**2 Samuel 7:1-16**

Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, **2** the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” **3** And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, 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: Would you build me a house to dwell 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 for my dwelling. **7** In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges 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, that you should 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 dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men 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 fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come 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 to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, **15**  but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. **16**  And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ”

**“The Hearty Home Of God”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. During the Christmas Season, another celebration gets attention in our western world. Last week was the start of Hanukkah. This is the Jewish holiday also known as the festival of lights or Feast of Dedication. It has nothing do with what Christians celebrate over Christ being born of the Virgin Mary. Instead, it seeks to commemorate the Maccabean Jews who rose up against the Greeks when they were able to rededicate the temple in Jerusalem. Such actions might sound strange over a building, but it was also in the temple during Hanukkah about 200 years later that Jews picked up stones against Jesus. They gave the reason, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God” (John 10:33).

You see, places are important to people. Catholics have the Vatican in Rome. Mormons have the tabernacle in Salt Lake City. Muslims have the sacred mosque in Mecca. There are plenty of other places even in our secular culture. It can be the magnificent Mall of America for shoppers. It can be the White House for our nation. It can be the prestigious universities for higher learning. Maybe you have a special place. Yet, God cannot be confined to the shrines of man nor is His presence controlled by the efforts of man. Stephen before he faced stoning for the sake of Christ said, “David…found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands” (Acts 7:45-48). Christ builds a perfect home for sinners to rest in Him the eternal king of glory.

Now just because God is not “in houses made by man,” does not mean He has no place among His people. He made His presence known to Moses by speaking out of a burning Bush. He dwelt upon Mt. Sinai before the Israelite giving to them the Law. He was in the ark of covenant that sat within the tabernacle. Yet, after entering the Promised Land by Joshua and at last settling down in Jerusalem. King David had glorious plans to do good for God. While resting from his enemies, he made a stark observation stating, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” His intentions were noble in providing a more permanent place of honor for God in building a temple. Even Nathan the prophet got caught up in it all declaring, “Go, do all that is in your heart…” Of course, the problem is evident. David’s heart was riding the waves of success as king sidetracked to what truly was important. Likewise, Nathan never consulted what God had to say, but went along with his gut feeling.

As much as we need to avoid darkness, false glory toward what is good fools us all the same. It may laud good works in the Name of God, but it still falls short before His throne of grace. Solomon the son of David who later built the temple in Jerusalem points out, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalms 127:1.) Certainly, the Lord desires us to serve Him with gladness and do good. However, glory is what constantly gets in our way as sinners. It can be by making your priorities appear as if they are God’s priorities. Maybe it is going with what feels right rather than holding to what God rightly says by His Word. Such inadequacy even affects our families as if any them are without sin or pains of death. A quick look at life lets us see how the grace of God must dwell among us in Jesus. This is what Mary heard as good news from the angel Gabriel. God’s Son coming into her flesh had nothing to do with her glory, but God’s grace. She said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

Those glorious plans of David were outshined by the better plans God gloriously set up for David. The Lord was not troubled over dwelling among His people in either a tent or a temple. All of it to Him was only for a time. What was to matter to David was that, “I have been with you wherever you went.” This meant all accomplishments in battle, all projects completed in building, even moving the ark to Jerusalem came from the gracious work of God. David was going to present God with the honor of a temple and in turn what happened? He came back with a better gift that gave him the greatest honor in his life. Nathan the prophet told him, “The Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.” This was no house of brick or mortar. David already had such glory. It even exceeded his son Solomon constructing the temple after his death. In the flesh of David, the Father would find a place to send His Son into the world. “He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

As much as we glory over Christmas next week, let us not forget what was already conceived by the Holy Spirit. Hidden before the world saw Him was God who became flesh in the Virgin Mary. Rather than God being “just there” in life, He freely chooses to be where He wants. There is a purpose for Him being present. It is for the salvation of man. Mary’s child would be called Jesus. God is doing the saving of our lives. No wonder the angel said, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” God does not dwell in houses built by man, but the Virgin Mary housed what no man had a hand in doing. Mary had the honor greater than King David did. She was the mother of God. As the empty tomb revealed the glory of Christ as God victorious over the cross, so the Virgin Mary revealed the glory of the most high dwells with us as Man. Jesus is the tent, the temple, and the house that has hands and feet. God remains in the flesh to be for us. His throne is forever. He makes the place of His kingdom come upon us by baptism into His Name.

Christ the eternal king gloriously brings us into His eternal home. David would die and so would his earthly accomplishments. After Solomon died the temples destruction was on the horizon. What God built by His Word promised one in the line of David would be forever. The Lord said, “When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him…” Jesus had no sin, but as the Son of God He stood in our place. The Word made flesh burst forth three days later to be king of sinners delivering all by His sacrifice. It means David could rest not from surrounding enemies for a time, but eternally from the true enemies of sin, death, and the Devil. It means you can rest for Jesus says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:2)

There are many place to find glorious churches. Just as there will be many big celebrations over Christmas next week. However, only where Christ is there is His Church. He lays humbly in the manger. He hangs on the cross out of love. No longer does the Virgin bring forth God’s Son, but His Church gloriously brings Him by Word and Sacrament. He comes to forgive all your fears for His faithfulness is everlasting. To eat and drink of His kingdom is a feast of victory that has no end. This is the wisdom come down from above, wisdom the world can never fashion by its strength, wisdom that will never fade away. Christ builds a perfect home for us to rest in Him the eternal king of glory. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.