

The Indwelling Face of God
2 Samuel 7:1-11, Luke 1:26-38
December 21, 2008

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

The theme of the service today is about God making His home among us. As I shared with the children, God is everywhere and is over all things. But He desires to live in our lives, to have His home in us. In this story from 2 Samuel, we see that David had a desire to build a home for God. He wanted to build a great temple. But God told him “No.” God had never lived in a house built by humans. He had never commanded that a house be built for Him. Instead a tent had been His dwelling, a tent that was able to be moved from place to place and was also able to be pitched among the people where they were camped. God’s home had always been among His people.

Through this message given to Nathan the prophet, God communicated that He would instead establish a house for David. What God meant was that He would watch over the throne and one day, the Messiah, the King of Kings would come from David’s family. The Messiah would be the one who would build a house for God. And that house is the people of God. In 1 Peter 2:4 -5 it is written, “As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by human beings but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” We are the house, the home, that is being built for God.

You see, within each one of us is a desire for God. All humans have an instinctive knowledge of the divine. We know that there is something greater than ourselves and throughout history, we have sought to worship this something. You can go anywhere in the world and find houses that have been built for the worship of gods. But only the God of the Bible says that His house is among His people.

David wanted to build a house for God but God answered that He would build a house for David instead. He would establish David’s throne forever.

Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophecy. He rules forever as He rules in our hearts and lives. His kingdom crosses all borders. There are believers in Jesus Christ all over the world. His kingdom extends across people groups, tribes, nations, ethnicities, political and class boundaries. This morning we heard the words “glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” in the various languages that are represented among our congregation. We tried to get all the languages that are spoken among us. We see even among ourselves a little of how far the kingdom of God stretches over the earth. How else apart from the work of God could we come together as one people to worship Him?

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise God made to David 3000 years ago that from him would come a ruler who would establish God’s people in a place of peace where they would no longer be oppressed by wicked people. This ruler would provide rest from all enemies. Jesus said in Matt. 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” And in John 14:27 he said “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Now we know that peace is not all over the world wherever God’s people are. God’s people are in places of great suffering, oppression and war. We are still waiting for the final fulfillment of this promise. But we can already live in peace with God.

I was at a meeting on Wed. and the pastor of the Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Philadelphia was sharing about what God has been doing in that congregation and community. They’ve been doing H & H evangelism, inviting their neighbors to cookouts and giving out hamburgers and hot dogs and then talking to people about God. He told of several conversations that he had with people who commented on how peaceful it felt being at the cookout. He told them, “You have peace here because God is here. When you go home do you have this peace? No, because God isn’t there. You need to accept Jesus as your lord and savior and then He will live in you and you will have this same peace wherever you go.” He has led several people to the Lord this way. Everyone wants peace and when God is at home in us, His peace remains in us.

The message the angels brought to the shepherds was one of peace. When the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary and Joseph he told them to not be afraid. He offered them peace. When Jesus was 8 days old and taken to the temple for circumcision, the old man Simeon saw him and prayed "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation." God wants to dwell among His people and give us peace.

The Christmas story communicates not only that God seeks a home among His people and gives us peace, but also that people must respond to God. When Vandy asked me to marry him and for us to make a home together, I had to say yes. And we've had to continue to agree to make a home together. As with most people, there have been times that have strained that commitment. But we've remembered our promises to each other and continued to make room in our lives for one another and worked to keep peace in our relationship and peace in our home. And that's only possible as we both seek to live in peace with God.

It's the same type of thing in our relationship with God. God gives us the invitation to live in relationship with Him as His people. We have to accept the invitation and let God move into our lives. When we were first married and I moved into Vandy's apartment, he made room for me. He cleaned out some closet space. He made sure I had room for all my stuff. He let me rearrange things. We opened a joint bank account. And throughout the past 20 years we've learned to share other things as well, thoughts, ideas, emotions, memories, problems, disappointments, expectations, parenting responsibilities, dreams for the future. It's the same with God. All aspects of our lives have to be open to Him if He's going to have His home among us. We have to learn to open everything up to Him and share our lives fully with Him. In return, He teaches us about Himself and opens up to us His Word and His heart.

In the Christmas story we see that Mary and Joseph accepted Jesus fully into their lives. Mary carried Jesus for 9 months in her body and gave birth to him. Joseph took care of Jesus, protected and provided for him, gave him a name and made sure he was taught properly. Joseph and Mary loved Jesus.

The shepherds responded to the invitation to see Jesus. They left their flocks and hurried off to find the baby. We didn't read the story of the wise men today but it's found in Matthew 2 and we see that the wise men left their homes, traveled hundreds of miles probably, following a star in order to worship the baby king. They responded to the sign of the star. All these people interrupted their routines, disrupted their lives, in order to worship Jesus and have an experience of him, to have him in their lives.

What about us? Have we responded to the invitation to worship Jesus, to let Him make His home in our lives? Have we experienced peace with God? If not we can respond today with a yes. All we have to do is say, "Yes Jesus, I want to live in peace with you, I want you to be at home in my life." He does the rest. Another question is how much at home is God in our lives? Is He fully at home in our lives or is He confined to one area of our lives? Maybe we need to open up some of the hidden spaces of our lives to God today. Are we truly at peace with God? Or are there things in our lives that are disturbing our peace with God?

As the worship team comes forward we want to take the time to respond to God's invitation to come to Him, to let Him live in our lives, to be His people. No matter how long we've been following the Lord and living in relationship with Him, we all have the need to examine ourselves from time to time to see if there is any area of our lives where He has not been welcomed. David prayed in Psalm 139:23, 24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I want us to pray this prayer of David's as the worship team leads us in this next song. And if you feel like you need to respond to God in some way today, if you need His peace, then I would ask you to stand as we sing and at the close of the song I will lead us in a prayer.