

2 Samuel 7:1-17

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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. ¹⁵ But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ **Your house and your kingdom** shall be made sure forever before me; *your throne* shall be established forever. ¹⁷ In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

The books of Samuel tell the story of radical transformation that occurred in the life of Israel as that people moved from living together as a religious association of tribes to a centralized state with a monarch. Samuel is the main character, the prophet who finds and ordains the monarchs and exists as a prophetic counter-voice to their whims and fancies, pushing them to inclusive justice and God-centered authority.

Curiously it's the story of the people wanting a king, to be like all the other peoples of the near east; while God calls them to be different, unique, but acquiesces to their desires, giving them all of what comes with a king – good and bad. Following a bad king, Saul, David comes to reign: a golden age. It's in that moment, that God promises (in today's text) that there will be a future leader, a descendent of David, who will be the true leader: the chosen one, or Messiah.

Nathan:: he was a court prophet who lived in the time of King David. His actions are described in the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. He announced to David the covenant God was making with him (2 Samuel 7), and he came to David to reprimand him over his committing adultery with Bathsheba while she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite whose death the King had also arranged to hide his previous transgression (2 Samuel 11-12).

David:: according to the Hebrew Bible, he was the second king of the united Kingdom of Israel and Judah, reigning in c. 1010–970 BCE. Depicted as a valorous warrior of great renown, and a poet and musician credited for composing many of the psalms contained in the Book of Psalms, King David is widely viewed as a righteous and effective king in battle and civil and criminal justice. He is described as a man after God's own heart in 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22. According to the Second Testament, he was an ancestor of Jesus.

a house: the Hebrew word בֵּית (bet) means "house" – yet we can see that in this passage it has several meanings. The phrase "House of David" is not surprisingly thought to mean the family or the descendants of David. It denotes the kingly line of Judah and all those who had David as their physical forefather. Jesus had David as His forefather and He was in line to occupy the Throne of David. 1 Clearly it does mean this in the majority of instances. It also means on occasion — quite surprisingly — something else. It specifies a location, a physical place, that has great importance, if understood correctly in context.

kingdom: the Hebrew word מַמְלָכָה (mamlakah) from the Hebrew word melek (King) meaning : "kingdom, sovereignty, dominion, reign." So as we see with the phrase "house of David" it implies both a geographical, physical space and something that is temporal, invisible yet real, nontangible but concrete.

Luke 1:30-33

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³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to *the throne of* his ancestor *David*. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of **his kingdom** there will be no end."

Luke 13:18-21

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¹⁸ [Jesus] said therefore, "What is the **kingdom of God** like? And to what should I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a **MUSTARD SEED** that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

²⁰ And again he said, "To what should I compare the **kingdom of God**? ²¹ It is like **YEAST** that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

Questions for the Practice of Examen & Contemplation

These historical texts flesh out the theological paradox around God's notion of kingship, leadership and vocation. The texts are both about the messiah (the anointed one) and all those anointed to leadership...so by extension all those who follow Jesus as teacher:: us! Where do you see the power and authority of Jesus in your life?; in our world? Is it straightforward or paradoxical? What does that mean for you in your daily life, hopes and frustrations?

The author of the pastoral letter sent to the Hebrews writes; "1faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible." (Hebrews 11:1-3) In your faith journey how do you experience the power or kingdom of God in the world? How do you dream of experiencing it? Why is there a difference? Talk to God about your frustrations or doubts.

Luke, tells his gospel version of the life of Jesus for Greek-speaking people, who were primarily Gentile, or non-Jewish. Today's gospel sections lay the groundwork for seeing Jesus as that Messiah, and include some parables about his reign.

kingdom:: the Greek word is basilica (can you hear how it sounds like basilica?). It means kingdom, reign, empire. It's both a physical and geographical reign, and also a spiritual – non-visible – one. It's both over what a king reigns, as well as his reign itself.

MUSTARD SEED:: We now know that the mustard seed is not the smallest that exists. But it is indeed quite small. Mustard was used for many things in the ancient world including as a condiment, as we use it. It was also used as a healing ointment, like Vicks Vapor Rub. You'd rub it on your chest to clear up congestion and sickness. Mustard was also known as the common, everyday, worst weed to have sprout in your garden. We plant it today between rows of grape vines for beauty and to till under as natural compost. But it used to be known as the weed that was unbeatable, once it got into your garden it would take over, subvert all of your well-intentioned horticultural plans and be nearly impossible to stamp out. It didn't grow to be a tree, but did become a substantial space-taking bush. How do the different uses of mustard in the ancient world possibly change or expand what Jesus is saying to describe the kingdom of God in the world?

YEAST: Curiously, whenever leaven is mentioned in the Bible (22 times in the Old Testament and 17 times in the New Testament), it is used symbolically to represent influence, usually negatively. Just as a little bit of yeast, works through and permeates dough, thereby producing a noticeable result (that is, the bread rises), so to does influence, be it good or bad.

The first instance in which this word is used is found in (Ex 12:15). This was just before the Passover, in which God destroyed all of the firstborn of Egypt, but spared the firstborn of Israel in the last of the 10 plagues that He visited upon Egypt. God gave instructions to Moses and Aaron that they were command Israel to celebrate this Passover each year "throughout your generations" with a feast. This feast, called the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" followed the Passover day (the 14th day of the 1st month on the Jewish calendar). It lasted 7 days. During the first day of this week, they were commanded to remove all leaven from their houses. In addition, they were not to eat any bread which contained leaven for the whole week. It's a setting apart, a change, a moving out.

In seemingly the only positive usage of yeast in the Bible, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God / Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast (Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:18-21). So what does it mean when Jesus uses this small element of great transformation as a descriptive metaphor for the kingdom of God: how God works and moves in the world?