

Sermon – “A House of Cedar”

Sunday, July 19, 2015

Scripture Readings – 2 Samuel 7:1-14, Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

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Our first reading is from 2 Samuel, chapter 7, verses 1-14. Hear now God’s holy Word.

1 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2 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." 3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." 4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: 5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? 6 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. 7 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?" 8 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; 9 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. 10 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, 11 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. 12 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. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 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.

Our second scripture reading is from the gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verses 30-34 and 53-56. Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. 53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

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

The title of the sermon – “A House of Cedar”

The text: “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.” 2 Samuel 7:10

Let us pray: Holy God, you call us into a rhythm of work and rest that our lives may be the better for it. So shape our lives that the world will recognize us as Christ’s disciples, and may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. Amen.

I have to say the best description I could possibly imagine for Mission Trip is found in Mark, chapter 6, verse 31: “For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.” We may all be about to go away to deserted places to rest awhile. I promised I would keep this meditation short. But if I had a full sermon, or even a full day, I wouldn’t have time to tell you all the things I want to share.

If I had the time, I would tell you about parking lot limbo and candy ammunition. I would tell you about early morning wake up calls, gentle or otherwise, and hidden air mattresses; about 1920s dance parties in the cafeteria and impromptu togas; about dehydrated scrambled eggs and the mad rush for ice cream; about friendship bracelets, flying rubber bands, and a truly stunning collection of bandanas. If I had the time, I would tell you about the people we met and served. People who each in their own way opened their homes and their hearts to us. I would tell you about our projects and work sites; all the scraping, painting, and deck building; and about Christine’s dock repair challenge. I would tell you all the ways in which we were served by our residents and all the ways we felt and knew God’s love through them. If I had the time, I would tell you about the hot, airless, narrow hallway the thirty-four of us crowded into each night for our own private group time; and I would tell you about all the ways we met God there.

I would tell you that our young women did the majority of Scripture readings at evening worship in front of almost five hundred people; and that our young men made up the entirety of the worship drama team. For I would also tell you about the confidence, self-assurance, and deep faith of each of these young people. I would tell you about frisbee games and soccer games and mad games of spoons. I would tell you about screaming group charges into the chill of Lake Michigan and acrobatics off of sand dunes.

I would tell you about the building of this family. I would tell you about their integrity and compassion and the depth of their feeling for one another and about their eloquence in word and deed as they cared for new friends and old.

But since I don’t have that much time, and since some of the youth will speak for themselves soon enough, I want to talk about houses. This past week we left behind our own fine homes of cedar and our house became a middle school. We were welcomed into different houses of so many different people. We repaired houses and painted houses and each one was different. But let me tell you, palaces of cedar were in short supply.

In one of our evening devotions this week I shared with the youth my delight with this passage for I am always amused at David. Only now that he is settled in his own fine and well-painted house, does he suddenly recall God – as if he had forgotten God while he got his own house in order. But God has no need for a fine house of cedar, for the ark of God is in a tent among the people and God is living among the people; healing and teaching and comforting, a shepherd caring for the flock. God has no need for a house for God’s concern is with God’s people, a

people who have wandered unhoused and without place of their own. God's house is second to homes for God's children. But more than that even, God's children are God's house.

We are God's house of cedar in all we do together as the church. In our frisbee games and our music, in our pranks, and in our tears for one another. We are God's house when we come together in mission and when we gather for worship; and together we build God's house when we reach out with compassion and care for others. We build God's house when we allow our own hurt and brokenness to give us the strength and courage to meet others in their pain. We build God's house when we repair the homes of others or offer kind words to a hurting neighbor or deepen our own relationships with one another. For in Christ, God lived among us and showed us how to build this house: by tending to the sick and grieving, by comforting the desperate, by caring for the well-being of others and ourselves until every one of God's children has a place of their own where they will live in peace and be disturbed no more. God calls each of us in whatever way we can to build God's house and to be God's house so that all children of God may have a home. Amen.