

## Advent wk 4, 2014: 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (Luke 1:26-38) – The Homeless God

What think of when hear the word homeless? (**SLIDES**)

Ever thought we could apply that word to God? Home in heaven, but here on earth.... Title for today is 'the homeless God' – what might mean for us today

### Story so far:

Israel's desire for a king not gone well so far: Saul – looked right, but heart not right (called when wandering around looking for father's donkeys; when chosen – found hiding in baggage – sermon series soon?)

Soon let God down – chose David – 'man after my own heart' – kills Goliath and very quickly Saul becomes jealous. Next few years: Saul chasing David, never catches him but eventually dies in battle (takes his own life, end of 1 Samuel)

David anointed king, but lots of rivals and enemies – so for the next 7 ½ years David is gradually asserting his authority. Defeats Saul's family, and eventually all Israel recognises him as king – beginning of 1 Samuel 5. Still a problem – not in Jerusalem, and ark not there.

Very important – location of ark sign of God's favour – instituted by God during exodus as place where God meets with his people, sign of his presence with them. When goes badly, ark goes astray – captured by Philistines during time of Judges – restored during time of prophet Samuel. But had *no permanent resting place*: Jerusalem had remained in hands of Canaanite people.

David set this straight – captured it in ch5 and then defeated Philistines who were now nervous of his growing power. But God was with David (5:10) and so he was granted victory wherever he went. Ch6 describes time of great rejoicing when ark is brought to Jerusalem, which is now David's capital. David himself stripped off and danced with best of them, which embarrassed his wife (note here to all embarrassing dads on the dancefloor – take 2 Sam 6 as your permission) – but unrepentant, as he was dancing for God.

Historical perspective – good 200 years from end of Exodus to now. All this time the ark, the sign of God's presence with his people had never had a permanent resting place. And David finally decides to put this right: READ v1-2.

*Underlying theme – David's passionate love for his God, his desire to worship him. 74 psalms (rather be a doorkeeper, better is one day in your courts). Wanted to do something for God.*

But God's view is very interesting – revealed to prophet Nathan – READ v5-7.

You see what he's saying: 'it's a nice offer, but I don't really need a home. Appreciate sentiment, but it's not necessary. A tent was fine, as long as my people were obeying me.' Risk that Israel (even David) misunderstanding point of ark. Sign of God's presence, but not limited by it. *He's the God of the whole world. What he wants is our hearts and our obedience. That's why God was blessing David.*

God not cross – knows David’s motives are good. So in fact he grants his request – only not to him but to his son: READ v11-13a. Exactly what happens – Solomon builds it.

Lovely word play going on – 15 refs to ‘house’ but mean various things: though God will not permit David to build a house (temple) for God (v. 5), God will build a house (dynasty) for David (v. 11), and one of that house (dynasty) will build the house (temple) for God (v. 13). (Lot of OT narrative beautifully written, esp Samuel.)

Significance goes further: READ v13b – new promise here which goes beyond: reinforced v16. That’s why read at Advent. 400 yrs later nation is destroyed and line of kings ends. Repeated failings – even prophesied in this passage: READ v14 (special relationship, but not perfect). But promise remains - how is it to be fulfilled? Why so important what Angel Gabriel says to Mary: READ LUKE 1:v32b-33.

God hasn’t forgotten 2 Samuel 7 – why Joseph key as Jesus’ human father, why goes to Bethlehem. This is the renewal and fulfilment of this passage.

But look beyond to this idea of **homeless God**. Reflect in two ways – profoundly important idea. Where do we meet with God? Human society fascination with particular places. Most religions – even pagan. We seem more bothered by it than God is. Not just here in OT – carries on into NT – Acts 17:24 READ.

Look at church buildings around world (**SLIDE**) – all shapes and sizes, some not even built specifically for that purpose. We can worship God anywhere. Still have David’s desire – in many ways good (lots of people love this building and invest a lot in its care) – but a flip side. Can limit God – or rather sphere of God’s activity in our lives. If God only really here, then maybe he’s more concerned by what goes on here than anywhere else. Perhaps encourages idea that can live rest of our lives as we like. But our whole lives are worship. Mon-Sat matters as much to God as Sun. Can’t really fabricate on Sunday what isn’t happening during week.

Above all, need to remember – *this is not a church! It’s a building where a church meets.* All fall into habit of calling this a church – but it’s a church building. When heating failed last Christmas, we went into school and village hall. Brought challenges, and not as impressive (though a lot warmer) but God no less present. God does not have a home on earth except in the hearts of his people, and whenever people meet in his name. God knows that, and reminded David of it in 2 Samuel 7.

Great to baptise Henry today – there’s a point here too. Emphasis on connecting with a church community and rightly so – hope you find a real home in Whitchurch and Aylesbury. But ultimately God wants to make his home with you. Not limited to formal religious observance – will you allow this God to journey with you wherever you are.

Secondly – as look to Christmas – **story of Jesus one of homelessness, or homeless God**. Writ large throughout narrative:

- Abandons his home in heaven to come to earth (Phil 2:7 – ‘made himself nothing, taking very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness’) – just as well God not wedded to his home, or would never have come to earth. Incarnation a scandalous doctrine – blasphemy to Jews and Muslims. ‘God does not live here, at least not in the flesh’. But he did, in person of Jesus. The homeless God made his home among us.
- But did we receive him? Well, not exactly – John 1:11 – ‘came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him’ – homeless among his people
- Not born at home like most children but in different town – indeed not even in room fit for human habitation but in bit reserved for animals
- Then fled to Egypt – ‘double immigrant’ – first there and then returning a few years later
- When his ministry started, home town rejected him and moved to Capernaum – never recorded as returning
- When approached by would-be follower, what did he say in Matthew 8 – ‘foxes have dens and birds have nests but Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’ (v20)
- Itinerant ministry and called others to do same

What does it look like when God comes to earth? Jesus was homeless for significant chunks of his life, a migrant. The homeless God, who does not dwell only in heaven, or in houses made by humans.

‘The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.’ [Reflect on that in a different way this evening as I tell you a Christmas Parable.](#) [But today:](#) literally ‘tabernacled’ – back to tent again, the tent that so troubled David in 2 Sam 7 – much more than it troubled God! God has no permanent home on earth – he’s always on move, and invites others to be on move with him.

Will you journey with this homeless God today? Will you allow him to make his home with you? Not just here in this building or any one of 1,000 like it. But in his only true home on this earth: the heart of a man, woman or child who will receive him? ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.’ Amen.

## **Extra material**

Prophetic vision – like looking up at mountains – see nearest peak but others behind them

V14 quoted as proof of Jesus' divinity in Hebrews 1:5

God's covenantal promise is developed through a delightful play on the ambiguous nature of the fifteen occurrences of the Hebrew word for "house," variously signifying the "palace" where David lives (vv. 1, 2), "the temple" he wishes to build for God (vv. 5, 6, 7, 13), his "family" (v. 18), or the "dynasty" of his descendants who will sit upon his throne (vv. 11, 16, 19, 25, 26, 27, and two times in v. 29). There, as here, though God will not permit David to build a house (temple) for God (v. 5), God will build a house (dynasty) for David (v. 11), and one of that house (dynasty) will build the house (temple) for God (v. 13).