

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely from now on generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.

Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting come.

v 1, "While We Are Waiting, Come", (Hymn # 92. Glory To God Hymnal)

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Stranger...you welcomed me
Second Samuel 7.1-11, 16
Luke 1.46b-55

The books of Samuel are part of the historical collection of books in the Bible and they deal, along with 1 and 2 Kings, the story of Israel's monarchy, or experience with kings. In the Hebrew scriptures, 1 and 2 Samuel are one text, the division into two in English translations of the Bible follow the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew texts into Greek which, according to one tradition, was completed in 70 days by 70 rabbis (thus the word Septuagint, a word that includes the Greek word for seventy). 1 Samuel focuses on Samuel in chapters 1-12, who is viewed as a transitional figure in Hebrew history leading into the time of the monarchy, and Saul, Israel's first king, in chapters 13-31. David, whose reign is found beginning in 2 Samuel 5, figures prominently in the latter.

David is portrayed in the history of Israel out of two different sources: one has him as a musician, the other as a shepherd. These two sources have been combined in the telling of David's story, which grew to include him as a great warrior (David and Goliath) who grew to command an army of soldiers in successful campaigns against the enemies of Israel. David is also personified as a great politician in his ability to not only unite the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel and his astuteness in choosing Jerusalem as the capital of the united kingdom. Jerusalem also contains the Hebrew word for peace: shalom, and salem, an English form of the word names not only a city in North Carolina, but a brand of cigarettes. 2nd Samuel, including today's text, is all about David leading up to Samuel. David is secure in Jerusalem and in conversation with his chief aide, Nathan, muses about building a house for the tabernacle, the ark of the Covenant which has served from the days in the wilderness as a symbol of the LORD's presence with the people. The LORD comes to Nathan in a dream and says that it is not up to David to make the LORD a house and that the LORD will make a house (a lineage) of David. Which, of course, happens.

The text from Luke 1 is a song which carries the traditional name "The Magnificat", so named because of the first word in Latin. It closely resembles a prayer uttered by Hannah found in 1 Samuel 2.1-10 in the wake of God answering her prayer for a child, delivering and naming that child Samuel, and then bringing him to the temple in Shiloh where he was mentored by Eli. In Luke it is an affirmation—magnifies declares the greatness of—by Mary of how God has blessed her through a pregnancy of her own. Intentional contrasts abound: Hannah was childless while her husband's other wife had multiple children; Mary is a young woman (the meaning of the word translated 'virgin') and is engaged, not yet married. Each is 'visited' by the Lord and is found to be a woman worthy of welcome.

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Stranger...you welcomed me

United States definition of homelessness, anyone without a:
"fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."

Statistics taken from endhomelessness.org (2019 stats) based on a "point in time" survey that is annually taken in the United States in cities, towns, counties

17 out of every 100,000 people were experiencing homelessness nightly January, '19

70% are individuals; 30% persons in families with children

60% of all persons living in homelessness are male

Amongst individuals, 70% are men and unaccompanied male youth

amongst homeless persons, overall 37% (50% of individuals) are unsheltered

on a single day it's estimated there are 200,000+ adults over 50 who are homeless

Groups: persons of higher risk

persons of color are % wise more likely to be homeless than Caucasians

chronically homeless persons include disabled: 17% of the population

homeless Veterans make up 7% of homeless population

unaccompanied youth make up 6% of homeless population

Over the past five years, temporary housing beds

(Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing has decreased by 9%

Shelters able to provide a bed for 51% of individuals, 100% of families

Over the past five years, permanent housing beds increased by 20%

Many Americans live in poverty: 38.1 million or 11.8% of the US population

In 2018 6.5 million Americans spent more than 50% of income on housing

Doubling up, or sharing a household, is shared by 4 million US citizens

Nationalhomeless.org

Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked

Poverty makes it challenging to pay for food, healthcare, childcare, education

Issues/challenges contributing to poverty:

Lack of employment opportunities

Decline in public assistance

Lack of affordable health care

Domestic violence

Mental Illness

Addiction

What is the Spirit inviting us to consider regarding opportunities to welcome strangers?