

Upon this house

2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Ephesians 2:11-22

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David unified Judea – a nation virtually at war with themselves. The Northern tribes practicing their faith their way and the Southern tribes another. You wouldn't think a chosen people of the same faith would wage war on one another ...but then, you probably know about the violence between the Sunni and the Shia Muslims.

David chose a neutral place to build his capital and he places the Ark of the Covenant there. Peace among his unified people reined and continued for many generations. He fought off all their enemies. He wrote many of the Psalms.

And having built a great city – his greatest wish was to build a fine Temple to hold the Ark.

Last week we talked about the humans need to build big stuff – to put God in a box – a concrete shelter. In this passage God says to David, I have been wherever you have gone, I have travelled with your people, I will make your name great, I will make a place for your people, I will give you rest from your enemies ...I can almost hear him say, 'isn't that enough??'

What is this fixation on edifices?

And Lord says, I will build YOU a house. And here there is a play on the Hebrew word Beit – House – which also means dynasty. A different kind of house. David is told in no uncertain terms he will not get his grandiose Temple – but rather be a foundation of a lineage that will establish a kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

And this is why Matthew 1 starts off with the genealogy of Jesus.

Now I am not sure God wanted to be put in a box. Remember last week, I said we are called to that other-worldliness? When he says he will build a kingdom, I don't think he's talking about Solomon...

I will be his father – can only be talking about Jesus and a completely different kind of kingdom.

Men will be men – and the need to leave concrete offerings was no different in those days than it is now. Solomon did build the Great temple that became the centre of Jewish worship.

Remember the times – they had seen the temples in Egypt, the temples in Rome – it was what you did.

So the great house of David was probably not what he wanted but it was what he got.

The greatest thing that David did was unify the house of Judea and I don't think he really understood the importance of that.

Just as Lincoln said, a House divided cannot stand – so the broken Judea was vulnerable on all sides to its enemies. Peace and Posterity were God's offerings to the people.

The suggestion of not buildings, not nations but households is picked up in the Ephesians reading. Once again, we are talking about unifying a people – healing what is fractured.

The passage asks us to remember – not to let go, but to remember as an act of gratitude. Jesus was Jewish – his disciples were Jewish; he was preaching to a Jewish crowd about a new way of seeing God. Remember, he was clear – He said it again and again, they should stick to the laws of their faith, – BUT (and that's a big butt) laws cannot compete with the one law - 'Love your God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself.' It's a no-brainer. There was one number one rule.

So, if it meant saving someone on a sabbath – it was worth breaking the 'no work' rule for love. If it meant being touched by someone unclean – that was worth breaking the hygiene rule for kindness. You get the picture.

Well, not everyone who came to listen was Jewish. The impact Jesus had on others was contagious and poor old Paul had to be hit over the head a couple of times (well scary God dream events) to understand that to honour another, to eat with another (no matter what the food) was to honour God: to love your neighbour.

By this time, there was a growing community of gentile Christians and a great deal of discomfort amongst Jewish Christians. But a house divided cannot stand. There is no way the movement could flourish with 2 branches.¹

The passage reminds us that the Gentiles were strangers, non-citizens, excluded and without hope. Basically, the Jewish Christians owned the 'house'. But Christ's death changed all that. His life preached peace – his death breached divides – everyone was in the same boat. "For he himself is our peace and made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." Because both groups have equal access to the Father.

Again, this passage says circumcision is an act of man, not God – so again, rules are being put aside for a greater purpose. But not to forget the past, to build on the foundations established by the faith through the prophets and Apostles.

And so the passage ends referring to a household *as* a Temple – reflecting the passage we read in Samuel. A mirror image but changed. In this, the members of the household are related by Jesus' blood. They are no longer strangers or foreigners and together will build a house in which the spirit of God lives.

And this house is built of people – not stones.

Dear Lord, help me be satisfied with greatness in action not in memorials that feed my ego. Amen

¹ Which is, by the way, one of the reasons there is an ING in Uniting. We are not united – as yet.