

The Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 20, 2020

The Lessons: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
 Psalm 89:1-5
 Romans 16:25-27
 Luke 1:26-38

The Hymns: # 357 (1,4,5) *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*
 # 398 (1,4,5) *Hail to the Lord's Anointed*
 # 339 (1-3) *Lift Up Your Heads, You Everlasting Doors*

The Collect: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Sermon:
 "The Throne of David"
 Luke 1:26-38

1. The Palace and the Tent

It just wasn't right, and David knew it (cf. OT reading, 2 Sam 7:1-11, 16). The enemies were conquered, the kingdom was secure, and he lived in a beautiful palace in Jerusalem. So far, so good: except for the tabernacle. The house of worship for the one true God was still a tent, one that had been in use for 400 years. David was living in a mansion of cedar, but Yahweh was still camping in a cloth room. It didn't look right: it looked like David was far more important than the one true God, and David wanted to fix it. He called Nathan the prophet and announced his plans to build a glorious temple, and one can imagine his excitement. Oh, to be there when the building was finished, when the Lord appeared in a glorious cloud, overshadowed the temple and then entered it! It sounded perfect, and Nathan gave his blessing.

But the Lord said no. He didn't want a temple, not yet. He didn't need a temple, either; that building—His house—would be for the people's benefit, not His. For now, the building would wait; but the Lord had better news for David. He reminded David that He had taken him, a lowly shepherd boy, and made him ruler over all of Israel: David was king only by God's mercy and faithfulness.

But more important was this: the Lord was going to make David's house last forever. Not the cedar palace: no, that would decay like everything else. David's household, his family line, wouldn't end. Ever. While David lived in a world of violence, death and rebellions, the house of David would rule and reign for eternity. One of his descendants would sit on the throne forever. That One would be the Savior.

David would not live to see Solomon build the temple, to see the Lord overshadow the Holy of Holies in a cloud before entering. For now, strange to the eyes, the Lord was content to live in a tent while a human king lived in cedar walls. David would be dead for nearly a thousand years before the Savior was born. But while he did not see these things with his eyes, he had God's Word on it. He had God's promise. It would happen. And so he declared in response to God's promise, "Now, O LORD God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said" (2 Sam 7:25).

God had said. It would happen. And so it did: "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her:

"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

God kept His promise; the angel appeared to Mary: Mary, descendant of King David, but humble and poor and living in backwoods Nazareth. "You've found favor with God," said Gabriel, "and you're going to have a Son. He will be the Son of God, and He'll sit on David's throne forever." It wouldn't be a throne of this world, watching this planet spin to its destruction. It would be an eternal throne, for God's Son would rule forever.

The practical Mary asked, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" Gabriel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Once God had overshadowed the temple before entering in; now He would overshadow Mary and she would carry the Christ child in her womb. And as David had once added his amen and prayed, "Do as You have said," Mary faithfully added hers: "Let it be to me according to your word."

It was like the palace and the tent all over again. King Herod's kids would cavort secure in royal mansions, while Mary would continue her life of poverty in Nazareth, Bethlehem, on the run in Egypt and back. Herod would sleep in a luxurious bed, but the Son of David would first be laid in a manger. And so it would go: Herod and Pilate and Caesar would have their proud warhorses, but Jesus would ride a colt, the foal of a donkey. They would possess their golden thrones and crowns, but the Savior would have His wooden cross and crown of thorns.

To the eye, Jesus would seem like nothing compared to those earthly rulers; but Herod, Pilate and Caesar all died and remain dead. Jesus died. Jesus is risen. And, as the Lord gave His Word to David, Jesus reigns forever as King. Your King—because He died and rose for you.

2. Your King, Forever

Indeed, in the past two thousand years since the birth of Christ, countless kings have ruled and died. Empires have risen and fallen, civilizations emerged and disappeared. That is how kingdoms go in a dying world. But Jesus remains King of kings and Lord of lords—for now and for eternity.

Why? Is it because Christians say so, hold out hope and insist it to be true? No. Jesus is King because HE says so. He who gave His Word to David and Mary still gives His Word today. Throughout the kingdoms of the world, nations rising and falling, some ruled by just men and others by despots, the Lord still speaks His royal decrees, His certain pronouncements. You hear Him ruling at the font, where He says, “I am the King who has conquered even death, which is why I live forever. I share that victory with you now as “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

You hear Him speak His final judgment through the mouth of His called and ordained messenger: “I have conquered sin and devil, and I set you free from that kingdom of darkness: I forgive you for all of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

You hear Him speak His invitation at the altar: “This is the King’s table, and I give you My body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.” That is where the King rules today: by His means of grace. Not just in church, but wherever His Word is preached and His Sacraments administered according to His Word: in the hospital, the battlefield, the nursing home, the school, the deathbed.

So be duly warned. You’ll always be tempted to look for Jesus in the glitz and glamour, the flash and sizzle of this world—in feelings and excitement and numbers and more. Or you’ll be tempted to despair because the world continues its death throes and the Lord does not return yet. But when you are so tempted, remember that He has made you part of His household of faith, not household of sight. Remember the tent, not the palace. Remember Mary in Nazareth. Remember manger and cross and crown of thorns, that your King comes humbly to save you, that you might be in His kingdom forever. He is not far from you, but gathers you here to rule with mercy, to speak to you His Word and feed you His Supper.

So like David and Mary, you add your amen: “Let it be to me according to your Word.” Your King rules and reigns forever, and you are His forever, too: because you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.