

God's Advent Promise to David  
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

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*Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. 2 Sam. 7:16*

Years ago a prominent preacher received a letter of complaint from a parishioner. The minister had preached a sermon on David and the parishioner thought that a waste of good pulpit time. Why spend so much time on David, the letter-writer wanted to know, he was such a scoundrel. He was an exhibitionist. He was an adulterer. He was a murderer. The list of David's sins was long. Why spend so much time on him where there are other characters, better characters, to preach about? I'm not sure if the minister answered the letter, but he eventually came back with yet another sermon on David. "Why spend so much time on David?" he asked in the new sermon's introduction. We spend so much time on David, he answered, because God thought so much of him.<sup>1</sup>

Just a week shy of Christmas now, folks might wonder why a sermon on David today. Isn't there something nearer the manger? Isn't there something closer to the heart of the gospel? I give David attention today because he figures into so much of our Advent and Christmas language. Bethlehem is called the city of David. Joseph is said to be from the house and lineage of David. All this matters to the gospel writers. That old king, dead some 1000 years by the time of the birth of Jesus, keeps showing up in the Christmas story. Why?

Much of the answer is in our text for today. God promised David that his kingdom would last forever, that there would always be someone, one of his descendants, on his throne. That was the Advent promise to David. The New Testament looks upon Jesus as the fulfillment of this promise. A descendant of David, in the royal line of David, Jesus was born a king and now reigns forever, never to leave or surrender the throne. All the references to David near Christmas are references to the everlasting kingship of Christ.

King forever, ceasing never  
Over us all to reign.<sup>2</sup>

So we are close to the heart of the gospel, and David's experience of God 1000 years before the birth of Jesus opens the way for us to see some divine truth at work in our lives.

*God makes promises.*

To begin with, God makes promises, even to the least likely candidates.

Before he was elevated to office, no one thought David was fit to be king. His father did not think so. His father kept him away from the party, Cinderella-like, when God's prophet Samuel was in town to choose the next king. His father brought all seven of his other sons to Samuel. He must have thought they had regal stuff in them. But he did not think David had any. He kept David back to tend the sheep, to do the chores on the farm, so his brothers could go strut their stuff before Samuel. But it was little David, the shepherd keeping watch, whom God wanted and promised to turn into a king.

You may have someone in your life that treats you like David's father treated him. You may have someone in your life who sells you short and who makes you feel as though you don't have anything regal in you. To that person, whoever it is, you fall short, you don't measure up, you fail, you don't meet the standards. Well, you cannot change them, but let young David teach you that, however many there may be who think that about you, God does not. God comes to ones such as you with a mighty promise, one kingly and stately, kingly and stately enough to draw you up out of the lows and set you on high.

*God keeps promises.*

Not only does God make promises to ones such as you, God keeps promises, even to the most undeserving.

God kept the promise to David. That is why we are talking about David still today, 3000 years after he lived. But David was hardly worthy of the promise God kept. The old minister's parishioner was absolutely right about David. It was bad enough that he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, but that sin was made all the worse when he abused his power as king to cover it up. He had Bathsheba's husband killed, and he plotted to make it look like a hero's death in battle. Let anyone else be the judge and David would be out of it, cut off from the promise. But no one else is the judge. God alone is the judge. And the wonder of God's love and forgiveness is that, in spite of David's wickedness and deep-seated flaws, God kept the promise God made.

I wonder now if there is an old promise you heard from God once along the way. I wonder if you think you have fallen so far short of the mark and have been so undeserving that there is now no way for the promise to be kept for you. You may still believe in God, but there is some area of life in which you have given up and no longer try. Think again. God keeps promises to ones such as David, to ones such as you. In that realization, there can be a new beginning. Have another look and another go at that old promise you heard. It can still shape your life. It can still mold your character. It can be your defining identity yet.

*God keeps promises beyond our imagining.*

So far we have made two points. God makes promises, even to the least likely; and God keeps promises, even for the most undeserving. Those two thoughts come to us from David's life. So does this one: God keeps promises far beyond our imagining. We cannot think up the good God will do, or take in God's power to do it.

We can only speculate what David might have thought when God first promised his kingdom would last forever. Whatever he imagined the realization of the promise would be like, it wasn't anything like what actually happened. There was a season of sorrow before the promise came true; there were bleak years, gaunt times when the promise seemed gone and forgotten. Then came the dawning. The dawning was a song in the night, a manger-born baby, and that child's kingdom was neither political nor military nor economic but spiritual. His throne was a cross, his crown a circle of thorns, his scepter a nail piercing his hand, and his coronation – best of all! – his coronation a resurrection to never-ending life and rule at the right hand of God. Hearing the promise a 1000 years before, David never imagined that. But God dreams, decides, and works far beyond our poor human capacity to dream or desire.

So! Let not your hearts be troubled when your plans do not turn out your way. Don't fear when you can imagine no way clear of the difficulty you're in. God has a way of keeping the promise, a way that is far beyond your understanding, far beyond your ability to choreograph or control.

Take these three truths home with you and keep them ever near your heart. Believe them today and let them sustain you in all your tomorrows. God makes good promises, even to ones such as you. God makes good on those promises, every one of them, even when you are your most undeserving. And God's good promise will come true in some way you can hardly imagine.

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<sup>1</sup> Clarence E. Macartney, *The Greatest Men of the Bible* (1941, rpt.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), p. 26.

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<sup>2</sup> John H. Hopkins, "We Three Kings," *Pilgrim Hymnal* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1958), # 143.