

# "An Unexpected Dynasty"

2 Samuel 7:1-11,16

December 21, 2014

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent

Although we are all caught up in paying attention to Christmas, there is something else that is vying for our attention already and that is the presidential election of the year 2016. Even though the election is nearly two years away, talk about who will run has been going on for some time now. Will it be Hillary or yet another Bush? We always seem so anxious to find a new and better president that we start talking about it earlier and earlier. We want someone who to be talented at governing, yet have personal integrity. We want someone who is powerful in dealing with our enemies, yet compassionate in dealing with the people of our country. We want someone who is just, yet fair. In other words, we want the perfect president. We want someone who is not only good themselves, but who will be able to make our country better.

Yet we always seem to find fault with the person in charge of our country, especially since the Watergate era of the 1970's. Now, reporters not only report all the failures and shortcomings of our leader which they already knew, but they go digging for dirt and scandal. Even if we find a president who is good, we will find that he is not and has not been perfect. Even if he is the best president ever, our constitution will limit his terms and, eventually, he will die and we will be forced to settle for a lesser person. It seems that we just can't find someone to fit the bill...or maybe he is there, but it's just not what we expected.

That was the case for God's people in the Old Testament. Our lesson for today tells of King David whom the Jews regarded as the greatest of all kings. Our text tells of early in his reign after he had assumed the throne, consolidated his power, and brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. Everything was going well and he felt that it was now time to do something for God. He felt guilty because he lived in a fine cedar palace while God dwelt within a tent-church called the

Tabernacle. David wanted to build a temple for the Lord. At first, Nathan, the prophet, gave David the go ahead, but, later that night, the Lord spoke to Nathan and told him His true wishes.

The Lord basically said, "Thanks, but no thanks. I've never asked for a temple and I don't need one. But I will do something for you. Instead of *you* building *me* a house (i.e. a temple), I'll build *you* a house (i.e. a dynasty) for, back then, the leader of the nation was not elected (as is the case now), but leadership was passed down from father to son. But dynasties could fail and fall. God promised something better than a regular dynasty. He said, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

I'm sure David and, later on, the people when they found out were overjoyed. They expected David to establish Israel as a successful and mighty world power. Then, one of David's capable descendants would maintain and expand their power. Nothing could stop this, so they thought, because God had promised that this dynasty would go on and on. Their nation would be successful as long as the Lord was on their side.

Some people today might think our nation is a modern day "kingdom of God" which is to be established and maintained through political means. We hear talk of making this a "God-fearing, Christian nation". We think that we will be successful as a nation as long as God is on our side.

The people of Israel found out that depending on politics and a human dynasty would be unreliable. David turned out not to be the perfect king. If you remember your stories from Sunday School, David's reign was marked not only with faithfulness to God and success, but also with lies, deception, adultery, and murder.

Instead of a smoothly flowing dynasty, there was a power struggle after his death which his son, Solomon, finally won. While Solomon did expand the worldly success of the kingdom of Israel and did build a temple for the Lord, he fell into idolatry and tyranny. At his death, the kingdom was split into a northern and southern kingdom, neither of which was as powerful or successful as the united kingdom and only one of which (the southern kingdom) was ruled by the Davidic dynasty.

Years later, after repeated unfaithfulness, both of those kingdoms were conquered by their enemies, leaving no kingdom and no dynasty under the family of David.

We find the same thing out when we think we have it made as “one people, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all”, don’t we? As much as we attempt to “Christianize” the nation and make it the modern day kingdom of God, we find ourselves disappointed over the ever deepening moral crisis that faces our nation and the lack of ability for our political leaders to do anything about it.

What went wrong here? We see no eternal kingdom or dynasty either in Israel or here. Did God lie or make a mistake? Or, might it be that the people then and we now have expected the wrong kind of kingdom and the wrong dynasty?

We run into difficulties when we think that the main problem is a political, social, or moral problem that can be solved with political, social, or moral solutions. The problem facing us, as it faced Israel, was a spiritual problem which requires a spiritual solution. Neither King David nor one of his descendants or any of our political leaders could ever be part of a dynasty to deal with this.

