

Preacher: Fred Unruh

Title: David's Big Dream

Date: July 19, 2009

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a *Big Celebration*

Sign #1: Jerusalem - 985 B.C.

I get goose bumps when I think about the celebration! I can still see it in my memory. All those people gathered to welcome the Ark of the Lord. The King with his nine wives in their finest attire, and their children dressed up like dolls on parade.

The sacred Ark on its special ceremonial cart was brought to the tabernacle tent which will be its new home.

The high priest led the procession, with altar boys, and musicians all around the square. And the members of the royal regiment on parade.

But you know what I liked best? The music. Such music only the angels can make!

A choir of hundreds accompanied by singing harps, and dancing tambourines, and crashing cymbals, and drummers pounding like a Sabbath thunder storm. It was way better than a rock concert!

Apparently, the best of the musicians will be staying in Jerusalem to bring elegance to the worship rituals at the Tabernacle. It's going to be wonderful!

I never saw so many soldiers in one place at one time. I've heard there were at least thirty thousand.

The soldiers bought up everything edible in the villages for miles around. Now people are griping: "There's nothing for us to eat, anywhere!" "All they left for us is mouldy barley, and rotten cantaloupe." Their anger could get dangerous.

Priests talk about a new Temple

Last week I met two of the priests at Tim Horton's. They came to town when the Ark was moved here. They bought nice homes over on the West Side. They were talking about **King David's big dream**. He is dreaming of building a splendiferous Temple to house the Ark of the Lord, and to provide dramatic proof of God's abundant blessings on David's reign.

David's new temple will shine in the golden sun, with doors of finest cedar, capped with polished brass and gold and silver. King David wants it to match his splendid palace.

King David wants a legacy of grandeur, so his fame will be preserved forever. Long after he is gone, people will look at his temple and say, "King David built that!"

Personally, I don't know where the King will find the money to acquire all that cedar and silver and polished brass, and ivory, and gold, and linen for his dreams.

King David has pretty much drained the national treasury, paying for his many wars, and border skirmishes, and peace making campaigns. Sure, we're pretty much at peace right now, but we're pretty

well broke too!

There's a lot of complaining among the soldiers. They haven't been paid for over two years already! Their families are eating dandelions and gophers. There's rumours of desertions in the ranks. This could get bad!

David Stopped by Nathan

Yesterday I overheard these two priest guys say King David is really out of sorts these days. It seems Nathan the prophet, (the King's chief advisor on religious affairs) at first gave his blessing to David's dream to build a magnificent temple, but just the next day he told King David - "It's not right to build a temple to showcase your power. It's just not right.

"Don't coop-up God in a mausoleum. When God led us out of Egypt, God lived in a tent. A tent was good enough for Almighty God then and it's good enough for God today."

I wonder what King David will do? He doesn't like anyone to oppose his dreams of fame.

Sign # 2: Some Years Later

OK - it's some years later. And, we're having another conversation about King David.

And YES, my friends at the coffee shop are still debating King David's moves, as he makes the City of David the centre of his reign.

Boy, it's a soap opera at the royal palace! There are rumours of plots and counter-plots as jealous wives and their favourite sons jockey for power.

Nathan, the King's chief advisor on religious affairs, is still very influential in the palace. I'm very surprised Nathan is still around, because he told David God did not want a legacy Temple.

But I'll give King David credit for listening to Nathan. David realized he didn't have the support of the religious community to carry out his plans.

David re-calculated. David began preparing for his successor, his son, to build a temple to the God of the Shepherd King. (But, that's another story for another time.)

Maybe you remember that 300 years later, the Hebrew slaves in Babylon collected stories about their ideal king, King David?

In one story in the Chronicles of Israel, they tell us Nathan the prophet brought this message to King David from God: "You may not build a house to honour me - you've done too much fighting - you've killed too many people." (1 Chronicles 28:3 The Message)

Sign #3: Reflections

Scholars say there were many reasons David could not build a great temple as the pinnacle of his reign. He may have been too busy with his many wars. His plans may have been way too ambitious to be carried out so soon. Religious conservatism ruled the day and Nathan the Prophet told David he would not have

the support of the priesthood and the tabernacle tradition.

