

## **Don't Fence Me In**

A prompting offered by Ruth Hopkins, Seminary Intern  
July 18-19, 2009 • Seventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Cross Creek Community Church, United Church of Christ  
Dayton, Ohio

### **2 Samuel 7:1-14a**

*Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 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." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."*

*But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? 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. 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?" 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; 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. 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, 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. 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. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.*

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I would like to offer a brief meditation on the scriptures, as a sort of part one to bounce us off into a dialogue about our Cross Creek's justice and witness goals and dreams.

Our David saga continues with the story of David "settled in his brick and mortar house," and rested from his fighting. He now realizes that he is living in a better house than the Ark of the Covenant. He would like to build God a house. David has good intentions. He wants to honor God, and the ark. Certainly the God of the King should have a better house than the King!

Nathan, the prophet, is the intermediary in this story, and it is Nathan that gives David God's response to his idea to build a temple. "Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel, I have been moving about in a tent." God does not want a temple, not yet. And when God wants one, God will have David's son, Solomon build it. Don't fence me in, says God. And don't forget who I am, and who you are, David. God reminds David that he once was just a shepherd boy. God, the God that led them out of Egypt, raised David up to be king – this God is beyond brick and mortar.

Now I have been in some of God's houses, and some of that brick and mortar is simply spectacular. Bob and I went south to the Basilica in Covington, KY several years ago, and I remember vividly my entrance into the worship space. It had an enormous stained glass window to one side, the largest in the nation – and in the semi-darkness, the candles were lit, and well, I

was afraid to go in. Large churches like that tend to freak me out. There was a real feeling of bigness – of an energy, a God, bigger and more awesome than I could imagine.

I have also been in small nursing home rooms, white and stark, sitting beside the bed of an elderly person going through the transition of death. Watching the breath, waiting with family, praying. There was that feeling of bigness, a feeling of being very close to the divine, even a feeling of helplessness – but no fear. No fear at all.

Last week, I asked the question “Where does God live?” In the temple, or out in the wilderness? Nathan reminds David that God lives in both. God is in the temple and out in the wilderness. In the beautiful Basilica, and in the small nursing home room. In the Feeding Friends Food Pantry, in the Walk for Peace and Justice, in our worship, and in all the other activities of this fine community of faith. God also lives in our very homes, as we make those everyday decisions that effect so many around the world. Wherever God’s people are gathered, God lives.

In our opening prayer today we read, “God, you are not confined to church spires and pipe organs, but you make a home within and through all. The brick and mortar of church buildings cannot contain your sacredness, but the flesh and bone of sacred community is made sacred by your presence among us.”

Our flesh and bone. In this sacred community. While we cannot bring our brick and mortar to the world, we can bring ourselves. We can bring our flesh and bone. We must bring ourselves. So, let’s not fence ourselves in. There is more to do. The God that is bigger and more awesome than we can imagine is calling us out into the wilderness, out into the world, to do more bigger and more awesome things.

Where will God take us next?

**July 25-26**

**It's good to be the king**

*In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."*

*2 Sam 11:15*

Themes: power corrupts, bigger and bigger sins of David

**2 Samuel 11:1-15**

in the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."