

Fourth Sunday in Advent  
Oh Come Emmanuel: The Gift of a Savior  
2 Samuel 7:8-16  
12/24/17

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Pt 1:2)

## 2 Samuel 7:8-16

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“FREE GIFT...with purchase.” You’ll see that from time to time at stores. But, do you notice a problem with that? “FREE GIFT...with purchase” is not really free, and its not really a gift, is it? Maybe later today, maybe tomorrow, you’ll give and receive some gifts. How would you feel if those gifts came with strings attached? *“Here’s a gift for you. You can have it after you go out and clean the garage.”* That’s not a gift, is it? Thankfully, God gives his gifts with no strings attached. David learned that in the sermon text today.

This text comes at the beginning of a new stage of King David’s rule. For much of the beginning of his reign David was a warrior-king. God had used David to bring Israel into a period of safety and security unlike any they had ever known. But now, through David, God had brought Israel peace.

As David sat in his newly finished palace in Jerusalem, a palace truly fit for a king, something struck him as not being right. It didn’t seem right that he should be living in such splendor while God’s house among his people was still a tent. Ever since God, through Moses, led the people out of slavery in Egypt, he had dwelt among his people in a movable tent structure called the Tabernacle. But now, it had been a few hundred years since God brought his people into their permanent home of Israel, yet his place among them was still a tent.

David wanted to fix that. He dreamt of building a beautiful and magnificent house for God in Jerusalem. There was nothing selfish about this thought; he was not out to make a name for himself. He wanted only to glorify God.

Through the prophet Nathan, God sent his reply to David’s plan. That reply is the sermon text today. God said, *“No, you will not build a house for me. Rather, I’m going to build a house for you!”* Now, as you look through God’s reply, do you see any conditions David had to fulfill? Were there any strings attached? No! God simply said, *“This is what I’m going to do for you!”* In fact, that’s one of the reasons God didn’t want David to build his house in Jerusalem. He didn’t want anyone to get the idea that God was in some way repaying David for what he had done. No, God’s promises to David were 100% gift from God.

And God kept his promises! First, and most immediately, this promise finds fulfillment in David’s son, Solomon. God blessed David with a son to sit on the throne in Jerusalem. He blessed David with a son in Solomon who brought David’s dream to fruition when he built God’s house in Jerusalem.

But God’s promise was more than just Solomon. As is often the case with prophecy, there was a double fulfillment here too. Solomon was a foreshadow of the greater fulfillment God would bring about through David’s greatest Son, Jesus. God said this, **“He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever...Your house and your kingdom will**

**endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”** How do we know this is not just about Solomon? Well, because Solomon doesn't have a descendant ruling on the throne in Israel today.

Through Jesus, God built a house for David. What exactly does that mean? I have to say, the cover picture for this Sunday in our sermon series on the gifts God gives at Advent, the gifts God gives to prepare us for the way Jesus comes to us, didn't make a whole lot of sense when I first saw it. The other cover pictures fit well and were easy to understand. The first Sunday in Advent focused on the gift of Baptism, and the cover picture was a shell – a common symbol for Holy Baptism. The Second Sunday focused on the gift of prophets – those who share God's Word with us – the text from Isaiah instructed Isaiah to **“make straight paths”** for the coming Savior – and the picture was a path that needed straightening. Last Sunday, we found joy in knowing that Jesus was coming to save you – the picture was a gift, something that brings joy.

But this Sunday, it's a house and the theme is “The Gift of a Savior.” What does a house have to do with the gift of a Savior? Look again at God's promise to David, **“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you”**. You know, come to think of it, a house does make perfect sense when thinking of the gift of a Savior.

God secured a home for David by sending Jesus. God's promise to David here was, **“I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed.”** The nation of Israel had that for a little while – they experienced peace. But that peace didn't last. Eventually other more powerful nations threatened and conquered them.

That's how this life is. Difficulty, trouble, pain, problems are never far away. The sin in this world and the sin in our own lives make it impossible to have perfect and lasting happiness, perfect and lasting peace. But God has established a home for you in the same way he did for David. In the Gospel, the angel Gabriel announced the fulfillment of this promise God made to David. Gabriel said to Mary, **“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end”** (Luke 1:31-33). God kept his promise to David by sending Jesus to win his forgiveness and establish a permanent home for him in heaven.

The fulfillment of this promise to David means God has kept his promise to you, too. He has taken you from the depths of sin and condemnation and made you children of God. He has given you true spiritual peace and rest from your enemies, the power of Satan and the curse of sin. In and through Jesus, God has established for you an everlasting home in heaven.

By giving you the gift of a Savior, your home is heaven. At Christmas we see the full and complete fulfillment of God's promise to David. God sent his Son to take away your sin so that you can have a home of your own in heaven where you will no longer be disturbed by sin. And this gift of a Savior is just that – a gift. What did you do to cause the birth of Jesus? Obviously nothing, it happened 2,000 years ago! What could you have done to bring it about? God did not wait to see if you were deserving, he didn't give you a list of requirements to fulfill before he would save you. He sent Jesus with no strings attached. There's nothing left for you to do but to welcome and receive him!

David had to do nothing to receive the promise of God. Mary didn't have to do anything either. Gabriel didn't give her a list of requirements before God would keep his end of the bargain. He simply said, **"You will be with child and give birth to a son"**.

It sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? That God would give you a Savior as a free gift, it sounds too good to be true. Our sinful natures naturally doubt God's gift. Our sinful natures naturally think there's got to be a catch. So Jesus comes to you in Word and Sacrament to drive away those sinful doubts. He comes to you to show you the amazing grace of God that would provide such a gift.

Jesus comes to you to dwell in your heart through faith. He brings your faith to trust the promises of God with the simple answer Mary gave the angel, **"May it be to me as you have said"** (Luke 1:38). You receive that gift from God the same way David did, and the same way Mary did in the Gospel. You receive that gift with no conditions, with no prerequisites you fulfill. God simply gives you the gift of his forgiveness and of your heavenly home through Jesus.

With God's gift of a Savior, there are never strings attached. He freely gives his love to you in Jesus so you look forward to the perfect home of heaven. And that is all yours with no strings attached.

Amen

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy -- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord ... now and forevermore. (Jude 24-25)

Amen