However, our Gospel lesson for today shows how God intended to fulfill His promise. Through His angel, Gabriel, God told the Virgin Mary, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 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, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” It would be a heavenly king - the Son of God, not an earthly king, who would continue the dynasty of David. And he would not be encased in either a temple made of stone or a tent made of cloth, but He would come in human flesh. The Gospel of John says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (Greek - “pitched His tent) among us. (John 1:14)

The kingdom would be just as different as the king who would establish it. It would not be a long lasting dynasty limited to earth, but an eternal dynasty beginning on earth and culminating in

heaven. It would not be a kingdom established by the king putting His enemies to death with military might to save his people, but by the king offering Himself to death on behalf of His enemies to make them His people. It would not be a kingdom with citizens limited only to those born in the right era, in the right location, or to the right race or nationality of people, but it would be a kingdom opened to all people of all times and all places. It would not be a kingdom where citizenship could be obtained by birthright or by the will of the potential citizen, but only at the invitation of the king. It would not be a kingdom that would be seen and noticed by other kingdoms, at least at first, but would be initially hidden in humility and, only later, show forth a power and a glory that would far exceed any other kingdom in the history of the world.

This unexpected kingdom has been established by this unexpected King whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. By virtue, not only of His humble birth in Bethlehem, but especially by His death on Calvary and His glorious resurrection, Jesus has established His kingdom of the righteous by paying the debt for sin which all people owed. You have received your personal invitation and been accepted for citizenship in this kingdom at your baptism in which your sin against Almighty God was personally forgiven. You don't have to wait for some future utopian kingdom of God to *be* established in the future and then worry and fret over whether you will be included. The kingdom is now and you are citizens of that kingdom now.

However, this is a kingdom which is now hidden to the human eye. The Pharisees of Jesus' time wanted to know when the kingdom would come. Jesus said, ""The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is among you." In other words, the kingdom of God is not present where there is glory, power, and might, like other kingdoms of this earth. The kingdom of God is present, though hidden, where Jesus and His love and mercy are present. Therefore, the kingdom of God is present clear out here in Montana because Jesus has promised, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." His mercy and renewing grace are present in the water in our baptismal

font and in the bread and wine on our altar in which children and adults are continually being brought into the kingdom and renewed in their citizenship in the kingdom.

Now, the world may not be able to see this kingdom or may even scoff at its existence, but one day there will be no doubt or scoffing. The kingdom of God which is humbly hidden now will be gloriously revealed when the King comes again in all of His glory and might at the end of time. There will be no more meekness and mildness to this King, only power and glory.

And, as you are citizens now of that kingdom, so shall you be citizens of the kingdom then for “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6) Then, as the Bible further says, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

Therefore, in the time that we have left, remember who you are by God’s grace -- citizens of the kingdom of God. As St. Peter says, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Live as citizens of the kingdom of God, rather than as permanent residents of the present kingdom of darkness. Realize that the kingdom of God is truly present now. It remains hidden from the human senses and covered by suffering and persecution. Don’t let that discourage you. Know that the King is present among us now as we gather together to hear His Word and eat His body and blood at our altar. When things seem bad and being a Christian seems to be a lonely and ridiculed station in life, go not to your senses for comfort and support, but to the King Himself in Word, prayer, and Sacrament to receive the strength and the encouragement to continue to live in the Kingdom.

And remember one very important thing: the kingdom will not be hidden for long. The triumph over sin, Satan, and hell has already been accomplished. The victory belongs to Jesus Christ and is

ours through faith in Him. The final culmination of that victory *is* coming. The eternal dynasty which is currently hidden to the human senses will soon be revealed in all of its majesty and glory. “Be faithful, even to the point of death,” Jesus says, “and I will give you the crown of life.”

For many people, the 21<sup>st</sup> of December means we are on the threshold of Christmas and all the celebrating that is about to occur. For us, though, as Christians, it is slightly different. We are on the threshold of a king and an eternal dynasty. We are preparing to celebrate the King’s birth in Bethlehem and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. That is truly a time of happiness and joy. We are also waiting for that king to return and usher in the fullness of that eternal kingdom. That is truly a time of excitement and anticipation. So, as you stand on the threshold of *that* this Advent season, look back with joy and forward with anticipation. The unexpected message about an unexpected salvation through an unexpected Savior and unexpected King is about to be fulfilled. As Jesus said, ““Yes, I am coming soon.” And we respond, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”