

**“When God Says ‘No’” Text: 2 Samuel 7 Pastor Dave Sattler
 Sub-texts: 1 Chronicles 28:3, Isaiah 55:8-9, Luke 22:42/44,
 Ephesians 3:20-21 April 7, 2019 North Shore Alliance Church
 Series: “A Heart After God: Spirituality for Everyday Christians”**

Sources: NIV Life Application Bible. Commentaries: Walter Brueggemann, Paul Evans, David Garland/Tremper Longman III. Book: “Leap Over A Wall” by Eugene Peterson (c.1997) Online: “Resting on your laurels.” Songs: “I Just Can’t Wait to be King” by Elton John & Tim Rice (Walt Disney’s *Lion King*, c.1994), “Who You Say I Am” by Hillsong Worship (c.2017). Sermons: John Dyer (SAC, 1992), Graham Cooke (1999), Mark Peters (NSAC, 3/31/2019).

I. Review & Introduction

- **<Slide>** Good morning, everyone. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors at NSAC, today carrying on our Series on the life of David, “A Heart After God.”
- So, what is it about David? Why was I, and half the men here, born between 1935 and 1985, named after him?
- Perhaps it’s his earthiness that draws us to him. David’s so like us: fighting, praying, sinning, loving; angry, generous, devious, worshipful.
- David’s story is a solid reminder that life on earth — and life with God — is not that simple. **An authentic faith journey is never cut and dried.**
- It can’t be ‘boxed’ or ‘packaged.’
- This side of eternity, God is never finished with us. So, like David, our lives are filled with ... wheat, and weeds, light, and darkness, ups, and downs.
- And, as Eugene Peterson writes, Q: “There’s nothing, absolutely nothing, that God can’t and doesn’t use to work his salvation and holiness into our lives.” — *Leap Over A Wall*, p.9. With God, it’s all ‘in play.’
- **<Slide>** Some call it the dramatical and theological apex of the story.
- You can find it on pg. 245-6 in the blue Bibles found in the seat-rack in front of you. Or, you can turn there now on your electronic device.
- We pick up the story in 2 Samuel 7.
- Imagine David’s journey? He’d lived on the run nearly two decades, often hungry, hiding, homeless, waiting ... for the life he’d been promised.
- **In many ways, David’s was a life of waiting.**

<PLAY “I Just Can’t Wait to be King” VIDEO>

- **<Slide>** ILL — In Disney’s epic *Lion King*, young Simba imagines the day ...
 - When he’s in charge; when his abhorrent enemy, Scar, who plots to wipe out his family, has been vanquished. He dreams of becoming king ... when finally the whole world will listen to him.
 - Q: “I’m gonna be the main event. Like no king was before. I’m brushing up on looking down. I’m working on my roar. I just can’t wait to be king.” — Elton John & Tim Rice, c.1994.

- <Slide> It's all coming together for David now. Momentum on his side.
- The endless waiting seemingly over. He's finally arrived.
- He's put the Philistines in their place, united the northern and southern kingdoms, consolidated power, established a new capital, and brought back the precious Ark of the Covenant with grand festivity and reverent pageantry.
- Most importantly, David's new kingdom has a transcendent, spiritual quality to it. As Pastor Mark said last week, Q: "When David became king, he made worship a matter of national priority." – MP, March 31/2019.
- Good on him! With God and country, he's now riding a near-unstoppable wave of good-will, gratitude, and popularity. And we pick up the story in ...

2 Samuel 7 (NIV)

1 After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2 he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."

3 Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you."

4 But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

5 "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? 6 I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. 7 Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

8 "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth.

12 When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

17 Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

18 Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said:

"Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? 19 And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant—and this decree, Sovereign Lord, is for a mere human!"

24 "You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, Lord, have become their God." 25 "And now, Lord God, keep forever the

promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, 26 so that your name will be great forever. Then people will say, ‘The Lord Almighty is God over Israel!’ And the house of your servant David will be established in your sight. 27 “Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, ‘I will build a house for you.’ So your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. 28 Sovereign Lord, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant. 29 Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, Sovereign Lord, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever.”

