

“David's Legacy: Blessed”

A Sermon Based on 2 Samuel 17

First Presbyterian Church, Kingwood

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Before I get back to David's legacy this morning, I want to read you a story. It's comes from a British newspaper called *The Daily Mail*. It was reported a year ago in 2010. And while it's a not a story that you may have read, if you've ever worked on a jigsaw puzzle, I think you're going to be able to identify with this story. We'll see I guess. Anyway here it is.

The headline over the story reads. "Pensioner" (Pensioner - that's a British word for somebody who's retired and living on a government pension) ... "Pensioner spends seven years doing jigsaw puzzle ... then finds one piece missing!"

And this is the story. "It cluttered up Jack Harris' dining table for almost eight years. Nevertheless, the 86-year-old was determined to finish his five-foot long, 5,000-piece jigsaw. And when he thought the painstaking process was complete, he stood back to admire his work - only to find a dog may have eaten the final piece!

Mr. Harris has searched his home for the missing piece, but his family fears one of their two dogs has swallowed it. His daughter-in-law Eve, who gave him the jigsaw as a Christmas present in 2002, said she thought the puzzled would be a challenge for the retired businessman. "I give him a new jigsaw puzzle every year," she said, "and he usually finishes them by spring."

But this puzzle was different. Mr. Harris started the puzzle, a picture of a 19th century oil painting, "The Return Of The Prodigal Son." But eight years later he was still struggling to finish it.

His daughter in law said: 'We got him this one as a bit of a joke really, because he always boasted he could get them done so quickly, he's a bit of a whiz with them. It was marvelous to see it finally finished. But when we saw there was one piece missing, we just couldn't believe it.'"

And, in some ways, those words match the sentiment that seems to be on David's heart too. For in the first few verses of 2 Samuel 7, what we learn is the good news that the puzzle pieces of David's life have finally come together for him. It's taken years. But they've finally come together.

He's not a fugitive any more. Now he's the king. He's not on the run, moving from one place to another. He's settled. He's not hiding out in a cave. He's living in a palace. He's not worried about Saul, or the Philistines. God's given him rest from all his enemies. In place of his enemies, God's given David friends. And in particular one friend who has been appointed to speak God's word to him, a prophet named Nathan.

Yes, all the pieces of David's jigsaw puzzle are finally in place., and as he stands back and looks at it, it's marvelous to see how his life has all come together. And maybe you can identify with him. Maybe you can remember feeling the way David must have felt. Maybe there's been a moment for you when you had time to pause and reflect and realize that the jigsaw pieces of life have come together pretty well for you.

And if you've had a moment like that in your life, then I'll bet you can agree with that in that moment you felt blessed. I mean you sit back one evening, and look around and it just hits you. I'm living in a beautiful house. I've got a good job, a great family, good friends. I'm financially in pretty good shape. I feel blessed. Ever felt like that? Sure you have. I have too.

And then, sometimes, at least for me, when I'm experiencing a moment like that in my life, I start to think. I guess it's just the way I'm wired. Maybe you are too. I start to think, "What am I going to do now? What's my next goal, my next step? Is there a piece of the puzzle that's still missing from my life?" My mind starts to go to work and before I know it I come up with it. And David did too.

So he made a decision. Now that he'd been blessed with a palatial residence, and rest from his enemies; now that he had the resources, he'd do it. He'd build a house for God to dwell in like his house. Instead of a tent, he'd build God a temple.

And Nathan, David's friend, who always seemed as a prophet to have the ability to look into David's heart and see what was really there, Nathan sees nothing in David's heart except gratitude, nothing except a desire to bless the One who's so richly blessed him. So Nathan listens to David's plan and says to him, "Whatever you've got in mind, go and do it, for the Lord is with you."

And it's true, He is. But when the Lord is with you, sometimes, (and maybe you've noticed this); sometimes in the strangest way, the Lord insists on being the Lord. He insists on helping you discover His plans for your future instead of your own. He insists on doing things His way instead of your way.

It was another prophet, the prophet Isaiah who perhaps said it best when he spoke these words for God to some of David's descendants centuries later. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

So God sends Nathan back to David. "Go and tell my servant David," I've got a different idea, an even better plan. And since I'm the Lord, if I really am David's Lord, tell him to listen to me."

But that's the issue, isn't it? Will David, now that he's king, will he let the Lord be his Lord? Will he be wise enough to do that? Faithful enough to do that? Humble enough to do that? Will David follow God's direction for his life, or will he decide to do it "my way?"

