

*“Home is where Jesus is”*  
(2 Samuel 7:1-17; Matthew 2:1-12)

“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me;  
your throne will be established forever.”  
(2 Samuel 7:16)

## **Home for the holidays**

Where is home?

This is a question that I myself have pondered over the last number of years as I moved away to college, got married, moved farther away for seminary, and then ended up here in Kansas, the place where I grew up but no longer the place where my parents live.

Where is home? Perhaps this is a question that you’ve pondered as well. Is home a specific place, such as a house? Or maybe home is more broadly a region, such as a state or section of the country? Perhaps even more broadly, home is whatever place where family is...but which family: parents, siblings, children...all of the above? We live in a mobile society. Where is home? How do you know?

Maybe home isn’t a place at all. Maybe home is more a **feeling** of love, comfort and safety. If we think of home more like this, then we could find ourselves at home in any location where these qualities are present.

Well, we have just come through a busy holiday season with Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. One key component of this season is that many people do a lot of traveling over the holidays. Some, like Mary and I, traveled across the country to visit extended family, putting almost 2000 miles on our car. Others had family travel here from other places across the country, spending a lot of work cleaning the house and hosting guests. And still others have family so close that their holiday travel consisted of going to as many different parties as possible, sometimes up to three parties in one day!

But why do we spend so much time and effort to travel over the holidays? There are of course many reasons, but one reason I think of is that we are searching for those feelings of complete love, comfort, and safety. We are searching for the feeling of being home.

So before we move on, I’d like you to take just a moment to think about this question: over the past month, where and when did you feel most at home?

## Building God's House

In our Scripture Passage from 2 Samuel 7, the great King David thinks that he has finally found a home. Not only has he settled in his new house in Jerusalem, but the Lord has also given him rest from all his enemies. After many trials of running for his life from king Saul and then seeking to unite the monarchy by defeating Israel's enemies, David has now found rest and security.

But David is still troubled: He says to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." In other words, David says, I've found a home, so isn't it about time for God to have a place to call home as well? Isn't it about time that I build a Temple for God to also find rest?

And the prophet Nathan gives David the green light to build a Temple. But on that same night, God spoke directly to Nathan, which is what we heard Bob read a bit earlier. First, God questioned David's motive: "Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle..." God is a moving kind of God. No, God says, it's not yet time for me to settle and dwell in a house. After all, a house isn't what makes a home. And from here on, God flips the conversation, saying to David:

"I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be **prince** over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went...and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth...**Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.**"

At this point, I'm guessing that David was a bit confused... "But God, I already have a house, that's the point. You're the one who needs a house so that we can find home together. Without the assurance of your presence, how can I ever feel at home?" But God discounts this logic, instead promising to build David a house, and beyond that, promising to establish David's house and kingdom forevermore. With this being said, we can understand that God isn't talking about building a house made out of cedar wood, but rather God is talking about making a lasting household out of David's offspring. In doing so, God is calling all of David's royal descendants to continue shepherding the people with God's justice and grace. As David and his descendants seek to follow God's ways, then they will find themselves truly at home.

Yes, it is David's son, Solomon, who will build a house for God's name, the temple in Jerusalem, but God promises that it will be David's name that will endure the test of time. Through God's blessing, it is David's throne that will reign for all eternity. Upon hearing such good news, David worships God.

## **An Everlasting Kingdom**

This of course sounds great to David. God will establish his household forever! God will make God's own home with David's descendants. David's descendants can forever live with peace and security because God will always be with them. Now that is something to celebrate!

But, unfortunately, it doesn't take too many years until we run into a significant problem. Many years short of forever, David's reign comes to an end. First the kingdom is divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, ruled by different kings. Then, after the Northern kingdom has already been destroyed, Jerusalem is attacked and God's people are sent into exile in Babylon. Only a few hundred years after David reigned as King over all the people of Israel, the Kingdom completely fell apart, and even the temple built by Solomon lay in ruins.

So what about God's promise to establish an everlasting kingdom? Did God's promise fail? Will God's people never again find a true place to call home?

Or perhaps God's everlasting kingdom wasn't meant to be a physical kingdom. And perhaps home with God doesn't refer to a place at all.