- <PRAY> ‘Lord, move me out of the way. Come, speak to us by Your Spirit. Open our hearts to what You have for us. We’re hungry to hear from You.’

II. Narrative Outline

1. <Slide> A Noble Plan Approved (7:1-3)

- There he is: King David “settled in his palace,” finally able to “rest” (1).
- Q: ‘Doesn’t make sense,’ David muses, ‘Here I am living in this palace “of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.”’
- And it’s on the king’s heart to build a temple for God (2).
- David even runs his idea past the prophet Nathan, his pastor, who meets his noble plan with near tacit approval, Q: ‘Ah, go ahead and do whatever you want, “the Lord is with you”’ (3).
- Building permit granted.
- On first fly-by, there isn’t anything fishy here.
- David has completed all the human acts to legitimize his dynasty, save one: honour his God by building a temple.
- Nothing outrageous; it’s what kings in the Ancient Near East did when they took the throne: built public worship places for their deities.
- The King of Israel even follows protocol: seeks the green light from his spiritual director.

2. <Slide> Permission Revoked (7:4-7)

- “But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan” (4).
- And the prophet is told, by God, to tell the king, that, upon further review from the Command Centre, permission to build the temple, has been revoked.
- BQ: So, why did God not want David to build Him a temple?
- Reasons aplenty in the text ...
 1. God never asked. V.7: ‘Did I ever say, ‘Build me a temple?’
 2. God doesn’t need a swanky place to live. V.6: The Lord says, ‘From day one, I have never dwelt in a house!’

3. David's not the right guy (12-13). In cf. 1 Chronicles 28:3, God says, Q: "You are not to build a house for my Name, because you ... have shed blood." 'Know who you are. David, you're a warrior, not a builder.' V. 12-13: "Your offspring" ... "He is the one who will a house for my Name."
 4. Though not explicit in the narrative, the idea is here that God is saying, Q: 'David, if I let you build this temple, you'll be in danger. Your popularity, your sense of self-sufficiency, your ego, will get completely out of control.'
- The Lord wants David to know He will not be controlled or domesticated in a temple — even a luxurious one, that's someone else's idea.
 - God is still in charge. And David is not!

3. <Slide> Covenant Promises Made (7:8-17)

- Verses 8-17 describe one of the most important moments in the entire Bible.
- The Lord goes on a not-so-gentlemanly rant. Pulling rank.
- God reminds David over and over again ... Who He is, what He has done, and, what He will do for David, and indeed all of humanity, in the future.
- It's clear David, and scholars since, see this interchange as God forming a "forever" (13) covenant with His people.
- Whereas the Mosaic Covenant contained conditional arrangements ['If you follow my decrees, then I will ...'], here unconditional covenant promises are made. Like one scholar puts it,
 - Q: "Yahweh has signed a blank check to the David enterprise and has radically shifted the theological foundations of Israel. This is a powerful, clear articulation of 'justification by grace' in which the 'works' of David and Israel are not decisive [in history, because] ... God loves unconditionally." — Brueggemann, p. 254.
- Out of this "revelation" (17), there emerges a new hope for the people of God.
- A hope not based on what they have done, or can do, but based on God, His gracious, loving character, and His work on their behalf.
- Fixes our eyes on the horizon, on a 'coming David,' Who will right every wrong and establish the Kingdom of God, our True Home, for all eternity.

4. <Slide> Humble Response to God (7:18-29)

- When he doesn't get his way, David's reaction is not, Q: 'I'm out then. I'm taking my stuff and I'm going home.'
- No, instead, 'he goes in and sits before the Lord' (18). Note: kings who think they're divine never sit. It's why I love David's humble response, Q: "Who am I, Sovereign Lord ... that you have brought me this far?" (18)
- APP — Here on the West Coast, it's easy to get caught up in our culture ...
 - Of advancement, high achievement, and relative wealth.

