

2 Samuel 7:8-16 You are also to say the following to my servant David. This is what the LORD of Armies says. I took you from the pasture, from following sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel.⁹I have been with you wherever you went. I have cut off all your enemies from before you. I will make your reputation great, like that of the great ones on the earth.¹⁰I will set up a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them there. They will dwell there, and they will not be disturbed again. Violent men will not afflict them again as they did at the beginning¹¹and ever since the day I appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD himself will make a house for you.¹²When your days are complete and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your seed, who will come from your own body. I will establish his kingdom.¹³He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.¹⁴I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he sins, I will discipline him with a rod used by men and with blows of the sons of men.¹⁵My faithful mercy will not depart from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed to make room for you.¹⁶Your house will stand firm, and your kingdom will endure forever before you. Your throne will be established forever.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. What do you want for Christmas? It's getting right down to it and if you haven't found that special gift for that special someone, you might find yourself giving up and asking them that question: What do you want for Christmas?

When it comes to kids, we don't usually have to ask them. They let us know and usually they want it all. There's no end to what they'll ask for. Sometimes their imaginations run so wild, if you really priced out what they were asking for — the indoor/outdoor waterslide attached to the house, the go kart track in the back yard — it would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. It doesn't stop them from asking though.

As we get closer to Christmas, the distractions become greater. Loved ones show up from far away, or you travel to them. It's time to start preparing that meal you planned weeks ago. Time to wrap, and, as we already said, there's little time left to buy.

The reading before us this morning may seem like an odd one for the 4th Sunday in Advent, which is the last Sunday before Christmas. But, as

always, God's Word serves as a timely reminder for the times we are in. It brings us to ask that question of ourselves — what do *I* want for Christmas? What are you hoping to find under the tree for yourself? — and then it leads us to realize that, unlike kids at Christmas, we're setting our sights much too low.

We have before us this morning an answer from God to King David. What do you think King David wanted from God? We know some specifics from the verses leading up to this section. He wanted to build a house for God, the temple. But going all the way back to when David was a boy, just another one of Jesse's many sons, a shepherd boy who was so insignificant that he stayed back to look after the flocks even when God's prophet Samuel stopped by for a visit. What do you think were some of the things *this* David prayed for? Food and water for his flocks? Bigger flocks? Flocks of his own? Nothing too much. A way to make a living since with so many older brothers his share of the inheritance wouldn't amount to much.

And God made him king. And then as king, what was the desire of his heart? To build God a temple, to make a house of worship for him. Seems pretty good — a lofty goal. And God said, "No, but here's what I'll do," The words of our text which boil down to the last verse: I'll make *your house* stand firm, *your kingdom* will endure forever, *your throne* will be established forever. In other words, I've got better things for you than building me a house that will last only a few hundred years. I'm going to establish *your* house, *your* kingdom and *your* throne forever.

David was blown away. His response shows that this was all much more than David even thought to ask for or ever imagined for himself. He said, **"Who am I and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"**¹⁹ **And as if this were not enough in your sight, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign Lord?**

There was nothing wrong if David had only wanted bigger flocks as a way to support himself and a family, and food and water to care for them, but God had much bigger plans for David and his descendants, as he does for all of us.

We just don't always realize it. We forget and we ignore as we think about everything else that's so much more within reach and seemingly

more needed or fulfilling in our lives. And in this way what we do with Christ at Christmas is often a picture of what we do with Christ in our hearts. We get distracted by the things of the season that will all be taken down and put away in a couple weeks—maybe three; we get sidetracked by the gifts under the tree that will all be unwrapped and played with, but soon after put away as they fade into the background with all the other stuff that clutters our lives. And we get distracted by the meals we work so hard to prepare but are over in mere minutes. The greatest part of the season is pushed to the side, shuffled to the back, only peeking through the cracks. And that’s how Satan wants it, not just at Christmas, but in our hearts, all our lives. To be distracted by earthly, temporary things, whether they are treasures and pleasures, or pain and loss, happy times with family and friends or turmoil over petty disagreements. Satan will use anything he can, the good, the bad, the ugly to lower our sights from the great things God has done for us and planned for us to the temporary things of here, now, and today.

So that Jesus becomes only the Savior we look to for the temporary problems we face, the pain and suffering, the turmoil and tragedies — take it away! And though we should go to God for help with these things, we often lose sight of the greater pain and suffering he’s already saved us from. And so often our prayers are filled with wants and desires, the things we think we need for today so we can have a hopeful tomorrow — “Lord, just let this work out this way for me!” And though we *should* ask him for the desires of our hearts, we often forget that he has already met the greatest desire of our hearts, a future with him in heaven.

Think of what you want for Christmas, think of what you asked for. How does it compare to what God gives you? Wrapped up in the appearance of a man, a human, a baby boy, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, here is God’s gift to you: His one and only Son.

As we ponder this astounding gift, David’s response becomes our own. **Who am I and who is my family that you have brought me this far?** When I was dead in sin and destined for punishment in hell, you gave up your Son to save me. You accepted his perfection in place of my sin. You sentenced him to death to save me from the hell and punishment I deserve. And if all that weren’t enough you prepared a place for me with you forever in heaven.

By his gracious gift at Christmas he gives us more than we could ever ask for or imagine: The forgiveness of all our sins. Even for the times that we have set our sights too low and looked to God only as a giver of earthly blessings and didn’t think twice about the spiritual treasures he offers us regularly and the eternal pleasures he has secured for us already. Every single sin God has taken off you and put on his Son who took each of them to the cross and paid their price in full.

So that we have perfection before God right now, no matter what you did last week, today, tomorrow, your relationship with God is good. Think about it. That God gave you his Son, that God became man, one with us means that God is on our side, no matter what!

And no matter what we’ve got eternal life waiting for us. Not just 6 days and 7 nights all inclusive, or a 1000 years of good things, or 10,000, but everlasting life where the effects of sin will never plague us again.

And if God gave you all this, forgiveness of sins, life, salvation, hope, peace, joy, love, and secured it by not only sending his Son, but sending him to die, whatever it is you want for Christmas, or any time in your life, as you suffer, as you long for something, as you go without something or deal with the loss of something, we know God will meet all our needs according to his time and will.

So, what do you want for Christmas? Whatever it is, think bigger! Not in our wildest dreams or most far-fetched imaginations would we think to ask God to send his one and only Son to be our Savior, to live, suffer, die, and rise again to spare us sinners from God’s wrath and punishment - to suffer it all in our place. How could we ask for such a thing? How rude that would be. How obscene! And yet, that’s what Christmas is all about. That very thing we so desperately needed but couldn’t ask for, it’s already under the tree.

Enjoy all the meals, all the gifts, all the decorations, all the music, all the sweets. But as you do, let’s remember, let them be a reminder that God has much greater things prepared for each of us, and with hearts at peace, prepared for Jesus’ coming, let us give thanks, today, tomorrow, on Christmas and forever. Amen!