

SERMON – 21/11/21**'David and God'**

2 Samuel 7:18-29

“I am not worthy of what you have already done for me, Sovereign Lord, nor is my family. Yet now you are doing even more, Sovereign Lord. You have made promises about my descendants in years to come.”
(2 Samuel 7:18-19)

This morning we come to the end of our series of sermons on the life of King David, although as we will see next week it is not really a conclusion but only the spring-board for the story of great David's greater Son (as we sang a few moments ago). Today too is the last Sunday of the Church's calendar when we celebrate the enthronement of Christ as King over all, although again as we will see at the beginning of Advent next week that too is not a conclusion but the pointer to a still more glorious enthronement when God will bring about a new heaven and a new earth, the enthronement that begins when each one of us allows the Christ child to be born in us, accepts the salvation that Jesus won for us at the Cross and bows the knee to Him as *our* Lord.

I would like to unravel that theme of conclusions and new beginnings this morning as we reflect on the prayer King David offered so many years ago but which prompts our praying still in our generation, that we may each keep in step with the Spirit of God by seeking the will of God, the coming of the Kingdom of God, in our own particular circumstances.

Perhaps you remember right back to the story of David that we have been reading, back to when Brenda spoke about the prophet Samuel looking for what the Lord described as 'a man after my own heart' to replace Saul as king. David was a man after God's own heart in that he was courageous in the face of the Philistine threat while the armies of Israel were cowering, he was a man after God's own heart in that he was gracious while Saul was vindictive, he was a man after God's own heart in that he was anointed by God rather than appointed by his fellows, and God used him powerfully. He was not perfect, of course – he was human and like all of us he fell short of God's standards, but as we might say his heart was in the right place, seeking after God and ready to humble himself before God in repentance when he has messed up. In our reading this morning I think we get a

helpful sense through the tenor of his prayer of *how* he walked with God, and there are lessons for us to learn here for our own walk with God.

In this morning's passage we find David enthroned as king over Israel and finally established in Jerusalem, which despite its apparent impregnability as a fortress city, he had skilfully wrested from the clutches of the Jebusites, completing the conquest of the Promised Land that had begun so long before. But despite his political and military successes he finds himself uneasy. He has brought the Ark of the Covenant of God to Jerusalem his capital city and welcomed that symbol of the presence of Almighty God personally with embarrassingly unrestrained worship, but he is overwhelmed by a sense that it is wrong for him to be living in a fine royal palace while the holy Ark of God is still housed in a tent. As we saw in the drama earlier, he determines to build a great temple for the Lord but God speaks to him through the prophet Nathan who informs him that that task was not to be his but for his son to complete. Now while you or I might be disappointed or even angry at this revelation of the will of God, David goes straight to the Tent of Meeting to pray.

And it's to David's prayer that I would like to turn with you this morning for what it has to teach us about walking in the will of God. "I am not worthy of what you have already done for me, Sovereign Lord," he begins," nor is my family. Yet now you are doing even more, Sovereign Lord. You have made promises about my descendants in years to come."

I don't know if you notice the shape of the prayer, which he goes on to develop and reinforce in the succeeding verses that we read earlier, but there is a past, present and future structure to it that chimes well with this season of the year when we move from looking back in remembrance to looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises, all in the context of the coming of Immanuel, God with us.

Firstly, David pauses to give thanks for what God has done. "I am not worthy of what you have already done for me, Sovereign Lord, nor is my family." When did you last sit down before God and pour out your thanks for what He has done. We have all had plenty to complain about in these past months, and I'm sure I've not been the only one to have taken my moans and groans to God in prayer. Perhaps we have also carried long-standing gripes about things that have happened to us or the lot we have been given in life, and whether we have been conscious of it or not these

