

The LORD Built A House For You

When is a gift *not* a gift? There was a woman named Hannah. Hannah had five children. Her youngest child was Jennifer. She and Jennifer had never been too close. So, Hannah was surprised and joyful when Jennifer started going to high school and started spending time with her. They would go to the mall together. Jennifer told Hannah to get her hair dyed. And so, she did. Jennifer advised her mom on what new clothes were in style. And, over the course of a year, Hannah's entire wardrobe changed. All of this was nice for Hannah. But, there was one question she had: *why?* Why was Jennifer so nice, so suddenly? At what point is a gift *not* a gift?

We will come back to Hannah and her daughter in a little while. But the question that Hannah had is the question our LORD had with David. In 2 Samuel, we read: *“Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? 6 I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. 7 Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?””*

David was ready to give to the LORD an amazing gift. He was ready to spend vast amounts of resources to build for him a house worthy of his name. There the LORD was, in a tent. The one, true God should have the biggest, brightest, boldest temple in all the world to show everyone who he is. David was ready to do this for the LORD. But here again we arrive at that question: *why?* Why did David want to do this? Why did Jennifer spend so much time with her mother? The answer is the same for both. They were both ashamed. Jennifer was ashamed of her mother's hair turning grey. So she told her mom to dye it. She was ashamed of her mother's wrinkled face and out-of-fashion jeans. So, she spent time with her—not because she loved spending time with her. No, she did this because she was ashamed of what her mother looked like.

And in these words this morning we find David doing the same thing. The King of kings and LORD of LORDS lived among his people in a tent. How embarrassing! How uncomfortable! How shameful! So, David thought he would do the LORD a favor. He offered to build a house, a temple worthy of the LORD's name. Take note of the LORD's response. The LORD was content. He was content to live in a tent. He never commanded anyone before David to build him a grand temple. For what temple could contain his glory? Everyone would shallow compared to his glory, power and might!

We see David acting so foolishly thousands of years ago. But, in him we find our brother. For we act the same as he did. A tent was a good enough house for the LORD then. And for us, today, God comes to us through his word. And there are many times when we, like Jennifer did with her mom, want to dress up God's word. God's word promises to us that it has power, that it will get done what it needs to get done. But so very often, we like to dress it up. And so, instead of setting aside time to hear what God's word says about the virgin Mary and the Christ Child, we are tempted to go and see *live* shepherd and *live* camels around a *live* mother and child. We want someone we know to become a Christian. We want them to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. So, what do we do? Instead of trusting that sharing God's word will do its faithful work, we work to bend that person's emotions so that they would become a Christian. Or, we try to pave a road for that person's logic, so that being a Christian is the natural, logical path to follow.

Why do we do this? We do this because like David, like Jennifer we are ashamed. We are ashamed of God's bare word. And so we like to dress it up. And, indeed there's nothing wrong with a live camel or speaking to someone's mind or heart. But, none of these makes a person a Christian. None of them forgives sins. None of them keeps a person in the one, true faith. Only God's word does this. And, it is a sin to replace God's gifts to us with our gifts to him.

That is what our brother, David learned. The LORD continued and told him: *“I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth... I will also give you rest from all your enemies. “The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.”*

David finally understood. The LORD didn't come to him in a tent so that David could give gifts to the LORD.

The LORD came to him and all the other Israelites so that he could give gifts to them. The LORD doesn't command us to come together Sunday after Sunday so that we can do him the favor of gracing him with our presence. No, he gathers us together to give us his gifts.

The LORD reminded David of all he had done for him. The LORD took him from being a shepherd and made him a king. He cut off all his enemies on all sides and gave him and his people peace. Here, among God's people, around his word, he does the same for us. He reminds us that Jesus saved us through water and word. He offers, forgives and convinces us that our sins are forgiven in the LORD's Supper. He tells us what sort of God he is and what he has done for us in his word. David got it. He understood that the LORD didn't want him to build a house for the LORD. No, instead, the LORD would build a house for him. Do you understand? Jesus gathers you here not primarily so that you can give gifts to him worthy of his name. No, he gathers you here so that you will receive the gifts of forgiveness and peace through his word.

And when we ask the question: *why*, the answer we receive is: *by his grace*. God gives so many rich and wonderful gifts to us by his grace, his undeserved love. This too, David learned long before you did.

The LORD has built a house for David. He did this by his grace. But, how long will this house last? After all, David had no control over what sort of man his son would be. Would his son throw it all away like Saul did? And so, the LORD told David: *“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: 12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”*

The LORD would give to David a son. But this son was not a normal son. He was different in a number of ways: 1) His reign would last forever. 2) He would not just be David's son. He would also be the LORD's son. 3) He would be punished for sin.

This morning, God's word tells us that this Son is Jesus. Notice what the angel tells Mary: *“I You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The LORD God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”*

Notice how the angel connects the dots. This child, Mary's child, would be both the Son of God and the son of one of David's descendants. This child would have a kingdom which would never end. There is only one detail left to deal with. The LORD tells David: *“When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.”*

Wait a moment. How many times can you remember when Jesus did wrong? The answer is, of course, none. What is the LORD talking about here? The apostle Paul makes these words clear when he tells us: *“2Cor. 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Jesus became sin in our place. Jesus was punished in our place. Jesus died in our place. Jesus rose in our place. That was a promise David could rejoice in. He came to the LORD with a sinful, selfish gift. He wanted to make a house for the LORD. The LORD faithfully showed him his sin and did much more. He gave him one gift after another. And he saved the best gift for last. He promised to give him a house—not a brick and mortar house. No, he would give him a family line in which the Messiah would be born.

This too is a promise we can rejoice in. We come to Jesus with our selfish, embarrassed requests. And he shows us our sin. Then he takes away our sin gives us countless, countless gifts after that.

In the words after this in 2 Samuel, we see David's response to all these gifts. He worshipped the LORD. He worshipped him in song, in prayer and by silently pondering his powerful word. I invite you do do the same. Rejoice that the LORD has built a house for you. It is not built of brick and mortar. It is built of humans. It starts from Adam. It ends in Jesus. The LORD built you this house by his grace. He built you this house. And it will last for all eternity. Amen.