So David was stopped in his tracks, and circumstances forced him to accept new realities.

Ralph Milton writes Rumors newsletter, (Rumors, July 12)

“King David was a very talented administrator, a charismatic leader, and a skilled general. Everything in the kingdom was working just fine. So now what could he do?

“Well, how about building a house for God? I would do this for the glory of God, you understand. Not for me. Only for God.” “And God’s response, “Yeah, right. Forget about it.”

“David wanted a lasting legacy to honour his name for generations to come. But God said, “Nope! Sorry.

“Instead of a house of God, which I don’t need, I will create through you a legacy of the line of David, a people who honour God in their lives.”

“History tells us that both Solomon’s and Herod’s magnificent temples were trashed. Only a few stones were left to commemorate their builders. But the line of David can still be traced, first to Jesus, and then through the church, based on Jesus’ life and teaching, to us.”

We are heirs of that promise, intimately linked to the legacy of David. Jesus, who is the Son of David and the Son of God, makes his dwelling among us, and rules as Lord of all.

Sign # 4: Good News

There’s good news in this story about King David. The good news is tucked away in the nooks and crannies of the story line.

1. God dwells in people.

“At the end of the 14th century, an obscure mystic we call Julian of Norwich had some very radical ideas. Here’s what she wrote:

"God has chosen no other place to live except in our souls. This dwelling that God has chosen in our souls is beautiful and stately. There, God touches us and rejoices in our love far more than sorrowing over our failings. God wants us to live gladly and cheerfully, even though this life sometimes feels like punishment. God wants us to look beyond the pain that we feel to the joy we can trust." "

from "The Essence of Julian," by Ralph Milton, Northstone 2002; Rumors, July 12/09

Sometimes we feel that if we could worship in a magnificent cathedral, God would be close to us and we would be truly inspired. Maybe? Maybe not.

Our story reminds us God does not need a crystal cathedral to connect with us. God is with us from the moment we are born, and walks beside us in sunshine and shadow. We don’t need a magnificent monument to find God.

At the Mennonite Church USA Youth Convention one of the key note speakers, Shane Hipps, invited the youth present to identify God's Spirit with every breathe taken in each moment of life.

God is present in our lives. God isn't far away, or hidden behind the golden altars of some magnificent temple. God is in a tent called our body and is as near as every breath we take. God is with us every moment of time, giving life and hope to us all.

So, take another breath, inhale deeply, and say
 "YES, God is here with me. I'll be OK."

2. NO may mean opportunity to grow

Nathan told King David, "You may not build a house to honour me - but I will create in you a legacy of faithfulness." God said NO, and then God said YES!

Sometimes NO can offer us an opportunity to grow. Not always, but sometimes a closed door, offers an open window to undetected possibilities.

I don't mean that if you lose your job in this financial recession, that God is doing that to you to teach you a lesson or help you grow. Our financial crisis is due to human greed and recklessness.

But I think God quite often has a hand in presenting new possibilities when life dishes out difficulty.

God is into new beginnings, not death. The power of the Resurrection is turned loose in our world, and new life is possible when we feel trapped or lost.

I bet almost everyone in this room has a story about how a NO in your life, was transformed over time, into an unexpected possibility.

I wanted to be a Kansas farmer, but along came U.S. military conscription for the Korean War, and I wound up in MCC PAX service in Paraguay.

My life's direction took a 180 degree turn. After many bumps and turns on our way, here we are in Lethbridge, far from Kansas, growing a church, not wheat or corn, or chasing tornadoes.

Sometimes a NO, leads to unexpected possibilities that God has planted in your life.

Look for it and claim it when it comes.
 It is God's gift.

Conclusion

- If life seems to say NO, and you feel discouraged, hang in there. Don't give up. You can never tell what possibilities still exist with resurrection power moving all around us
- Take another breath, inhale deeply, and say "YES, God is with me. I'll be OK."

Please join me as we pray together.

Prayer (#160 in Sing the Story, adapted)

Empowering God, we are following you through unknown terrain.

We're not always sure where we are going.

Sometimes we stumble.

Sometimes we lose our way.

Remember to find us.

Remember our name.

Remember your promise to walk with us home. Amen.