

God and the Granny Pod
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
4th Sunday of Advent 12 20 2020 LUMC

Theme: Love

We're beating the odds here in Sun City. The average lifespan in the US today is 81 for women and 76 for men. It wasn't so many years ago that the expected lifespan was just 50. Those of us who are boomers can not only expect a much longer, healthier lifespan but our parents are also living much longer and generally healthier. Many of you moved here to avoid the snow shoveling New Yorker's are dealing with this week, but that sometimes means separation from children and extended families.

There comes a time that some realize they need more assistance and while we enjoy many options for assisted living here, other parts of the country aren't so fortunate leaving folks with fewer options. Assisted living is often too expensive and most homes today lack the classic "mother-in-law" quarters.

Enter the "Granny Pod." **(Slide 1)** After a depressing visit with a parishioner in an assisted living, pastor Kenneth Dupin, from Salem Va. Partnering with Virginia Tech Research Center in Blacksburg, Virginia, founded N2Care, and together they designed the MEDCottage, now known as the granny pod.

All across the country people are buying small homes and placing them in backyards or alongside their home. Most of them are less than 1,000 sq feet but they often contain some great features; soft flooring under carpet to minimize injuries in falls, interactive video and monitoring for health including blood pressure, glucose levels, sensors to detect falls, monitors on toilets, lifts, automatic reminders for timing on medications, all come together for a custom tiny home near family but largely independent.

(Slide 2) The tiny home movement is gaining traction across the country with people moving into minimalist tiny homes, often on wheels, of less than 1000 feet. Some towns are even creating affordable housing neighborhoods for low-income and homeless using the tiny home concept. Now the Granny Pod tailors that tiny home for you. Efficiency, safety, and lower cost than long-term assisted living, it's a viable option for some people.

We all want a place we can call 'home' so it's no wonder that in today's text we find King David pondering about building a house for God. Here he has just finished his grand mansion made of Cedar and living in luxury while he believes God is still living in the tabernacle – a tent. This is happening before David fights many wars, commits adultery with Bathsheba, engineers the death of her husband, avenges the rape of his

daughter, Tamar, by Amnon, her brother, and before he must reckon with the rebellion of his son, Absalom.

He has a conversation with his advisor Nathan, about building this house for God and Nathan responds, **(Slide 3) “Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.”** (v3) What a great gesture David is making, wouldn't you agree? In many ways, we've been doing this for centuries, check out some of the great cathedrals around the world, eh? How about this house of worship? This is a beautiful space to gather and worship God. We even call our churches, “God's house.”

God's response is surprising, but then again, maybe not. For many of you, if your children told you to come live in a Granny Pod in the back yard, you might say, “No way!” God tells David to forget it. God doesn't want to live in a house in David's back yard. Maybe God knows something about David's motive for wanting to build that house.

Throughout history we've been negotiating with God as if there is some quid-pro-quo way of manipulating God to do what we want him to do. Here are a few of those moments:

- Abraham bargained with God about Sodom and his nephew Lot (Genesis 18).
- Jacob bargained during his wrestling match (Genesis 22).
- Moses struck a deal with God to save the Israelites in the aftermath of the Golden Calf incident (Exodus 32).
- Jephthah made a bargain that cost his daughter's life (Judges 11).
- Hannah bargained for a son (1 Samuel 1).
- When he was on his deathbed, Hezekiah argued for 15 more years (2 Kings 20).
- Don't forget the “foxhole” prayers most of us have uttered whether from a foxhole or some mess of our own making.

Maybe I'm being a little too hard on David. Perhaps he is simply grateful and wants to show it. Truly, David is grateful for he will pen the words of the Psalm, **“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.”** But maybe in turning David down, God is aware that David's thanksgiving, at this point in his spiritual growth, is a little hollow. He is a man of power. From shepherding in the fields, now is king of a great country, maybe he feels he's earned his place. “Thanks, God for everything, you know it's been quite a sacrifice getting here.” And how about you? You have volunteered countless hours, given of your resources, been generous to a fault, always paid your taxes on time, voted for the ‘right’ candidate, and never used profanity. It's almost like presenting God with a balance sheet or an invoice to say, “I think we're good God.” Now we can walk away feeling we've earned our place, maybe even a little equality.

Whatever David's motives, he was a fallible human as we come to discover, God doesn't want a house, didn't ask for a house – at least, he doesn't want David's house. Hear God's voice through Nathan in verse 6-7,

(Slide 4) “Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? ⁶I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. ⁷Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?””

You cannot please God by making a little corner for him to live in. You cannot earn your way into his good graces. Nothing we can do on this earth can make us right with God on our own.

God doesn't need a house. The Israelites thought God needed a place to live where they could come and visit, offer sacrifices, receive forgiveness.

God doesn't need to be sheltered. It's not our job to protect God. God is not an idol that can be broken or melted down. You cannot cage God into some form or shape of your making. God will have nothing to do with that!

God doesn't need our help in making his living arrangements and God doesn't give David the satisfaction of building such a house. God reminds David that he is very much in control of his creation and who he is, David is not.

As 2020 draws to a close, one of our lessons from this year is that church is not the building. God doesn't live here but it is a place of gathering, encouragement, healing, learning, and sending. This learning will make the kingdom stronger even as the face of the church changes through our meeting electronically.

Now we learn that God turns the tables on David. In verse 11, God says, **(Slide 5) “I will also give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you.”** This house God is going to build is not a house of cedar or stone or metal. It is something entirely different.

In the television series and movies, **Star Trek**, the Klingon race is powerful and built on their capacity to wage war. But each Klingon is judged by the way they honor their family and their people. Each family is a “house” and for Starfleet officer Warf, his house is the house of Mogh. The house of Mogh had lost its honor and place in Klingon society until Warf's actions restored the house to glory, honor, and power.

The house God wanted to build is one that would never decay or fall apart. It is one that would never see dishonor because it is the house God founded. And this brings us to Advent and this last candle we have ignited today, the candle of love.

Notice in verse 13 and now in verse 16, God uses the word “forever” three times.

(Slide 6) Verse 13, **“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”**

And now, verse 16, **“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”**

It is out of David’s house, his lineage, that God established his house, the House of God, the kingdom of God. Advent pulls us in anticipation of the coming Messiah, the “long awaited One” of the royal house of David who is to bring salvation to all people. This is the culmination of God’s love for us. The Angel Gabriel said to Mary, **“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end”** (Luke 1:31-33, emphasis added).

How appropriate that this child, Jesus, the anointed One, was born in a manger far away from his family home. This child wasn’t of the house of Joseph or Mary, this child is of the House of God. The house God established beginning with Abraham, Jacob and David and it can’t be contained, constrained, or confined. Everything in his name suggests that God has amazing plans for you and me. Listen to his names. What do they speak into your need? What do they speak into your heart right now, right where you are whether you are profoundly grateful, or desperate, lonely, hurt, angry, grief-stricken, or feeling inadequate?

He is:

Wonderful Counselor

Everlasting Father

Prince of Peace

Jesus

Savior

Messiah

You can be in his house by receiving Jesus and following him. Receive the counseling you seek, embraced by a Father of love and grace who will never let you down, rest in an indescribable peace even in your crazy world, receive salvation from sin. God told David and now, on Christmas Day his house, the kingdom is established forever.

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

Christ the Lord.

Amen.