- o We take ourselves, our accomplishments and brilliance so seriously, and begin to believe in — even adore, our own ‘amazing-ness.’
- o Consequently, our reliance on God gets easily pushed to the ‘back-burner.’ And we’re blind to the profound truth in this simple question, ‘What’s a God like You doing with a guy like me?’
- o I love how Hillsong Worship begins their song,
 - ❓ Q: “Who am I, that the Highest King, would welcome me?”
— *Who You Say I Am*, (c.2017).
- o This is the correct posture with which we are to approach the Lord.

III. Application

- Time to ‘land the plane’ now on a few application points.

A. <Slide> **Thinking we can do stuff for God.**

- When God’s glory and our glory become conflicted. When making a name for myself gets in the way of making God’s glory known.
- Like David, human desire ... for relevance, recognition, to get what we’re due, can drive us. Yet this craving for validation is insatiable. It can never be satisfied in the things of this world.
- The only greatness that truly satisfies comes not of our own making.
- When David suggests building a house for God, the Lord says, Q: “I will build a house for you” (27). Instead of David making a name for himself, God says, Q: “I will make your name great” (8). ‘In My time in My way, if you humble yourself and trust me,’ God says, ‘I will lift you up.’
- <Slide> APP — Here’s the point: **Too often we try to do for God what only God can do through us.** — John Dyer, c.1992
 - o Having accomplished much, David finds himself in a place of rest.
 - o ILL — Have you heard the phrase ‘resting on your laurels?’
 - ❓ Laurels are sweet-scented, aromatic leaves that cause you to feel comfortable, relaxed — idle even. Basking in the memory, the glory, of your own achievements.
 - ❓ Thinking, Q: ‘Look what I’ve done!’
 - o And this can be a dangerous place to sit. Fixated on your accomplishments. And scheming what to do next. Versus focusing on what God has done, can do, will do for you.
 - o When you’re feeling like you need that next mountain to climb, or deal to close, or project to build to legitimize your life. Versus asking, and listening, for what God wants you to do.
 - o You see, our worth is not based on what we do for God ... or, for anyone else, for that matter.

- Our value is based solely on who we are: WE ARE HIS, and, what God does ... for us, in us, through us, HIS CHILDREN. We would do well to rest right here.
- ILL/APP — And I’m convicted by how seldom I seek God for ...
 - Direction in my life. Typically, I call the shots. I cook up the plan.
 - And then, when I’m feeling a bit nervous, I might bring my plan to God, or to a spiritual friend; not seeking their discerning feedback.
 - But, truthfully, wanting them to, ‘carte blanche’ bless my plan, that I’m already, in my great wisdom, implementing.
 - Perhaps you can relate ...
- <Slide> We know the David-story anticipates the Jesus-story.
- Our Saviour was born into the family line of David, in the same little hometown, Bethlehem, just 10km from Jerusalem.
- Four centuries later, Jesus finds Himself, on the eastern slope of the Mt of Olives, at the Garden of Gethsemane, in the city of David, facing a horrendous future: death by Roman crucifixion. He is, understandably, a picture of nerves and anxious thought. Jesus even ‘sweats blood.’ He wants out.
- Yet, our Lord humbly submits. His prayer? Q: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done.”
— cf. Luke 22:44/42.

