

[2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38]

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! And many of us either want to celebrate it right now, or we want it over with right now! Some of us are still preparing for it. This Fourth Sunday of Advent is our "last hurrah!"

In our First Reading from the Second Book of Samuel, David wants to build an appropriate house for God, a beautiful temple. It is to be a splendid place for the people to worship God, housed at the time in the Ark of the Covenant and protected by a humble tent. But God has something to say about that. After all, didn't God make the entire cosmos and all that dwells within it? Didn't God provide David with his kingdom and all the people in it? In fact, God is actually the maker of David's "house" or family, which is OUR house and family too, along with all the people of the world.

Nathan, David's court prophet, tells David to "go for it," but David's plans would be subject to God's revision. God had other plans. David's plans, however well-intentioned, were rejected. Why? Because God is free, dynamic and independent. A God who journeys, bivouacs, comes and goes and is never confined to one space. Unlike the lowercase gods, this God needs no temple, desires no temple, and approves no temple. This doesn't stop Solomon, David's son from going ahead and doing it anyway.

Do you know what the sad irony is about this? After the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD, only the Western Wall of the temple foundation remains and the Ark of the Covenant disappeared, never to be found again... That is until Indiana Jones finds it in the movie, "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Then, at the end of the movie, the U. S. government Powers That Be go and bury it in some obscure warehouse. And all of God's people said, "OY!"

But there is a sequel to the story. One that tells us that not only can God not be contained in a place or a thing, but that God can be found in an actual human being. Thus, the Gospel passage we hear today: The Annunciation.

Mary was only 14 or 15 years old, the typical age of a girl in the Middle East to be betrothed, or engaged in probably a pre-arranged marriage. Her parents were so inconsequential that the Holy Scriptures do not even give us their names. Only later tradition would call them Joachim and Ann. There was no honor, no status, and no greatness here.

The very idea that God could live inside of a human being is revolutionary! A human tabernacle for the Son of God? “How can this be?” We have the answer from the angel Gabriel, “nothing will be impossible for God.”

Does not God also invite you and me into something awesome and majestic? Does God not also make extravagant promises to us about blessing and eternal life? It happens every time we come to Holy Communion.

Mary, the Small and Meek, encounters her God, the Great and Terrible, and just like that, becomes the mother of God’s child. And what is her response? “Okay.” That’s all. And that’s everything. She said “Okay” to a scandalous pregnancy, a difficult birth in a barn, the perils of her Son’s childhood, and the rejection of her home as He sets out to change the world. She says “Okay” in her embrace of His broken, lifeless body after a shameful death. Who says that Mary is irrelevant, that we cannot relate to her? We don’t expect angels to deliver messages to us from God, but we can still learn from Mary’s example.

In what ways do I try to put God in a “box”? A safe and contained place where I know I can always find God? Where does God choose to dwell in my parish or community? In what “house” does God want me to dwell? Do I welcome God into the life I live and into my home? When do I feel most certain God dwells in me? How can I imitate Mary’s response to God?

As we put our finishing touches on our Christmas decorating and other preparations, take some time to be still, to be silent. To let your house be quiet. Read again these three Scripture readings. Listen to the PROMISE God makes to each one of us, the BLESSING that St. Paul shares with us, and the HOPE that Mary gives us. Do not be afraid, “for you have found favor with God.”

“Okay!” Come, Lord Jesus! AMEN!