GOD AND THE GRANNY POD

2 Samuel 7:1-11; 16

December 20, 2020

Juanita Ramirez (not her real name) lives in the Portland, OR, area. She has a 2 year old daughter. And now she’s shopping for a place to live – a place with some space, some land. Because she has a problem. Her mother.

The mother is not a *bothersome* problem, but she’s a concern. Ramirez now thinks it is time for mom to be closer to them. She wants to find a lot that will allow her to build her mom a small cottage. If she can do this, she will be able to take care of both her daughter and her aging mother as well.

Juanita isn’t the only one thinking of building a house for a parent. In fact, there’s a movement in this direction fueled in part by the high cost of care in assisted living facilities These backyard homes, called by some “granny pods” and some others as “mother-in law suites,” are an alternative to putting an aging relative in a care home. Some are full of medical technology, and are specifically designed for senior citizens. For example, many granny pods have safety features that come standard with the construction, such as hand railings, defibrillators and first aid supplies. Some have lighted floorboards and floors made of soft, porous material covered in thick carpeting, thus minimizing damage from falls.

Children building homes for parents. It’s almost as common as parents building, buying, or helping to finance homes for their children when the kids – with freshly minted college diplomas or are newly married—[almost the same, as I was saying ]as when kids are just starting out on the adult journey of life.

Something similar is happening in today’s Old Testament text. King David—who has many wars and battles yet ahead of him, who has yet to commit adultery with Bathsheba, who has yet to engineer the death of Bathsheba’s husband, who has yet to do anything to avenge the rape of his daughter Tamar by Amnon his son—this David is thinking of building a house, a house for the Lord, for his heavenly parent.

It would seem to be a gracious gesture. But, as with many parents who resist or resent their children telling them what to do, and don’t like it when the kids connive to reduce their independence, God pushes back, and basically tells David to forget it. God doesn’t want to live in a house in David’s backyard.

The context of this kerfluffle is that David has built himself a house of cedar and thinks that it is not enough that he has brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. He says to his prophet pal, Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” The inference is clear: He lives in a sumptuous and stable structure in relative ease, while God ahs been shunted to flimsy warehouse of canvas and twine. The situation would make any self-respecting child a bit guilty—treating his parent this way. Yet, why did David *really* want to build a house or temple for the Lord?

It’s hard to know the king’s motives. One can speculate, however. Perhaps there’s a *quid pro quo* idea lurking in David’s heart. If he does something for God, God will do something for him. Such an attitude is hardly uncommon. People have always bargained with God.

- 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).

- Hannah bargained for a son (I Samuel 1.)

Soldiers offer up foxhole prayers during a firestorm that often have something to do with never fornicating again or going into the priesthood. Many people with a terminal illness understandably try to strike a deal with God – perhaps offering to tithe faithfully if God will heal them. People in financial distress often make desperate promises to God.

All of these situations are sort of like pagan attempts to appeal to a wrathful deity. People burn incense, light candles, and ask their patron deity to help them pass examinations, heal a dying mother, increase their prosperity and give them health and long life. Maybe David, too, is seeking a little *quid pro quo.*

Or maybe he just wanted to express his gratitude. God’s hand had been on him since Samuel anointed him in the presence of his brothers and his father Jesse.

Expressing gratitude to God is a good thing. Like most parents, God tries to teach His children to say “please” and “thank you.” Later, David himself will write: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name” (Ps. 100:4) Yeah, it *is* a good thing to say “thank you.”

But perhaps, just maybe, God senses that David is attempting more than just a thank-you note. Maybe he’s also *trying to pay God back, to settle a debt.* Powerful men like David don’t like being indebted to anyone, not even to their God. Is this what’s happening here?

Do we ever think that we’re sort of square with God? We’ve called innumerable housebound people. We’ve sent “be well” cards and sat in the kitchens of bereaved friends. We’ve thought of all manner of neat little things to do to give people a smile and make them feel special. We’ve paid our dues. We’ve done our service. Could God expect more?

So we tend to think this way: if we’ve done no harm, been faithful to our spouse, volunteered for various nonprofits, been generous with our financial resources, never once kicked the cat, never once evaded the IRS, never once used profanity – well what could God possibly say? it’s like we present an invoice to God and say, “I think we’re good.” Now we can walk away.

Whatever David‘s motives, God doesn’t see it this way. God doesn’t want a house. At least, God doesn’t want David’s house. God makes it clear: He never asked for a house. He doesn’t want a house. “I have not lived in a house since the day I bought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” (vv. 6,7)

David was treating God as a client. The one who builds the house is greater than the tenant of the house. God sees through David. There’s David, the man of action and mighty deeds. He’s going to make decisions for God. He’s going keep God in His place. He is going to take care of God. He is going to put God somewhere so that he’ll always know where God is and what God is doing. *He is going to manage God.* He is going to please God as any child wishes to please a parent by showing the parent that he has outstripped the parent, has advanced and gone beyond the parent.

God will have none of it, and brings the house building plans to an abrupt halt. And although God will later approve plans for a temple built by David’s son Solomon, right now he has a lesson or two to teach the king.

*God doesn’t need to be sheltered*. Perhaps this is why the tabernacle never had a roof. To put a roof on the structure would suggest that God needs protection, that God is not much more than a thing made of wood or stone.

No, we don’t need to protect God in any way, shape, or form. We are not going to cage God.

*God doesn’t need to be assisted with his living arrangements.* God reminds David that he has never uttered a complaint about the tabernacle. God has never expressed dissatisfaction with his “house.” God doesn’t need His children telling Him what to do. He is just fine, thank you very much. God will not permit David the satisfaction of feeling like he’s helping God, giving God a hand, lending assistance for someone who can no longer help himself. God reminds David that He, God, is firmly in control of His powers and faculties.

So now God turns the tables. God tells David that although David cannot and will not build a house of God, God will build a house for him: “Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house” (v. 11).

The house that God will build for David is not a house of cedar, marble, and precious stones. Such a house, no matter how well-built, is still subject to decay or destruction. No, God is going to build a dynasty! It’s a house that will last eternally. Notice that God uses the word “forever” three times when describing this new “house.” God says, “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever” (v. 16.)

This brings us to Advent. We’re only a few days from the day we celebrate the advent of the final ruler, the last and eternal sovereign, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the One who is of the royal house of David whose throne will be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16.) Remember it. 2 Samuel 7:16. God has made His covenant to David and to you. The angel Gabriel says to Mary: “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you wil 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).

And now, God, who rejected David’s plans for a house, settles into a “house” of an entirely different order, a house of flesh and bone.

Here in the manger, God is in His house. This human house, this child -- all for us. Everything in the name of this child suggests that God has amazing and saving plans for us: Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Jesus, Saviour, Messiah.

*O come let us adore Him.*

*O come let us adore him,*

*O come let us adore him,*

*Christ the Lord.*

Amen.