B. <Slide> Living in God’s sovereign grace.

- David’s ability to perform some pretty amazing feats [tear a wild beast limb from limb, slay a giant, build a city, set up a kingdom] is not what makes him special. For it’s impossible to impress God. Or ever measure up.
- What characterizes David as a man with a “heart after God” is his knack for always finding his way back to His Lord. Even after he’s sinned greatly, or been incredibly disappointed, David finds a way of embracing the gracious sovereignty of God in his life.
- ILL — Many years ago, I too received a strong ‘no’ from the Lord.
 - To a perfectly noble plan of mine. A plan that had even met glowing approval from my closest spiritual advisors and confidantes.
 - And, when the ‘no’ verdict came down. Shockingly. Painfully. Publicly. I was wrecked. And forced to face some big questions:
 - ☐ Was that really God’s plan? Was God disciplining me?
 - ☐ Were there things I couldn’t see about myself that the Lord wanted to reveal through the process?
 - ☐ Was the Lord’s ‘no’ protecting me, or positioning me, for something else I couldn’t possibly see at the time?
- <Slide> APP — Perhaps God’s said ‘no’ to you before.

- Not let you do something you wanted to do.
- Shut down a job opportunity, a relationship, ‘kiboshed’ a carefully-laid plan you thought He’d appreciate.
- And you’ve been shell-shocked. Hurt. And left to ponder.
- **When you’re disappointed, how do you respond?**
- When someone else gets to have, or do, what you wanted?
- When things don’t make sense? When it seems it’s not your time or your place, even when you’ve earned it?
- When our ‘good’ plans are not God’s plans for us?
- Do you, fight back? Rebel and do it anyway? Or, run and hide?
- Or, become angry, bitter, jaded ... brooding, stewing over what you wish you had and not accepting what you do have?
- There’s a saying that floats around our house,
 - ☐ Q: “There must be stuff we don’t know.”
 - ☐ Hard to believe, right?!
- **<Slide>** In cf. Isaiah 55:8-9 we are reminded,
 - Q: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
 - A hallmark of the Christian Story is this:
 - ☐ **God still reigns. No matter what. Somehow. Someway. Even when it doesn’t feel like He does.**
- APP — These past ten months have been some of the darkest ...
 - Of my life. It’s difficult to see God, feel His presence, or find our way ... when pain and tragedy cloud our view.
 - But I am learning, that, even when there’s stuff I don’t know or can’t see, I can still trust God. Nothing can separate me from God’s sovereign grace. It’s in His character.
 - And, with Jesus in the picture, there’s always reason for hope.
 - No matter the circumstance.

C. **<Slide> God can do more than we could ever imagine.**

- The proper response to God’s ‘no’ is to live a life of reliance upon the King.
- David accepts God’s ‘no’, but he also anticipates what he can’t yet see, and aggressively grabs onto God’s promises.
- V25: “And now,” [David says], Lord God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised ...”
- One commentator says,
 - “Yahweh ... has invited this kind of relation with David.”
 - Brueggemann, p.261.

- David never ever saw the temple. But God was up to something far greater, in and through, his life. And David held onto that truth. And it carried him through all the ups and downs of his journey.
- **<Slide> Reality is: Accepting God’s ‘no,’ and rolling with it, requires as much faith, or more, as carrying out God’s ‘yes.’**
- ILL/APP — Can’t say I’ve mastered this ...
 - But, I have come to appreciate, anticipate even, that, though His ‘no’s hurt for a time, God is often up to something far greater.
 - As I process many of the ‘low-points’ of my life — including the one I’ve been experiencing just now — I marvel at how the Lord is able ... to make beauty out my ashes, bring joy in the midst of my mourning, and lead me to praise despite my life’s heaviness.
 - And looking back, I see the grandeur Lord’s handiwork ... in transforming my character, impacting others, putting me, not necessarily where I want to be, but exactly where He wants me.
 - And God is weaving a truly beautiful tapestry in and through my life that I could never have imagined.
 - And those are just the things I can see now! I’m holding onto God’s promise of more that I will finally be able to see in eternity!
- **<Slide> Cf. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, Q: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”**
- **We see short-term. God sees eternity.**
- David’s earthly dynasty would end. But, Jesus would come, as a direct descendant of David, and the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise.
- And, our Saviour, pushes through the cross, conquering sin and death to win our salvation. And Jesus ... He shall reign forever and ever. And, those of us who put our trust in Jesus will be with Him, too, for eternity! Amen.