

August 30, 2015

"It's Not About Me" (Based on a sermon by Pat Damiani)

2 Samuel 7:28-29

For you are God, O Sovereign LORD. Your words are truth, and you have promised these good things to your servant. And now, may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you have spoken, and when you grant a blessing to your servant, O Sovereign LORD, it is an eternal blessing!"

Originally, 1st & 2nd Samuel was one book and so it continues without interruption. 1 Samuel ends with King Saul's death and 2 Samuel begins with the reign of King David. 2 Samuel describes David's accomplishments as well as his moral failure and the consequences of his sin.

The world tells us today to follow our passions. Well, that's okay as long as our passions are guided by God. Our passions can get us into a lot of trouble as it did for David. It's much better to follow God's guidance every step of the way. That's the lesson of 2 Samuel and of the entire Bible. The problem is, instead of making it all about God, we keep making it all about us.

When Roy DeLamotte was chaplain at Paine College in Georgia, he preached the shortest sermon in the college's history. However, he had a rather long topic: "What does Christ Answer When We Ask, 'Lord, What's in Religion for Me?'" The complete content of his sermon was in one word: "Nothing." He later explained that the one-word sermon was meant for people brought up on the 'gimme-gimme' gospel. When asked how long it took him to prepare the message, he said, "Twenty years."

Unfortunately for you this morning this will probably not be one of the shortest messages you have ever heard. But it certainly may be one of the most important. In fact, one Old Testament scholar (Dr. Walter Brueggemann) refers to the passage we'll look at this morning as "One of the most crucial texts in the Old Testament for evangelical faith."

I don't have to tell you that we live in a culture that seems to be increasingly centered on self. One of the largest themes and bestselling books are the "Self-Help" books. We're told "if it feels good, do it." In other words, make your decision based on how it impacts you. We even have a magazine titled "Self."

British actor Michael Wilding was once asked if actors had any traits which set them apart from other human beings. "Without a doubt," he replied. "You can pick out actors by the glazed look that comes into their eyes when the conversation wanders away from themselves."

Then there was this conversation overheard at a party: "My husband and I have managed to be happy together for 20 years. I guess this is because we're both in love with the same man."

Or how about the lady who answered a knock on her door to find a man with a sad expression? "I'm sorry to disturb you," he said, "but I'm collecting money for an unfortunate family in the neighborhood. The husband is out of work, the kids are hungry, the utilities will soon be cut off, and worse, they're going to be kicked out of their apartment if they don't pay the rent by this afternoon." "I'll be happy to help," said the woman with great concern. "But who are you?" "I'm the landlord," he replied.

2 Samuel 7:1-3

When King David was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all the surrounding enemies, the king summoned Nathan the prophet. "Look," David said, "I am living in a beautiful cedar palace, but the Ark of God is out there in a tent!" Nathan replied to the king, "Go ahead and do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you."

David was a shepherd who became the ruler of God's people. In chapter 7 of 2 Samuel I think David is about to cross the line from being full of God to being full of himself (this is what is happening in our country too and if we are not careful it can happen to us.). David was king and perhaps that was starting to go to his head. We have to learn as David learned that, it's not about me. All of David's success, every blessing he had was because of the grace of God. Here's the first thing you must remind yourself: (1) It's not about me because every success is a gift of God's grace.

2 Samuel 7:4-7, 11b, 16

But that same night the LORD said to Nathan, [don't presume to know the heart of God] "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD has declared: Are you the one to build a house for me to live in? I have never lived in a house, from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until this very day. I have always moved from one place to another with a tent and a Tabernacle as my dwelling. Yet no matter where I have gone with the Israelites, I have never once complained to Israel's tribal leaders, the shepherds of my people Israel. I have never asked them, 'Why haven't you built me a beautiful cedar house?'"

"Furthermore, the LORD declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! ...Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever."

(2) Recognize that God must build my house before I can build His house.

David comes to God, offering to build God a house, but God isn't interested in what David can do for Him. He's much more interested in what He wants to do for David. He basically says to David, "David, I don't need a house. I never asked for one; it was never my idea for you or anyone else to build one. David, by now, you ought to know me well enough to know I can't be put in a box...or a building. But David, I love you so much that I'm going to build a house for you – not just some temporary structure, but an eternal house that will never pass away."

