

16th December 2020 – Here is your King, His Kingdom is Everlasting – Wednesday Prayer Meeting

Tonight I would like to remind you from where we started. Last week we started with the theme: Discover the One who is Already Amongst You. Who was helping us to find Him? It is John the Baptist. John the Baptist is helping us to find the One who is already amongst us. We saw from the life of John how he was the son of a priest, and when he was born with a promise of the angel, you would not have blamed the father to think that John was going to have a great and bright future in the temple itself. The father was a priest and he would have had all the right connections, and therefore he would have been hoping that with the right connections that he has that he can actually get his son to climb the priestly ladder quickly, and maybe in no time he would have become the high priest. He would have been famous. The temple was new and powerful and beautiful, everyone was coming to the temple. He had a great and bright career ahead of him.

But to everyone's surprise, John leaves the environment of the temple and goes into the wilderness. We realised that in the environment of the temple of that time, there was a lot of politicking, there was a lot of jostling for power, there was a lot of human wealth being played out. Because of that, hearing God's voice was so hard. I think it's the same for us. The more we are distracted, the more we are preoccupied, the less we hear God's voice. In the wilderness there was no human honour, there was no human appreciation, there was no human love. In that emptiness, John was able to pierce the cloud and connect directly with God. Therefore he received a revelation from God direct and in that revelation he was told, "The light is coming and you need to bear witness to that light."

So if we want to recognize the One who is already amongst us, we need to stop being distracted with our distractions. We need to come out of them into the wilderness. No one wants to come willingly into the wilderness. I'm sure you know that by now. The wilderness for us is our sicknesses, our financial crisis, our rejection by our loved ones, a terrible injustice that happens to us is a wilderness, and in this wilderness when we have no human support, when our comfortable environment is lost, we can hear God speak, we can see God, we can touch Him in a way that was not possible before.

If you look at your own life, you would see this truth. When did you meet God! When did you encounter God? When was the revelation of God deepest? Was it when everything was going fine and you were doing whatever you liked, or was it in the depths of your crisis, when the pain was too deep, the struggle was too great and you really had no answers. Isn't that where God broke through into your life?

Many years ago when I was in the US, I was talking to a priest who was there at one of those meetings and he was telling me about his encounter with the saint today who was then Pope John Paul II. He told me how he was in this team that was going to the Vatican on Rome and they had this audience with Pope John Paul II. This priest broke his leg a few days before the trip from the US to Rome and he had excruciating pain, but still he took the step and he went along with the group. Then they met Pope John Paul II, he was talking to each one and while he was talking to each one, he met this priest and he asked him what happened. The priest said he fell and that it was very painful. John Paul II asked, "Is it still painful?" He said, "Yes, very much so." Then he said, "Don't waste it." What does that mean? He was saying, don't waste that pain. Make use of it to pierce the cloud and touch and know and hear the voice of God.

So here it is. We are in the midst of Covid. Everyone is in the desert. It's a worldwide desert. Everyone is isolated, everyone is going through this abandonment experience, and we can hear St. John Paul II's voice

saying: Don't waste it. Don't waste your loneliness, don't waste your sadness, don't waste your emptiness, don't waste your misunderstanding because through it God is coming to you, and you will recognize the One who is already with you.

We saw that John said, "I'll point you to that way." The way to recognize Him is through our hearts and the pathway is repentance. Repentance is not just about things we have done. If you have bad fruit, repentance can be you saying, "I'm sorry Lord, this fruit is bad, that fruit is bad and the other fruit is bad." But if you don't examine the root you will be repenting forever about the fruit but you will never change anything. Repentance is about looking at the root and finding out where the problem is. That's the pathway. You open the pathway and then the light is coming into our lives.

Tonight the theme is: Here is Your King, His Kingdom is Everlasting. I'm going to go through the readings to discover the King and His everlasting kingdom in our journey to Christmas. We start with the first reading and the first reading is from the book of Samuel. This is about King David at the end of his life.

