

Jesu Juva

“We Three Kings of Israel Are: King Solomon”

Text: 1 Kings 8:12-21; John 2:13-22

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. 10 Downing Street. Buckingham Palace. Mount Vernon. Monticello. You know those names and addresses. Important people live in such well-known places, important places, grand places. Places that show that the one who lives there *matters* and is a person of power or wealth or both. The opposite is true as well. Live under a bridge, in a cardboard box, or in a shelter, and you're not one of those people.

So what about a tent? What would *that* say about you? Well, based upon how we look at things in this world, compared to palaces and mansions and famous addresses, it would say you're not very important, not very wealthy, and not very powerful. For no matter how nice that tent might be, it's still a tent after all.

And that's what King David thought. He had just built himself a palace and it was awesome. A palace, as they say, fit for a king. But on the other hand, the One who gave them their nation, their land, and the peace from their enemies that allowed David the opportunity to build such a grand palace - *His* throne, the Ark of the Covenant, stayed in a tent. And that didn't seem right to David. And so he decided to build a house for the Lord God. A Temple. A proper place for God to graciously dwell among His people. A place fitting for such a great and powerful God.

That's what David thought and decided to do. But what did God Himself think? He did not ask for such a house. In fact, He was satisfied with the tent. Because this tent wasn't just a dwelling place, it taught something about God as well. It was mobile, for God would be wherever His people would be. And it wasn't permanent, which witnessed to the fact that we are on a pilgrimage through this world and life. So a tent was perfect for God. He was great and powerful, even if the earthly dwelling place of his throne was not.

But at the same time, God was also pleased with David's desire to honor and glorify Him in such a way. But thinking ahead - because God always thinks ahead - He says no to David. David could desire the house and plan the house, but he could not build it. His Son would. And so we heard from Solomon in the first reading tonight that he built such a house. A magnificent Temple, greater than any other on earth, for a God greater than any other on earth.

Except, just as we heard last week, the Son of David God had in mind was not the one we first think of. And in this case, it was not Solomon - it was the Son of David named Jesus. And the earthly house that God would dwell in forever was not a Temple of wood and stone, but of the flesh and bone of Jesus. That's what we heard in the second reading.

Jesus said: *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* And the people objected because they were thinking as we do, of the building. But that was not the Temple Jesus was referring to. And so what Jesus said, happened, when His Temple of flesh was destroyed and put to death on the cross, but raised three days later on that first Easter morning.

The Christmas Gospel attests to this fact as well, saying that *the Word became flesh and tented among us.* That caused many people to mock and scoff, for who was Jesus? A carpenter's son. Born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. A Nazarene. A nobody. Surely, if God *were* to come down and become enfleshed, it wouldn't be in such a humble man and humble flesh - it would be an important person in an important place.

But while that is how we think, that is not how God thinks. The God of both the Old Testament and the New is not only *happy* to, but *wants* to dwell in a tent. Humbly for the humble, lowly for the low, to be the God of all people. Accessible to all, inaccessible to none. Great and glorious not because His dwelling is, but because He is in Himself. And awesome in His mercy and love.

That is the kind of King Israel had and we have. The *We Three Kings of Israel Are* - Saul, David, and Solomon - all fell far short in their kingships, being sinners all. But we have a King who does not fall short, but reigns to give the blessings of forgiveness and life to all people. A King who serves His people in truth and holiness, who gives, and who is with you wherever you are -when even two or three are gathered in His Name. For He is great and glorious, yes, but **for you.**

And so when our King comes to us in a manger, when He comes humble and mounted on a donkey, that should come as no surprise. When He comes to us today in humble water, and words, and bread and wine, that should be no surprise either. That He comes in humble churches, to humble people, broken people, sinful people - yup, that's our King. At home in the most magnificent places as well as the most humble - for compared to Him and His heavenly home, well, they're all humble. Yet that's exactly where He wants to be and how He wants to be, for you. To be with you. To be your Saviour.

So as we've been concluding every week, *that's* your King - do you really want another? The question sounds sillier and sillier every week. And yet just like Israel, we do choose other kings and gods, don't we? When we rebel against this One, when we choose to sin, when we want more and so think Him not so good, or not as powerful as we need, and so take matters into our own hands. But Saul and David and Solomon all show us that when we take matters into our own hands . . . that usually doesn't work out so well.

So Advent calls us to repentance for all that, and then to rejoice that we have a King who does not reject us (as we learned with Saul), who does not come just for the high and beautiful (as we learned with David), and who do not live apart from us in an inaccessible

palace (as we learned from Solomon) - but who has come in love to rescue us fallen sinners; to be with us here and now, that we might be with Him forever.

That's your King, O new Israel. And as we will very soon now sing: *O come let us adore Him.*

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.