

TITLE: God Without Walls

DATE: 2024.7.22

SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a

TEXT: ^{11b}Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

THEME: God is not stationary in dwelling among God's people.

INTRODUCTION

What does a **house** represent? A home, a family, parents, children, grandchildren, uncles and aunts, cousins.

What does a **house** represent? Identity, ethnicity, belonging, acceptance, culture, love, community, caring, helping, sacrifice and innovation, building, creating, succeeding.

What does a **house** represent? Shelter, security, established, accomplishment, legitimacy, status, wealth, food.

What does a **house** represent? A place to gather, fun, study, imagination, organization, relaxation, recovery, safety, origin.

Having the ark of the covenant nearby, is a symbol of the presence of God, but the ark does not contain God. God is not contained in the box. All that is in the box are the artifacts of a living covenant between God and the Community of God. We too are a living sign of the presence of God.

SCRIPTURE

King David is at peace with his neighbors and has built himself a cedar home and now wants to do something nice for God. David has good intentions, but fatally flawed as he fails to ask what God wants.

Very early on, when I was still a teachable as a pastor. A colleague told me that when he visits members, he asks them what they would like prayer for, instead of assuming we knew what they needed. "You'll be surprised what they want prayer for and often times, not for themselves, but for concerns that you would never have thought of."

David assumes God wants a Cedar house and tells the prophet Nathan his plans for God's Ark. But that's not what God wants. God does not want to give the appearance of being stationary. God is mobile and has traveled with this community of people where ever they have gone. In fact God is not territorial or limited to only being in one place at a time. God is not tied down, God cannot be contained like a genie in a lamp and certainly God cannot be controlled. God is not exclusive for Israel either, but for all people.

So...What does God want? God wants to dwell among us. To live in fellowship with us. As imperfect as we may be, human, God enjoys our company and engages with us. Together we grow, share experiences, help each other, create a relationship with each other. Like what a house represents, but without walls. God wants to be at home with us.

A God without walls, doesn't follow protocol and selects the next king of Israel from out of a pasture. A good heart is more important than royal blood.

Then the flip side of this passage is not for David to build God a house, but for God to build us into a house. To be at home with God. Passing through generations and amped by Jesus as the Kingdom of God. What God wants is way beyond a measly temple. God is building the house of the people of God with God's Holy Spirit inside of them.

APPLICATION

What house do you imagine, God is making us into?

Yesterday a few of us gathered to distribute flyers inviting our neighbors to the August 1st informational meeting with our developer EAH, our Planner PBR and our Architect Ama A/E. This is not our intended Affordable Housing project, but for Seniors. My introverted self was excited and apprehensive about doing this. But as I pulled up, after picking up Josh Hayashi from the airport, we were met by Alan, Richie, Helene, and Eric. Needless to say I was happy to see them. After a short prayer, we walked up and down a couple of streets and down Main Street. All except of one person seemed happy about what we were proposing.

This has been a rough week sorting out the change of the housing focus to Seniors. The stark reality is how costly it is to build today and how expensive everything has gotten. If there are not enough units bringing in an income this project would not be feasible. It could not staff itself or do the regular upkeep and repair it needs to be self sufficient. One of the ways our project could help families, is if Seniors from our neighborhood were able to move to our housing, then this could create more available dwellings for a family to rent or buy.

The other information that was presented was on how Seniors are suffering to make ends meet in our neighborhood. Mariane from EAH called it the 'Silver Tsunami' as more seniors find themselves in need of social services.

The other story I heard was about seniors giving their properties to their children only to be kicked out or have the home mortgaged and lost because of non-payment.

Our instincts were correct in trying to address the housing for families, but we have had to change our strategies in order to accomplish this. As we address the need for senior housing, this may open up housing opportunities for families.

We have been at this for a long time. Working with the county, state, partnering with a developer, hiring a planner and working through a consultant. We have all learned a lot by going through this process and are creating a path for other churches to utilize their properties in ways that can serve their neighbors.

The question we have to ask "is this taking our focus off what God had given us, for families or is this a refinement of the vision God has given to us for seniors and the side effect benefitting families?" Addressing the problem from another way that help both seniors and families.

Iao UCC is looking at the potential their property has in providing housing. They do not have the same kind of zoning restriction we do and could provide the

housing for families that we wanted to do. Maybe that is why we have been at this for so long? For others to see and be one piece of a larger puzzle.

Last thing to make this work is for the County of Maui to mandate for Maui residents to have the first chance to apply for these units. Then we are not bringing new people to live here but are addressing the need of our neighborhood. This is where our prayers are needed.

CONCLUSION

What does a **sanctuary** building represent? A **house**. The presence of God. We are the sign of the presence of God. 6 people going door to door of our neighbors represent the presence of God in our neighborhood. The conversations we were not afraid to have represent the presence of God. The sharing so that our neighbors would be the first to know about this project represent that God is in our neighborhood. That God cares. That God is not confined to a box.

Watch out, we have a God without walls when God's people take to the streets.