

Ordinary Sunday 16 2021 **2 Samuel 7:1-14a** Ephesians 2:11-22 Mark 6:30-34 53-56 **Scott MALCOLM**

One of the things I do in my spare time is read articles from theological magazines. A while ago I came across a review of three very old commentaries written on the First Testament book of Daniel.

One was written in about 500, the other 600 and the last at about 800 AD.

They were written by learned and scholarly men, but when I came to the end of the article the most fascinating thing about these reviews, was that they told me more about the men who had written them, than the God supposedly contained in their pages.

What I mean by that, is that from a perspective of 1500-1200 years later, it's easy to see cultural, religious and ethnic bias at work. These men couldn't help seeing things through the lens of their place in history, their particular time. They couldn't help seeing things through their gender, nationality, privileged positions in the church and society. Through their relationship to the powers that existed at the time, the Kings, Emperors and Pope.

They wrote a lot about God, lots of talk about language and translation ... but as I read the article, I couldn't escape, that the writers of these commentaries were people of their time, and so were their thoughts about God.

This got me to thinking, if that was true then, is it true today?

**Perhaps much of our God talk, reflects more of who we, than who God is.**

I thought about South Africa, and the White Nationalist party using the bible for its ideas of apartheid. About the American South and how justification for segregation was founded on Christian doctrine, was supported, aided, abetted and implemented by Christian people.

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I thought about the situation in Russia where the Orthodox church supports and benefits from the regime of Vladimir Putin. About former President Trump and his claims to believe in God, guns and oil. About the multitude of Covid disasters in the world, supported and aided by anti-vaxers' ... many of whom are Christian.

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In our text from Samuel, King David decides that his living in a house of cedar is unacceptable if the ark of the Lord lives in a tent. So, he decides to build the ark a temple. Nathan the prophet, who is not shy to speak truth to power, but who is also the Kings man, says, "Do what is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."

It all sounds very righteous, very proper and very humble on David's part, until we look a little more closely at what's been happening. David has just become King of Israel and Judah. His kingship is in its infancy. He has established a new capital, called, funnily enough, the city of David. He has quietly but surely established his power base and cleverly centralised all political power in that place.

In this new city of David, he now wants to build a temple ... for the Lord, or so he says.

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David is King, he has a new city to be King in, he has made that place the centre of political power, and now he wants to centralise all religious power there too.

By doing this, David doesn't just centralise power .... He gains complete control. He gains control politically and perhaps more importantly, religiously.

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Interestingly enough, overnight Nathan has second thoughts, or perhaps God has first thoughts ... and says NO.

You see the thing is, God likes living in a tent. Doing whatever God wants, moving wherever God feels like moving. Not being tied or held down. Not being caged up. Not being bound to a particular place or group or set of ideas or thoughts or theologies, even.

God isn't all that interested in inhabiting a temple, being cooked up, penned in ... being domesticated ...

For David's use ... or for anyone else's. In spite of what the text goes on to say.

God is nothing ... if not free to do as God wills.

So, God says ... NO.

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How often have we heard someone say "God lead me to this, God told me to do that"? How often have we heard someone express opinion as fact, not only fact, but biblical certainty ... "thus saith the Lord".

How often have these things been more reflective of who said them, rather than the God who's supposed to have said them.

**Perhaps much of our God talk, reflects more of who we, than who God is.**

After reading about ancient commentators on the Book of Daniel and 2 Samuel this morning, I'm inclined to try and hold my counsel a little bit more closely, about what God might be saying, and hopefully, with a lot more humility.

Because ... **much of our God talk, reflects more of who we, than who God is.**

Amen.