Over the course of history, several of Israel's prophets came to realize that God's everlasting kingdom was not finished, but rather was still to be fulfilled in a future descendant of David. Thus, as David's physical kingdom fell apart, hope was born for the continuation of God's everlasting kingdom. The prophets said that this hope would find fruition in a future Messiah, God's anointed King who would establish God's kingdom on the earth and free all of God's people from oppression, allowing all people in the whole world to find a true sense of home. (put scripture verses on the screen: Num. 24:7, 17; Jeremiah 23:5; Micah 5:2, 4; Amos 9:11-12; Ezekiel 34:23)

Furthermore, after exile, all these building hopes for the continuation and fulfillment of God's everlasting kingdom came to fruition at one time, in one person.

In Matthew chapter 2, we read the familiar story of the Magi, astrologers from the East who recognize a sign in the stars that a new king of the Jews has been born. After traveling to Jerusalem, when they ask King Herod about this new King, he was greatly disturbed and all of Jerusalem with him! After all, the proclamation of a new king was not good news for the current king!

So after consulting with the Jewish chief priests and teachers of the law, King Herod found out that the Messiah was predicted was to be born in Bethlehem because of what the prophet Micah wrote:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.” God’s everlasting kingdom was finding fulfillment before Herod’s very eyes.

So Herod the Great sent the astrologers on their way to find this new king and ordered them to report back to him so that he could also go and “worship him”.

### **Worshipping God’s Son**

You see, in both passages of scripture from 2 Samuel 7 and Matthew 2, we hear the good news of God’s everlasting kingdom: promised to David, fulfilled in Jesus! While King Herod responded to this news with fear, the proper response to this life-changing news is that of worship.

King David, upon hearing the news that God would establish his throne forever worshipped God. In similar fashion, when the Magi encountered the boy Jesus, they worshipped him with great joy, giving him gifts fit for a king.

But little did they know that this child was not just any new king, this Jesus was a king in the line of David who would re-establish God’s everlasting reign. This Jesus would shepherd God’s people just as David had shepherded God’s people in the past. This Jesus would be king over God’s people, but even more importantly, this Jesus would reign over the whole world!

Now, from a Jewish perspective, these astrologers from the East were outsiders, people who didn’t belong in the story of God and God’s people. These outsiders had no share in God’s eternal home. Yet it was these outsiders who sought out the boy Jesus in the first place, following the guidance of a star. Thus we can see already at Jesus birth, outsiders are becoming insiders in God’s kingdom! Already, God’s kingdom is turning the world upside down.

So as these astrologers worship king Jesus, we can catch a glimmer of hope for future inclusion. All people who submit themselves to Jesus’ reign will be included in God’s kingdom. God’s everlasting kingdom is not for Jewish people alone. Rather, God’s kingdom will break down barriers all across the world, inviting all people to worship the true king and thus find their true home.

You see, in worshipping Jesus, in offering complete allegiance to him, that's where we find authentic love, comfort, safety. That's where we find inclusion and relationship. That's where we find home.

### **Journeying home again**

So where is home?

Home is where Jesus is. Home is wherever Jesus is proclaimed as Lord. Home is wherever people gather around Jesus to worship him and thus be sent out by him to embody God's everlasting kingdom in all the world.

You see, God's promise to establish an everlasting kingdom through David's line did not fail when David's physical kingdom was destroyed. Rather God's promise to David found fruition in the person of Jesus, God's son, sent to the earth to show the world what God's kingdom really looks like.

In our own lives, it can be easy for us to get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of everything that we lose sight of the vision of God's everlasting kingdom.

We can get caught up in work, in politics, in sports, in technology, in travel, and even in family drama, that we lose sight of Jesus as our true King.

I wonder: what are the things in your own life that get in the way of you being a full participant in God's kingdom? What are the things that hold you back from worshipping Jesus and offering to him gifts fit for a king? These things, whatever they are, are also the things that hold us back from finding a true sense of home. Because home is where Jesus is. Home is where Jesus reigns.

And God's goal is that all people throughout the world might find their true home in declaring Jesus king and following his example of radical love. We, as followers of Jesus, are called to worship him as our king, to declare our full allegiance to his ways, and to spread his kingdom love all around, thus fulfilling God's promise to establish an everlasting kingdom.

So as we finish this busy holiday season of travel and searching, may we journey home again...to Jesus that is. May we worship Jesus and thus invite him to reign in every aspect of our everyday lives: then we will find ourselves truly **home**.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?  
We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”  
(Matthew 2:2)