An Eternal Kingdom

Read 2 Samuel 7:4-16

Key verse: “Your dynasty and your kingdom will be secured forever before me. Your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16).

Pastor and author Tim Keller, discussing our need to trust God when God doesn’t give us what we want, shared this personal experience:

“I prayed for an entire year about a girl I was dating and wanted to marry but she wanted out of the relationship. All year I prayed, ‘Lord, don’t let her break up with me.’ Of course, in hindsight, it was the wrong girl. I actually did what I could to help God with the prayer, because one summer, near the end of the relationship, I got in on a location that made it easier to see her. I was saying, ‘Lord, I am making this as easy as possible for you. I have asked you for this, and I have even taken the geographical distance away.’ But as I look back, God was saying, ‘Son, when a child of mine makes a request, I always give that person what he or she would ask for if they knew everything I know’” (from Keller’s book, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering).

Sometimes God says “no” to us because God has something greater and better in mind. We see this truth operating in 2 Samuel 7:4-16. Here, King David wants to build a temple for God. But God sends his spokesperson, Nathan the prophet, to tell David: “You are not the one to build the temple for me to live in” (v. 5).

God says no to David’s plan. But God reveals that He has plans for David that are far greater than David could have imagined:

1. God’s immediate purpose is for David to defend Israel from surrounding enemies. “I’m going to provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them, as they had been earlier, when I appointed leaders over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies” (vv. 10-11).

2. Though David is not to build the temple, one of his children (Solomon) will build it. “When the time comes for you to die and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your descendant—one of your very own children—to
succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a temple for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever” (vv. 12-13).

3. Ultimately, a future descendant of David will establish God’s eternal kingdom. “Your dynasty and your kingdom will be secured forever before me. Your throne will be established forever” (v. 16)

God’s promise to David finds its ultimate fulfillment in the rule of King Jesus, a descendant of David. Luke’s gospel tells us that the angel Gabriel revealed to Mary: “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:31-33).

God said no to David because God had something far greater in mind. David would live to see only a part of that purpose fulfilled—God using him to defend and secure Israel from her enemies. However, in the light of eternity, David sees how God’s “no,” and David’s submission to it, enabled him to be a part of something far greater in the far-reaching purposes of God!

Every follower of Christ has a part to play in the unfolding purposes of God and of God’s kingdom. May we be willing to say yes to God’s no, and trust that God has something greater in mind for us. As we submit to God’s will for our lives, we realize that only eternity will fully reveal our part in God’s great story, His big picture.

Craig Larson illustrates this marvelous truth:

“On my desk I like to display, on a bookstand, the kind of gift books you put on your coffee table—those filled with professional photos of nature or tourist destinations. My current book is called America’s Spectacular National Parks. For several days I have had the book open to a photo of the Grand Teton Mountains, an extra-wide photo that filled not only the left page, but crossed the fold and took half the page on the right. It is a majestic display of deep blue sky; rugged, snow-capped mountains; and a calm lake in the foreground.

“This morning I decided to turn the page to the next photo, and as I did I discovered that I had missed something important. The right page of the Grand Teton photo was an extra-long page folded over, covering part of the Grand Tetons. So when I opened it up, it not only revealed what was covered, but added another eight inches to the Grand Tetons photo. In other words, when I opened the fold, I added some 16 inches to the width of the photo. Wow. The Grand Tetons became even grander.”

We rarely see the whole picture. But God does. When God says no to our plans, it’s so we can be a part of God’s bigger plans. He sees the big picture, and one day so will we. (Contact Michael at msigler@fumcfwb.com.)