

SERMON
First Lutheran Church
Aitkin, Minnesota

2 Samuel 7:1-17
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
October 23, 2016

KIDS' MESSAGE

Kids, do you see this tent? **God used to live in a tent.** No, the ancient people of Israel believed that **God's feet** lived in a tent in the middle of their camp. God's ancient people traveled around following their sheep and living in tents. They had a special tent where they thought God's footstool stood for God to rest God's feet on.

When **God's people**, with **King David**, finally settled down and started to build **wooden houses** to live in, they figured that they should build a **wooden house for God's footstool** to be in too. But, God said, "**No! I don't want to live in a house.** I want to be **free to move around** and be with my people wherever they are. I don't want to just stay in a building. I want to be with them when they are **watching their little lambs**. I want to be with them when they are **hauling water from the river**. I want to be with them when they are **eating their supper** and **sleeping in their beds.**"

Kids, we call this church "**God's House**." Does God live here? Is this where God keeps God's footstool?" Well, **yes and no**. God is certainly here to welcome us when we come together for worship and Sunday school. But God will also be there when you are sitting at **your kitchen table** this afternoon. And God will also be there when you go to **bed tonight**, and when you go to **daycare**, pre-school or elementary school tomorrow. Or when we're **camping in our tent** at the state park.

God will also be with the **homeless people** who sleep under bridges tonight. And with the **soldiers** who serve our country in far distant places. And with people who are in **jail cells**, or **hospital rooms**, or **nursing homes**.

When King David and God's people offered to build a permanent house for God, God said, "**No! I want to be everywhere that my people are!**" And that's the promise we have, kids. God is here and everywhere. God loves and cares for us every day. And even when we die, God will bring us home to live with God in heaven forever. **So, we never have to be afraid of being alone.** God is always with us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

ADULT MESSAGE

Can you see God somehow present in your life and home. Your church and faith family. Your community and world. Can you see God dwelling in each and all of those places and circumstances? How has God been moving in your past? How is God seeking to move in your life right now? What are God's hopes and dreams for your future? For our future together as the people of God gathered here, in and through First Lutheran in Aitkin, Minnesota?

God moved in the past. We heard about it in our lesson from **2 Samuel**. After years of battle and turmoil conquering and then settling the Promised Land, finally the Israelites, God's chosen people, could slow down, catch their breath and live in peace. **King David** now ruled over Israel. You remember, David was the youngest son of his father, **Jesse**. When the **prophet, Samuel**, came to find and anoint Israel's new king, he skipped past all of Jesse's older sons and had to go out into the fields to find and anoint David, a young boy who was shepherding his father's sheep.

King David, with God's help and blessing proved to be successful in battle and in achieving power and wealth. Settling down, David built a fine house of cedar to live in. Then it occurred to David that God should also have a **more permanent structure** to dwell in than the tent that had sheltered the "**Ark of God's Presence**" since they had left captivity in Egypt. The people believed that this tent sheltered the **footstool of God** here on earth. King David announced his plan to the **prophet, Nathan**, who agreed that this would be a good idea. **God's people should take proper care of God right?**

That night, Nathan learned otherwise from God. David was making a **little promise** to build a house for God. God, in the meantime, was working on a **much larger promise** for David and for the people of God. Here's the story God reminded them of:

"Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought the people of Israel from Egypt to this day" –

- I have been **moving about in a tent**.
- I have moved about **among my people**.
- I took you from a **sheep herder to a prince**.
- I have been **with you wherever you went**.

- I have **cut you off from your enemies** and given you a **great name**.
- I will find a **place for my people to live** and **plant them there**.
- I will give you **peace and rest**.
- I will **make YOU a house** – offspring, kingdom and throne.
- I will give you **an offspring who will build your kingdom**.
- Your offspring **will suffer at human hands**, but my **steadfast love will remain with him**.
- And the gift I give – **your family** – **will last forever**.

Did you hear all that God had done and promised to do for David and God's people? David thought that he was going to **take care of God** while God made clear that **it is God who takes care of David and of God's people**. Here at **First Lutheran**, do we take care of God or does God take care of us? Is what happens in ministry and mission here at **our initiative or God's**? God did the building in David's day and God does the building in our own day. And **God can be found in our worship here**, but God can also be found when we worship in our **deer stand**, in our **duck blind**, beside our **campfire** and amidst the **autumn leaves** that are falling.

David promises to **build God a house (structure)**. God comes right back with the promise to **build David a house (family)**. David promises to build God a house that will **last until the cedar walls rot away**. God promises to build David a house that will **last forever**. **We are a part of David's family today**. David has a little dream for building God's house. God has an unbelievably huge dream for building David's house. God has been pursuing God's people in love since the first creation story. Now God comes through a shepherd king, an ancient kingdom and eventually God moves through **another shepherd, Jesus**, born not in a palace but in a cow barn. And King Jesus has come to love and save all people, to love and save us. We are hearing our **own family story today**. God raises the bar from David **building a house to serve as the footstool of God** to **God dwelling** for an **eternity with God's people**. God **promises to move** through **David's faithful following** and through **King Jesus**, David's great, great, great... grandson. God is heading through history **towards you and me**.

Even when we have the best intentions in mind for loving, serving and worshipping God, **God is always ready to do greater things** for us than we could ever do for God.

- It is such a good start for us to be **here to worship God**, but it is way bigger that Almighty God is **in here and out there to love and care for us.**
- Us putting **some of the money we have** in the plate when the ushers come around for the offering is a good start, but God giving us **everything we have** is way bigger.
- Us loving and caring for the **people in our families and friendship circle** is nice, but God loving and caring for **us and for all the people in the world is way bigger.**
- Us using our time and talents to do **our part in helping the world to be a decent place to live** is so good, but **God using all the people** in the world to partner with us is even way bigger.

My wife, Jennifer, and I have slept in the same bed for over 43 years. My parents gave us our bedroom set when we got married. It is still holding up through the **enthusiasm** of early marriage, through the **conception** of three children. That old bed has provided **rest** for our weary muscles and heavy eyelids. **Refuge** from the world's troubles. **Care** in times of sickness. **Solace** in times of grief. A **place to kneel and pray**. A place to **worship and thank God**. A **fresh start** for every new day.

God has been building a house for Jennifer and me. Our lives together started in a third floor servants' quarters in one of Duluth's fancy, old houses. It continued in seminary apartments designed by a southern architect. They were too cold in winter and too hot in summer. It continued in three parsonages – similar to rental homes. We've lived in a little house of our own for about 25 years. Some day we may end up in some sort of a condo. An assisted living apartment. A nursing home. An Alzheimer's unit. God has been on the move through all of this. And God will keep moving to give us life through whatever the future brings.

Here is a **picture of our family** taken this past summer. Picture your own family. Maybe someday, more grandkids will be added to our photo. Maybe a divorce or death will steal someone away. Someday I will die and leave my family here on earth behind. You've heard me say before, **"On that last day, it won't matter how fancy my earthly home, or how much money is in my bank account. What will matter is that someone loves**

me and I love them. What will matter is that God loves me and I love God.” I love God a lot. Maybe you love God a lot too. **But, God loves you and me** and our families way, **way more than we could ever imagine.** And God is the One who builds our house, our church, and the heavenly mansions.

Today we gather here and remember

- That **every good gift** in our lives **comes from God,**
- That **we come from God,**
- That **on the last day, God will bring us home** to live with God in love, joy and peace forever.

Today, together, we **remember and give thanks** in **God’s House.** And tomorrow, we will remember and give thanks in **our house,** **where God also dwells** mightily to give us life. Thanks be to God. Amen.