2 Samuel 7:1

After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him...

King David was at peace, he had no more enemies (maybe he outlived them). He was at peace they say. At the end of his life, the words they say is that he was at peace, he was at rest. God's favour was upon David. It's interesting to find out how God's favour would have been on this man because you can't say that he was a saint of God. He did a lot of other stuff but God's favour was on him and that's the key. We need to find out how he kept God's favour right to the end.

2 Samuel 7:2

...he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."

I'm sure David is typically like us -- first he looked after himself. Many of us are like that. After I've finished everything, if I have something left over I'll give to God. Many of us give the leftovers, we give the handouts, but from God we want the number one stuff. We say, "Lord, you have to give me the number one stuff," but we give Him the leftovers. Cain and Abel is the issue there. The real problem of Cain and Abel was also that.

So here, David was at peace and he thought about his life and suddenly he realised, "I have built myself a palace, but the ark of the covenant is still in the tent. I have met my own need first." At least he realised it. Sometimes we need to be secured enough in God to realise or to think beyond ourselves. That's why I tell people when they come to me to get help at the start, I say, "Cling to God selfishly. Don't worry about serving God, following God, doing His plan. Cling to God. He is your Saviour first of all. If you cling to Him deep enough and strong enough and He secures you, you will become free enough to serve Him and to offer your life to Him in return."

2 Samuel 7:3

Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you."

At least one person grew old with David -- the prophet Nathan. You can remember the prophet Nathan in our four step retreat in the second step. We see how prophet Nathan was given the unenviable task by the Lord to go and tell David that he was the guy who had committed this sin. Here, David and Nathan had grown old together but Nathan is saying something beautiful. He is saying, "Whatever you ask from God, He is going to give it to you." Why is that? Because David had learnt how to live under the favour of God.

I think, if you want to be rich in the kingdom, if you want to be rich in the spiritual dimension, here is the secret. We have to find out: How did David manage this? How did he manage to build a favour upon his life, that Nathan who was having God's ear told him, "You know David, whatever you ask God, He is going to give it to you"? That's really the base of us asking for intercession from saints. People who have the divine life and who have the favour of God, whatever they ask God, God opens the way for them.

Tonight we'll look at the secret: How did David come to this place of favour? Can we find that place in our own life? That would really be the blessing of Christmas.

2 Samuel 7:4-5

That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?"

Nathan was now in a spot. He told from his heart what he believed God was having on David. He said, "You ask anything and God will give it to you." Then Nathan goes to prayer and in the night time, as he sits in prayer, God reveals His mind and says, "My plan is different to David's dream."

All of us who are on a serious journey, there is a tremendous spiritual principle hidden. What is that? The naturally good thing may not be the will of God. The obvious choice may not be God's will. Today we are so tempted to do the right thing, to follow the good way, to make the naturally correct decisions, and we are so used to it that we don't have a second thought about it. Nathan did the naturally good thing. He saw the favour of God and said, "Whatever you wish God will give it to you." But then when he went to prayer God gave him another guidance. Credit to Nathan, he comes back to David and tells him, "God has another plan about this house for his ark for the temple." Let's see that word:

2 Samuel 7:11

...and have done everything since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. "The Lord declares to you that the Lord Himself will establish a house for you...

God is telling David through the prophet Nathan, "You don't build a house for me. I will build it myself through another plan." What I understand is, each of us has been given a task to do by God, like John the Baptist was given a task, David was given a task, and God may have another task for somebody else to complete it. I don't have to grab and do everything because God has a bigger plan. What do I do on my part? On my part I do what God expects me to do. In obedience God when I do that, God will fit it into His bigger plan. If I'm serving God only the problem starts. Then I don't want anyone else to interfere in my plan. Then only the jealousy comes, the reaction comes, the anger comes, the fighting comes, the defenses come because we think, "I have to do this. This is mine. This is my baby."

Then God gives another promise to David through Nathan:

2 Samuel 7:12

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.

