

ADVENT 4

2 Sam 7:1-5;8-12;14,16

Rom16:25-27

Lk 1:26-38

Have you ever bought a present for someone on the basis that as you like what you have bought the intended recipient must also like it? This is what King David did. David, the shepherd boy from the hills had lived an unpredictable life since he was chosen by God to be the leader of his people. But now he was in Jerusalem living in a house in which he was safe and secure. If that was good enough for him, then God would also like to have a house so David decided to build him a Temple and the Ark of the Covenant would be God's home.

God wasn't angry with David, but God does not need a house to feel secure. God doesn't need to be domesticated and he cannot be contained in a box. It is a mistake to think that God must also want what we want. God points out to Nathan the prophet that it is not our job to make God a home, rather it is his job to make this world a home for his people. While this began at the creation and continued when God brought his people out of Egypt and led them to the Promised Land, it would not be completed until he himself comes to make his home with us and in us.

As St Luke shares with us in his gospel, the angel Gabriel comes to Nazareth to visit Mary, a young woman who had found favour with God, of the house of Aaron, the first High Priest. She was betrothed to marry Joseph, a member of the house of David, to whom God had promised that his kingdom would endure for ever. Gabriel negotiates with Mary about the home that God wishes to make for himself. He presents God's plan to her while the God whom heaven and earth cannot contain, patiently waits for Mary to consent to the proposal that she becomes the mother of a son who will be great and inherit the throne of his father David.

Mary doesn't ask Gabriel what the benefits would be for her if she agreed because there would be a great deal of social shame as well as trouble with and for Joseph. She didn't ask if she could go and discuss it with her family, but she did point out that the slight problem was that she was a virgin. When Gabriel assured her that it was all fixed and that all manner of things shall be well, Mary submitted her will to that of God.

Have you ever noticed how low-key God's great acts of salvation are? God speaks and order comes out of chaos; he breathes and new life is given; he meets people in the stillness and calm; he borrows a young virgin's womb in which to be conceived. He borrows a stable in which to be born and a family in which to grow up. He borrows boats from which to teach the people; he borrows a donkey to ride into Jerusalem; he borrows an upper room to celebrate the Last Supper; a cross to die on and a tomb in which to be buried. Jesus borrows people to achieve God's purposes and he wants to borrow you and me to be his disciples and lay or ordained ministers while patiently waiting for us to respond.

All the things we long for and search for in this world, love, security, peace, joy and fulfilment are found in God who is our real home. Yet like Mary he waits for us to say, 'Yes' to him.

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me' (Rev 3:20).

Very soon we celebrate his coming to earth to make his home with us so that we can find our home in him. Will we open the door to his knocking and invite him into our lives and with Mary say, 'Be it unto me according to thy word' (Lk 1:38), and with Isaiah say, 'Here am I, send me'' (Isaiah 6:8). God is waiting for our response.

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