Of course all I have to do is say those two words, and I know some of you will start to think about the music. Because it's one of the most recorded songs of all time. More than 100 performers have sung it. But the version of the song that most people know best is the one by Frank Sinatra. And while you may know the song, you probably don't know the story; the story of how "My Way" became a signature song of Sinatra. So let me tell you the story of how it happened.

It was Paul Anka who first heard the song. It was composed by a Frenchman and Anka heard it while he was on vacation in the south of France. He flew to Paris, bought the rights to the song, and two years later found himself thinking about it on a plane flying back to New York. He had had dinner earlier that night with Sinatra. "He looked tired at the table," Anka later said, "and as we talked together

he said to me, 'I'm quitting this business. I'm sick of the songs people are writing these days.'

So Paul Anka got up from the table, hopped a plane back to New York, sat down at a typewriter in his apartment at one o'clock in the morning and started re-writign the song. "I wanted to use the words Frank would use," Anka said, "tough words, because that's how he liked to talk. I finished the song at 5am. And I called him up in Nevada later that day. Frank had flown to Caesar's Palace for his next engagement. I said to him, 'I've got something special for you. I think this song might just keep you in the business.'"

And it did because Sinatra loved to sing "My Way." It expressed his personality so well and his perspective, the way he lived life. In fact when he retired from singing, on his 80th birthday, his friends threw him a star studded party and the theme for the party, the one they turned into a huge banner that hung across the stage was "80 Years, My Way."

It was a good theme for Sinatra's life. But God had a better theme in mind for David's life. And God has a better theme in mind for you and me too. So let's move back to David's life once again. And let me read to you some of the words God speaks to David through the mouth of the prophet Nathan.

"Now then, tell my servant David ..." Just a few words, but they're crucial, because they start to set the stage. They start to set the stage for David to see things not through his own eyes but through God's eyes. You see the truth is David is still a servant, at least if he wants to be. Even now that's he's a king. Even now after all the pieces of of his life have come together, and he's at the height of his power and success. David is still a servant, if he wants to be. He's still the servant of the Lord.

How about you? Is that the way you see yourself? Is that the way you look at your life? Do you see yourself as a servant of the Lord? Do you see your life and your position, your wisdom and yes, your wealth too ... do you see it all as something for you to use, or God to use? Do you see yourself as a king, or as the servant of the Lord? Because the way you see yourself and the way you look at your life makes a difference, a life-changing difference.

It's the difference between simply living your life, the life you want to live and living the life God hopes you will live, living a missional life. So make the decision. Will you look at your life through your own eyes or through God's eyes? Are you a king, or are you the servant of the Lord?

Because if you're the servant of the Lord, then you know your life's really supposed to serve God's purpose, not just yours. You know your life's meant not only to bring you pleasure, but to bring God pleasure. You know your life's meant to fulfill not just your plans, but God's plans for you.

And the question is, do you know that yet? Do you know that you're the servant of the Lord? Because if you're missing that piece, you're missing the one piece that you need to finish the puzzle. You need to know that you were meant to be more than just a king. You were meant to be the servant of the Lord. It's what David needed to know. It's what we need to know. But there's more.

"Now then," God says, "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. I have been with you wherever you've gone, and I've cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I'll make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth."

And there's the second thing David needs to finish the puzzle. He needs a memory, a lasting memory. He needs to remember where it all started, where God took him from and how he came to be the king. And we need to remember the same things. So where did God take you from?

You know, I don't know whether I've ever told you all this. But God took me from a family where neither my mother or my father earned a college degree. God took me from a summer job as a school custodian and took me through college, and seminary, and doctoral work. He provided for me and protected me. Then He appointed me to be a Professor and a Pastor. He's been with me wherever I've gone. How about you?

Can you look back at your life and see God's hand at work? Because if you can see all that, then you can see, then you can see that your life was always meant to be missional life. You've been prepared to be the servant of the Lord.

So if you haven't done so lately, take a few minutes and look back at your life. Look back at the place God took you from. Look at the way He's led you, protected you, provided for you. Then think about where you are now. He's appointed you to be there. So think about how he wants to use the person you are to move forward His mission in your world?

But be prepared, if you open yourself up to that line of thinking, God may just have a plan for your life that's bigger than your own. He may want to use you to do something you didn't plan to do, something that will end up making a contribution to this church and God's mission in a way that will become a blessing to you and to many others too. After all, that's what happened to David.

For God said to David, "The Lord declares to you that the Lord Himself will establish a house for you. When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish his kingdom forever."

That was the blessing David found. And he found it when he put the last piece of the puzzle in place. He found it when he decided to let the Lord be the Lord of his life even though he was the king.

Let's pray ...