Now He is pointing towards the successor and ultimately the greatest successor of the line of David is Jesus Himself, the King. Now through the prophet Nathan, He is telling David, "Don't worry. From your body itself I am going to bring a successor to you."

What I want to offer you tonight is, how God is going to lead this successor and how most probably He led David, and you will find this leading in the life of Jesus Himself, and then you will find that that's the same way the Lord leads us. If you don't see that, if that light is not there upon your life, God may be leading you and you may not be responding your entire life. Why is that? Because you don't know the language of His leading.

Tonight I want to offer you this great secret written in the scripture: How did God lead David? How did God lead His successors? How does God lead us? How do you recognise His language? 2 Samuel 7:14 explains it beautifully. Through the prophet Nathan he is telling David, "This is how I am going to lead your successor."

2 Samuel 7:14

I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.

There are two thoughts tonight:

1. I will punish him with rods of men

What do you mean by the rod of men? God is moving in the king's life through the people who are around him.

2. Floggings inflicted by men

When you say floggings inflicted by men, who comes to your mind at once? Jesus Himself. You can say he is not a son who needed to be disciplined, he didn't do wrong, but he carried the sin of the world and he carried the punishment for the sin of the world within himself. The fact is and the truth that I want you to focus on tonight is the way of God. God is speaking to us, God is guiding us, God is leading us through the events that are happening around us. But if you reject it, if you refuse to listen to it, we may be resisting God Himself.

So the question comes: How did David find rest after doing all kinds of things? You can see he was a scoundrel and doing all kinds of wrong things. How did he find rest and how did he find favour with God? I'm thinking because he knew this principle. He knew when God was speaking to him through the lives and the hands of people around him. I'm going to show it to you from a text explaining this principle from the book of Samuel itself. This explains the favour on the life of David. The background to this is, Absalom his son has attacked David and his kingdom and now he was marching on Jerusalem, and now David had to leave Jerusalem and abandon his kingdom because his son was marching in it. Look at David's way, the way that he left Jerusalem:

2 Samuel 16:5

As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out.

Saul was the king before David and now this man is from the family of Saul, the royal line. He comes out now and curses King David.

2 Samuel 16:6

He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left.

David was going with his special guards and commanders. You can see the same thing today. People are hanging out of defender jeeps and waving and shouting. So the guards are surrounding David and this old man comes and takes stones and he is pelting and cursing.

2 Samuel 16:7

As he cursed, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel!"

That's the beauty of the Bible, though it is a holy book you get all kinds of unholy things happening. Non Christians read this and they will wonder what kind of book we are reading -- all higher thoughts, holy ideas and you get scoundrels in the middle of it also.

2 Samuel 16:8

The Lord has repaid you for all of the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!"

These are fighting words especially to tell a king. You are asking for trouble but he directly challenged him.

2 Samuel 16:9

Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head."

The ego and the pride of a king has been attacked, and this guy is suggesting the natural process to shut his mouth up, kill him so that nobody else will dare to open their mouth.

2 Samuel 16:10

But the king said, "What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?'"

He took it from the hands of God. He took this attack from the hands of God. Instead of silencing that voice, he opened himself to the voice of God. If we do that, every attack, every curse, every reaction will only open our hearts to the deeper work of God. If you refuse to do that, even the best things that God does we will be blind to, because we don't see His hand, we don't hear His voice in the events that surround us. David had committed sin, he knew that, and he knew that these repercussions were there upon him, and he accepted it humbly from the hands of God. If you want a breakthrough in your life, here

it is. If you want the hand of anointing on your life, here it is. A breakthrough and anointing is there when you receive what you get from the hands of God and you open yourself.

2 Samuel 16:11

David then said to Abishai and all his officials, "My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to.

He took it from the hands of God. He humbled himself before the attack. He didn't humble himself before the man, but this attack led him to humble himself before God. That's the invitation for repentance this Christmas. This is the preparation God is calling us to this Christmas.