things have been right in the forefront of our minds whenever we have come to God – that thing that we have never forgotten, never let go of, perhaps even blamed God for because to our way of thinking our life would have been so much easier, so much better, if it had not come our way. David could have come to God seething with rage at the fact that his anointing as king by the prophet Samuel had taken years and years to come to fruition because Saul had steadfastly held on to the throne, but instead he bows before the Lord saying “Lord, I am not worthy of what you have already done for me.” And I venture to suggest that each one of us should be taking that prayer on our lips today. Let us of us each recount the wonderful acts of God as we pray and let us lay down those disappointments and unworthy thoughts that too often cloud our fellowship with the Lord as we simply revel in the fact that, unworthy as we are, God has been constantly and unbelievably good to us. Without Him what would we have been?

Secondly, though, David rejoices in what God is doing in the present. “Now, you are doing even more, Sovereign Lord.” You know sometimes we are so caught up with what has or has not happened in the past or with thoughts of what may or may not lie ahead of us that we are oblivious to the gracious presence of the Lord in the moment, right now. We may have learned the lesson David did about the importance of giving thanks for the past deeds of God but the rest of our prayer times can so easily get taken up with the long list of things we want God to take care of in the days to come. Don't get me wrong, it is right and proper that we pray for the peace of the world, for the wise government of our nation, for the support of the poor and needy, for the healing of the sick and for so many other things besides but before we start on the list, we need simply to rest in the presence of God and to seek the face of God right in this moment. Listen to what David says here: “How great you are, Sovereign Lord. There is none like you. You are God and you always keep your promises.” When did you last just pause in the presence of God, worshipping and simply revelling in who God is? We are too easily tempted to look back and seek to make sense of what has happened in the past or to look forward and rush on into the future (and as I have been saying there is a time and a place for both of these things) but too often we get caught up so much in the high speed journey of life that we miss what God may be doing in this very moment and we are deaf to the still small voice whispering to us as we press on to the next big

thing. Be still and know that I am God, says the Lord. Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know. Be still. Just be. How great you are, Sovereign Lord. There is none like you. You are God and you always keep your promises. All praise and worship, all honour and glory be yours.

But thirdly, David does take hold of what God is saying about the future. “You have made promises about my descendants in years to come.” If he has any sense of disappointment that God is not going to allow him to realise his vision for a great Temple for the Lord in Jerusalem, that is swept away by his joy at the promise that the Temple will be built by one of his offspring and that his son and heir will be just the first in a long line of descendants that God will establish on the throne of Israel, culminating (though David himself is not given to know it) in Jesus of Nazareth, the very Son of God, *our* King and the Lord of all eternity. All of us have our dreams, and David was no exception, but where many of us start with our dreams and ask God to bless them and make them happy, for David it is the other way round – he starts with the promises of God and asks God to change him and make him a part in their fulfilment. This is perhaps the lesson that we find hardest of all to learn about prayer for we tend to think of our praying as an attempt to bend the will of God in our favour rather than about putting ourselves in a place where the will of God will mould and change us. As we saw earlier, David had come to God with a dream, an apparently honourable dream to create a worthy temple for the name of God in Jerusalem, but God's answer was No, that's not for you to do, David. How easy (and understandable even) it would have been for David to be angry with God but instead he comes to God in thanksgiving for the past and in worship in the moment and the Lord responds by opening up a future of promise that David could never have dreamed of. Now what have you and I missed out on because we have never moved on from that time when God said No?

We all have so much more to learn about the place of prayer in the outworking of the purposes of God. I hope that we may all make time this week really to seek the face of God and to humble ourselves before the Lord – Almighty God, I am not worthy of all you have done for me, all you have given; and, remarkably, there is even more for me at your hand right now as I still my heart in your presence; but what does the future hold for me? Let me be completely open before you to all that you have in store for me, don't let me assume that my dream, however apparently worthy, is the

best that can be, but shape my will in accordance with your perfect ways and let me discover just what you can do when I let your Kingdom come and your will be done, through Jesus Christ in whom all your promises are Yes.