

## Homily Notes for Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Fourth of Advent B

2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-12, 14-16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-28

**1. This Christmas we are focusing on two themes. The first is how great and wonderful it is that God so loved the world that He sent his only Son to save us through His covenant with David. The second is that our response to such a great gift must be “the obedience of faith.”**

**2. The wonder of Christmas!** We are an historical religion. Here we have the promise of God to King David (approx. 1000 B.C.). This passage occurs after the capture of Jerusalem by David, when he is secure in his kingdom and he wants to build a temple for God. He responds obediently to the guidance of the prophet Nathan who tells him that God doesn't want him to build the temple. In response to that obedience David receives a promise which is fulfilled in Jesus. Nathan says to David,

“The Lord also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you... Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

Note that the encounter begins with David wishing to build a house for God. It ends with God making a messianic prophecy to David that his house (David's lineage) would stand firm forever.

**3. Psalm 89 is about the promise of an eternal covenant forever.**

“I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations... Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm.”

**4. Second reading:** St. Paul recognizes the historic nature of our faith and its call to obedience.

“Brothers and sisters: ... according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God... made known to bring about the obedience of faith...”

**5. Gospel: The promise is made to Mary by the angel Gabriel:**

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will...be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne (authority) of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

How remarkable this historical **continuity**. We Christians can see the hand of God working through time, consistently from the beginning of time. Here is his promise! What does it mean that God sent his Son, the Word of God, through which everything was made, everything that we can see through the Hubble telescope and more? We hear these words too often. They are too ordinary. Wonder with me what it means that God, himself, cared so much about us to send “His Son” to save us! (2)!

**6. Therefore, we can see that another essential theme for this Sunday is “the obedience of faith.”**

**8. In the first reading King David is obedient to the prophet Nathan** who tells him he cannot build a Temple to God. This illustrates how strong was David's faith in God. Nathan had already given him God's permission to build Him a house. Then God spoke to Nathan that night revealing that He did not want David to build him the temple but that his Son should do it (v.13). Read the rest of 2 Sam. 7 for King David's prayer of response. He was completely obedient to the word of God brought to him through Nathan and therefore received the promised blessings. King David was great, not because he was sinless and perfect, but because he repented and finally obeyed God.

**9. The Responsorial Psalm** tells us why we want to be obedient to God, that is, because of his goodness and his Covenant with us.

**10. The Second Reading, from the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, shows that the entire purpose of his mission was to bring about “the obedience of faith to the only wise God.”** Note that this is the way he begins the same letter in Romans 1:5: “Through him (Jesus Christ) we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles.” This shows that the purpose of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, had as its purpose calling the early Christians to “the obedience of faith.” How remarkable that Martin Luther found in this same letter his doctrine of “salvation by faith alone!”

On the importance of “the obedience of faith” (see CCC 144-149).

**11. Finally, in the Gospel reading we see the obedience of faith acted out in the Virgin Mary’s response to Gabriel, “Let it be done unto me according to your word.”** So, the last word to us in preparation for our celebration of Christmas is a call to the obedience of faith to the Lord Jesus Christ! How important is it for us, in the midst of the world in which we live, to be obedient to God?

**12. But today I would just like to suggest some areas in which God will bless our lives if we are obedient.**

**a. In our marriages** God says that He “hates” divorce. How hard should we work at preserving our marriage with the “wife of our youth”? Jesus speaks to this in Mt 19:9: “I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.” We are called to a higher standard of love which involves suffering for one another. See John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (husband, wife). We do have to determine if the marriage was legitimately founded. If not a declaration of nullity can be obtained.

**b. In our families**

**parents to children:** Eph 6:4 – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.” Also Heb. 12:5-11 on the need for instruction and discipline. Parents are called to instruct their children in the way they should go.

**children to parents:** the fourth commandment is the first commandment with a promise, “Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the earth that the Lord has given you.

**c. In our relationships**

**d. At our work**

**e. In the life of our Church**

**f. In the life of our community**

**13. Now at the end of Advent, how has your evaluation of your life, at present, gone?**

Do you find yourself more deeply aware of the love of God and his awesome power?

Are you finding yourself desiring to conform to his will and his guidance as his disciple?

Do you feel more and more moved to offer adoration to our God?

What should be your next steps toward a more spiritual and godly life?

**14. Let us rejoice that the Lord is ever present to accompany us through whatever life gives us.**