God makes a covenant with David, covenant is another word for promise. God promises David that He will build a house for David and that David's house and his throne will endure forever. Ultimately God's covenant or promise with David will be fulfilled when Jesus, who the Bible clearly shows to be the offspring of David, returns to this earth and reigns forever.

Right now God is building your house. Not only is He preparing a place for you, He is preparing you. You may be going through tough times. What you may be considering failure, difficulties, God is using that and this time in your life to "build your house." He knows that before He can use you to help build His house and His kingdom, He has to do a work in your life. God will humble you, develop attitudes, skills and gifts in your life that He can use. He will teach you the principle that Eugene Peterson describes in his book, *Leap Over a Wall*:

But there are times when our grand human plans to do something for God are seen, after a night of prayer, to be a huge human distraction from what God is doing for us.

I guess I'm a slow learner. It took me a lot more than just a night of prayer, to learn that lesson. If you are serious about knowing and serving God, then He will do a work in you first.

- It's not about me because every success is a gift of God's grace.
- It's not about me because God wants to build my house before I can ever be part of building His house.

2 Samuel 7:18

Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and prayed...

(3) Retreat into God's presence.

After Nathan reveals to David God's response to David's plans, the account tells us that David went in and sat before the Lord. That translation doesn't really do justice to what happens here. The Hebrew word translated "sat" also means to "dwell", or "abide" or "remain." David didn't just go into the tent and sit down for a few moments. He retreated into God's presence and he remained there for quite some time. This was not just some casual, brief encounter with God. It was a prolonged period of time where David could just focus on God. If God is going to build your house you must have prolonged periods of time in His Presence, just focused on Him.

When David retreated into God's presence, he discovered that all true worship begins, not in a spectacular building, but in focusing on the greatness and the grace of our God.

That's a lesson that Jesus focused on throughout His ministry:

- In the story of Mary and Martha, Jesus made it clear that it was far better to sit at the feet of Jesus than to try and do something for Him.
- The woman at the well discovered that God didn't care which mountain she

worshipped at – He was far more concerned that she learn to worship in spirit and in truth.

- Even Jesus found that He needed to just spend time in His Father's presence so that He could be prepared to carry out His ministry.

As I said, I'm a slow learner, but over time I have learned that my time in the presence of God is far more crucial to my ministry than anything else I do.

- It's not about me because every success is a gift of God's grace.
- It's not about me because God wants to build my house before I can ever be part of building His house.
- It's not about me so I need to spend time at the feet of God, listening to Him

2 Samuel 7:27a

"O LORD of Heaven's Armies, God of Israel, I have been bold enough to pray this prayer to you because you have revealed all this to your servant..."

(4) Respond to God's revelation.

I love David's prayer here. David doesn't focus for one second on the fact that he will not be the one who will build the temple or house of God. Instead, he spends all his time focusing on what God has just revealed to him. He humbles himself before God and thanks God for the promises he has just made to David.

Everything in that prayer is a direct response to what God has just revealed to David. It is a prayer that focuses completely on God and His purposes and plans for David's life.

It's OK to pray for our needs and the needs of others. In fact, we are instructed to do so. But if that's the extent of our prayer life, then prayer becomes all about me, and not about God.

So when you pray, you need to respond to God. Maybe there is some attribute you can praise Him for. Maybe there is some work He is doing in your life you can thank Him for. Maybe there is some sin in your life that He has revealed to you that you need to confess to Him and repent of. Maybe there is a principle you need to apply in your life and you need to ask God to help you obey Him. When you pray it needs to be about God, not just about you.

- It's not about me because every success is a gift of God's grace.
- It's not about me because God wants to build my house before I can ever be part of building His house.
- It's not about me so I need to spend time at the feet of God, listening to Him.
- It's not about me so I need to respond to what God reveals to me.

Rick Warren begins his best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, with these words:

It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God.

David knew that was true over 3,000 years ago and, as a result, he became a man after God's own heart.

Let's follow in his footsteps.

We must acknowledge the Lordship of Christ in every area of our life. We need God's abiding wisdom, protection, and companionship. As we acknowledge His kingship over our lives, we have the promise that His hand will uphold us and that He will guide us every step along the way.

It's not about me.