

Sunday August 7, 2022
Lesson 10: God's First Choice
Scripture: 1 Chronicles 22:6-10, 17-19

Context:

We close our series with a new unit titled "The Pursuit of the People." The lessons and scriptures will focus upon the promises and the challenges to living nonviolently today. The focus of the unit will be on how others will know we are Christians not only by our love, but by the peace we embody in a violent world.

Our first lesson comes from the book of Chronicles. The book was written potentially between the sixth and fourth century BCE when new books were being written and older literary traditions were being gathered concerning the people of Israel and their history.¹ The book of Chronicles was an interpretative history of Israel with a vast chronological scope, extending from Adam to the Persian period.² The Chronicler, as the author(s) are addressed, seeks to pay attention in particular to the books of 2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. Throughout the book, there are stories repeated verbatim with occasional additions and omissions.

The Chronicler pays particular attention to the reign of King David. Like the authors of 2 Samuel as well as 1-2 Kings, the Chronicler portrays David as paradigmatic, the ideal king of Israel and a standard against which subsequent kings are judged.³ As the Temple had been restored during the time of the Chronicler, there was a symbol to hold continuity between preexilic and postexilic Israel.⁴ Thus, the Chronicler would have held David and all those connected to the Temple with high regard.

The next king the Chronicler holds in highest regard is Solomon. While 1 Kings hints at the apostasy to result from Solomon's foreign marriages, there is no account of this in the accounts of the Chronicler. Instead, Solomon is praised for his dedication to building the Temple and for his more pious nature. Because of Solomon's actions, the current life of the Chronicler and the peoples' new Temple reminded them of the groundwork laid by this wise king.

Today's passage gives a glimpse into the reign of King David and an explanation of how Solomon came to be the one to build the Temple. David understands why he cannot lead the kingdom to build the Temple and thus blesses his son to do so. His son, with the counsel

¹ Coogan, Michael D., ed., *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 440.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 445.

⁴ Ibid.

and the support of others, will be the one to lead the kingdom to building the Temple, God's home among the people.

Application

David has been called a man after God's own heart as found in the scriptures. He loved the Lord, followed statutes, and even then, David stumbled. Beyond the scandal with Bathsheba, there was also the case of David's bloodthirst as he pursued and ravaged the land before and during his kingship. In the world of Shakespeare, his hands would have had too much red to wash out for anything positive in his kingship to lead the nation forward. Instead, there is the passing of the mantle to his son Solomon as he promised to be the peacemaker and the one whose reign will accomplish the building of the Temple.

For one of many instances in God's wishes and promises, we see the importance of avoiding violence and the desire for peace. God does not delight in harming others or seeing people swept away. God desires for there to be goodness and for peace to be what reigns and guides the people of God.

As I read of this text, I think of the modern-day church. When I was working on my doctorate, one of the projects given was to discover your church's creation story. The basic premise is the story of how your church came to be and its DNA will help to pave the way for the future of your congregation. One of my favorite components of the project was interviewing and talking to members of the church I served. I heard of beautiful stories of connection, support during tragedy, and the Holy Spirit giving vision and guidance to clergy and laity alike.

Since the project, I have tried to discover the creation story of every church I serve. Throughout the story, there are nuggets which give direction for today and remind us of the stories being told. The Holy Spirit is anything but dead and there is still so much to unfold!

Yet a danger the church always faces is when people seek violence and conflict not for the sake of moving forward, but instead squashing vision and continuity. Any time someone seeks to critique the church or to tell what is wrong, there should always be the attempt to see a solution or to name possibilities. And any attempt to split the church or to destruct what has been built up does not reflect the peace God invites us to seek.

Lately, I have noticed quite a bit of fear mongering and anxiety among various components of the church. I am always curious to why people spend their time giving dire future predictions for the church or attempts to violently deconstruct institutions. Are they upset about validation they didn't receive as a child from a parent? Are they pouting because they coveted something and didn't receive it so if someone isn't happy why should anyone be? What is it to make people believe the good days of the church are over and now the only thing left to do is lament and then to tear apart what those before us have built up? We do not have to shed blood like David to create damage and disunity in the body of Christ. Damage can be done in the form of words and pressing an emergency button, which would be better left alone. Perhaps instead of going into apocalyptic mode, we need to return to our creation story.

Creation stories are not just for churches. I think they can also be for the personal faith life of Christians. The prayer as we go through this life is the same which David possesses for his son Solomon as he comes to the throne. God wants all of us to seek peace and to see the

resources God has put in front of us. God wants us to have dreams for the church and to practice good stewardship of the land and the buildings those before us labored over. Like Solomon, we have been so blessed to have those who have gone before us and paved the way so we might bloom and grow.

How do you think violence comes in more than committing physical acts? How does God invite us to consider having an attitude of peace? What does your church's creation story tell you about the goodness of God? What does having a heart of peace look like in today's world? How can we build and flourish looking to the future? And finally, are we celebrating our creation stories, or dwelling on apocalyptic oracles which promise no hope?

Rev. Dr. E. Hunter Pugh
Pastor of Brantley – Brunson Chapel Charge
PO Box 71
Brantley, AL 36009