

Devotion 1 - 2 Samuel 7:8-16

⁸“Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. “The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: ¹²When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. ¹⁵But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

... In an Everlasting Kingdom

As God spoke to his servant David, King David has moved into his new palace and conditions in David’s kingdom were peaceful.

David recognized God’s wonderful blessing and wanted to bless God in return. He thought, “I’m going to build the best house I can for the Lord!”

What a lesson there is for us in this! God blesses us with so much, in so many ways, and so faithfully. Did you go hungry today? If so, it’s not because of the lack of food but rather the neglect of eating? Were any of us out in the cold last night? Did any of us have a problem finding warm clothes to wear today? Then think of the faith we have, the forgiveness we enjoy, the eternal life that’s ours, the presence of God and his power put to work in our behalf. We are blessed!

But do we seek to bless God back, living for him, worshipping him, and supporting the ministry of the gospel? David serves as a wonderful example of blessing God in response to his blessing us. But he also serves as a prick to our conscience when we don’t give thanks.

God’s response to David was “NO!” Why? God didn’t want a temple built at that time. 1 Chronicles 28 reveals, when God would decide to have a temple built, he would have someone other than a warrior like David to build the temple. So, David wanted God to bless David with the privilege of building God a temple, but that was not the Lord’s plan. God had another blessing for David.

It’s interesting, isn’t it, how we may have plans, but our plans are not God’s plans? So, God displaces our plans and replaces them with his. But that’s what we pray for when we pray, “Your will be done.”

While God didn't will that David build a temple, God planned to bless David in other ways. God told David that he would make David's name great. God did. How many people are remembered and renowned 3000 years later? David is. God gave him such a name.

But God also would give him another kingdom – an everlasting kingdom. God told David – **“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever (v. 16).”** This is a kingdom in which you and I and every true believer lives and dwells.

In this is a kingdom her citizens are not immune to sickness or invulnerable to hardship. Citizens of this kingdom struggle to stretch paychecks to cover expenses. They struggle with the influence of sin that infiltrates their lives through the media and society that gets a buy-in from their sinful nature. People physically die and before that, they often physically digress in this kingdom.

Yet, this is a kingdom, this house of David, where we enjoy the love and peace of God in us, the power of God at work for us, and the protection of God over us. In this house we are safe from the curse of sin we deserve. While the devil may tempt us, he cannot snatch us out of God's hand because God holds us safe in his powerful hands. This is a house, a kingdom that is everlasting.

This is because in this kingdom with an everlasting king.

... With an Everlasting King

God then had Nathan the prophet announce to David a blessing that God had stored in his bag of best blessings. **“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:¹⁶Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (v.11 &16)**

The short-term fulfillment is that David's son Solomon would succeed him as king. He would rule over a kingdom with fame that spread through the world.

But there was an ultimate fulfillment for David. This would come in David's descendent Jesus. As to his divine nature Jesus is the son of God; as to his human nature, of the house and line of David. He would build a house for God's name, not a temple like that which Solomon built, but a temple of all true believers. He would do it with his life, his death his resurrection. He would do it through the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament.

Isaiah prophesied, **“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom ... forever (9:7).”** The angel Gabriel told Mary that the son to be born to her would sit on the throne of David and rule over the house of Jacob, and his kingdom would never end (Luke 1:32,33)

As a result of this ultimate blessing of David, we are blessed. We have a Savior. Our sins are forgiven, and this forgiveness is ours through faith. We have a living Lord who loves us and rules over all things for our good, blessing us with the best. We are part of an everlasting kingdom and enjoy everlasting life, partially now but fully in eternity. Like David, do everything you can to thank him.

Devotion 2 - Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God. ³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷For no word from God will ever fail." ³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Mary's Response

Can't you imagine how disturbing the appearance of this holy, heavenly being must have been to Mary? While Gabriel's greeting was positive, what was it all about? Not knowing, Mary was afraid.

Of what are you afraid this Christmas? An illness that could end your life? Death and meeting Jesus? Has Covid-19 taken its toll on your resources to the point of where you're not sure how you will financially make it much longer? Are you struggling with depression or some other illness? Is there friction in your family or among your friends? With so many things unsettled in society and uncertain in government, are you afraid for our country and our way of life? Do you feel guilty of sins that make you feel unworthy and afraid of our Holy God because in his law he condemns sin and curses sinners?

Gabriel's Message

Sensing Mary's fear, the angel Gabriel gave her a second message - "**Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.**" Literally Gabriel told Mary that God was showing her his grace, his undeserved love.

God's Miracle

This message of Gabriel brings to light the first miracle of God – his grace to Mary. Mary was not conceived and born without sin and therefore, never sinned. St. Paul wrote, "**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...(Romans 3:23).**" Mary had sin and needed a Savior. It was only by God's grace that she could enjoy favor with God, be a part of his family and have eternal life.

That anyone is saved and has eternal life is only by the grace of God. If we are left to take care of our own salvation, cope with our own problems by ourselves, secure our own peace with God and enjoy peace within ourselves, we are hopeless. It is by God's grace and his miracle that we are saved.

It was in view of what the angel would go on to say that this would be possible.

Gabriel's Message & Miracle

Gabriel continued – "**You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.**" ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the

throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Gabriel wasn't sly and subtle with his message to Mary. He was straight-forward and specific. "You will bear a son and his name will be Jesus" which means "the one who saves." How appropriate. The holy life, the sacrificial death on the cross and the resurrection of the dead of the son to whom Mary would give birth, are the way God especially showed his grace to Mary and all humankind. Through Mary's Son our Heavenly Father provided forgiveness, peace, and eternal life for Mary, for us and for all.

Gabriel went on to say that Mary's son would be the Son of the Most High. He would be true God as well as being true man and Mary's son. Gabriel added that God would give Mary's son the throne of King David. Jesus would rule over God's people. Gabriel also indicated this with his reference to Mary's son ruling over the house of Jacob.

Mary's Response

Mary's next response to Gabriel's message was, **"How will this be ... since I am a virgin?"** Mary knew that humanly speaking, what Gabriel told her was impossible. Mary was engaged to Joseph, but they had not been intimate. This would require a miracle.

Gabriel's Message & God's Miracle

Gabriel's next message promised a miracle of God - **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing is impossible with God."**

"...Nothing is impossible with God ..." God is almighty. Remember this when you have problems that seem so big and overwhelming. Think of how God parted the sea and stopped a river, sent bread from heaven and defeated armies. Remember this when you feel so helpless and things seem so hopeless. Remember how Jesus brought hope and peace and light to people to whom he ministered. Remember this when your guilt is so great and the possibility of your being right with God and getting into eternal life seems so slim or small. Remember this when you are facing death and wondering about how you will get from here to heaven or whether and how there can be a heaven or how the dead will rise.

"...Nothing is impossible with God ..."

Mary's Response & Miracle

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Surprise, shock, fear, and doubt turned to humble submissionHow could this happen? It was another miracle of God. The love of God, the power of God and the peace of God brought this about and made this a most memorable meet for Mary. When you find yourself struggling with the Lord's will or his call for you to serve or sacrifice, like Mary, remember and trust in the love, power, and peace of God. Respond, "I am your servant, O Lord."