

Sermon: Mending Links, Breaking Chains
Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-14, Jeremiah 33:3
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Mission Trip Presentation Sunday
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Today's first Scripture reading comes from 2 Samuel 7:1-14. As David dance before the Lord when he brought the Ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David seems unsure how to be a great host for the Lord. When he was perplexed, it is God who reached out and makes a covenant with David. Listen to the Word of the Lord.

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

Amen.

Our second Scripture reading comes from Jeremiah 33:3. When Prophet Jeremiah and the Israelites were held in exile and was wondering what will happen to them and if God has deserted them, God mend links between Godself and the people by reassuring them how firm God's covenants are, and to understand that there will be a restored nation of Israel. To calm the fears and anxiety of the people, God comes to Jeremiah a second time and begins with this one verse. We will hear them in two Bible translations. Hear now the word of the Lord.

“Call to me and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (NKJV)

“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” (NRSV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Let us pray:

Faithful God, thank you for your Word that is new every morning. As we seek your face and lean on your wisdom and understanding this morning, may the Word of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer.

For the past week, exception of last twelve hours, youth mission team had a great time of serving, loving, and learning about others. We have encountered and experience God at every corner; we were captivated by God's love through nature which are God's brush strokes which its beauty cannot be duplicated; served those who are the least of these in the world – not directly but behind the scenes by packing kits, packing boxes, fixing structures; all of which you will hear directly from our youth in a bit. Thank you for your prayers and support to make it happen. We really lived out our theme, mending links, breaking chains.

When someone mentions a link these days, many associate a digital link, a button or blue letters that will open another website or an email we can send messages to. But this morning, for those who are with me, understands that I am talking about a physical link. A tool unique and powerful, yet not very useful by itself. It brings out its potential when it is connected and linked with another, creating a chain. As many of us have experienced, during the time of COVID, we have been isolated and our links - our relationships - has been not connected physically, and we longed for them. And when we came out from our isolation and started to reconnect our links, it brought us joy; simple things such as hugs, ability to share a meal, to simply sit together. Likewise, our youth needed a time to bond and create a deeper relationship once again, to enjoy each other's presence.

Our Bible passage today reminds us that this connection also needs to take a place in our daily spiritual walk with God. How often have we invited God to our tables with prayer before the meals, how often have we invited God to journey with us during our walks, how often have we simply sat together enjoying each other's presence? During one of the devotions, I asked the youth, have we looked at our spiritual walk the wrong way? If our God is steadfast and faithful, who walks with us, is next to us all the time, and carries us in time of need, is it truly us who needs to ask, seek, and knock so that the door will be opened to us? Or is it that God, who wants to mend our relationship is the one who is already asking, seeking, and knocking on our hearts so that we may invite God into our lives, in order to create a home, a temple; to be a host not in a physical building but within our hearts? We forget mending links, mending relationship is like a door. It is a two way street.

We have many hidden false pretenses in many areas of our lives, including our spiritual walk. We have created many chains of habit in the way we think and we act, without thinking about where these links are anchored to. We need to ask God to help shine God's marvelous light so that we may see the hidden things that we have not known in

our own lives. Are we faithfully living out what we believe? Is God truly on top of our priorities and the root cause of why we do good deeds? Are our chains anchored at the foot of the cross or something else in the world?

I would love to extend an invitation for you to sign up for the steadfast neighbor service week to recenter your lives and make it a time when you call on God – to ask the great and mighty things, like the youth have done throughout their week in service. Let us be the agents of change, starting with myself, to be changed. Let us go out in faith and see what God does for us. I dare each of you to grab any one of us wearing the green T-shirts today and ask when they encountered and experience God this week. God is faithful. Let us mend our links with God. Let us mend our links with all our neighbors, starting with the ones sitting next to you, in this neighborhood, and to the ends of the earth. Along the way, let us break the chains of our own fears, anxieties, and false pretenses. Let us break the chains of injustices that we encounter. As we proclaim God's good news, let us experience what God has prepared for those who love God¹ and be a source of blessing to others around us. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 2:9