2 Samuel 16:12

It may be that the Lord will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today.

We read how he had outlived all his enemies, the favour of God was upon him, the offspring was suggested that his kingdom will be established after his death and God has done good to David. We have the key here given tonight. The key is hearing and responding to the hand of God through the events that happen in your life. Sometimes the hand of God and the voice of God is coming from people we don't like, from events that we detest. But if you open to the voice of God, here is the breakthrough coming into our lives.

We go back to the final verse of the first reading that connects us to the gospel tonight. This is the promise to David:

2 Samuel 7:16

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

God told David through the prophet Nathan, "Your kingdom will not only be for the next generation but it will be forever, and there will always be someone to sit on the throne that I have established for you." The king is coming.

The gospel is telling us tonight how God established this promise for David. That is found in Luke 1:26-38. We need to be clear about this. The first part of the gospel is actually talking to us about the visit of the Angel Gabriel and what happened as he dialogued with the Blessed Mother. We have preached this many times, the Hail Mary is all there. But the second part of that gospel which I am going to go to, talks to us about the promises that God gave the Blessed Mother, like the promises He gave David through the prophet Nathan. Let's look at those promises:

Luke 1:32

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his father David...

The last verse of the first reading says, "I will establish your throne forever," and now the angel is saying He will give the throne of his father David.

Luke 1:33

...and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his Kingdom will never end."

Tonight I'm going to ask you to list the promises together with me. It's so important to understand how God is moving. Look at the promises given by the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Mother about Jesus, like the prophet Nathan gave those promises to David:

1. He will be great
2. He will be called the Son of the Most High
3. God will give Him the throne of David
4. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever
5. His kingdom will never end

The Blessed Mother would have thought she had hit the lottery and got the real son. Every mother thinks like that but here the Angel himself has said this.

Now we fast-forward 33 years later and we remember the image of the Pieta sculpted by Michelangelo. As you enter the Vatican you will find the Pieta. In the Pieta, the Mother is holding the dead body of Christ. Fortunately for the angel, angels can disappear unlike us. We have to face the music but the angels can disappear. He was not there. If he was there, the Blessed Mother would have had several questions for him: Where on earth are these promises? Every one of them had failed. Let's go back to the promises:

1. He will be great - but now he is dead.
2. He will be called the Son of the Most High - but he was crucified like a criminal.
3. God will give Him the throne of David - but the throne he got was a seat on a cross and a crown of thorns.
4. He will reign forever - but now he is being placed in a tomb.
5. His kingdom will never end - but his disciples had already run away.

On the one hand, it looked as if everything had failed. Bishop Robert Barron says there are many theologians today who say Jesus never rose from the dead, but that the way he died was so inspiring that he actually rose in the minds of his disciples. They were so inspired that they went around proclaiming the gospel. That's a strong argument in western theology. Then Bishop Barron goes on to explain, a few years later, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, there was a rebel called Bar-Jesus. He was called great and given a title because he collected so many people and they had a major following. But after he was crucified none of his disciples carried him in their minds. They didn't go anywhere but they disappeared from the scene and that was the end of Bar-Jesus.

All this defeat was transformed into victory by God. How do we know that? We fast-forward 2000 years and we ask the same questions:

1. He will be great - Is Jesus considered great today? Of course. He is called the greatest man who ever lived, and the story of Jesus is filmed as the greatest story ever told. So promise #1 is fulfilled.

2. He will be called the Son of the Most High - Is Jesus recognised today as the Son of God? Of course. More than 3 or 4 billion people on the planet acknowledge Him as the Son of God. Second promise fulfilled.

3. God will give Him the throne of his father David - Did He receive a throne of a kingdom? Yes He did, and it is established.

4. He will reign forever - Is He still reigning? Yes He is. Bishop Barron explains that when Pope Benedict was made the Pope and he was brought to the balcony, all the other Cardinals were around and he says the Cardinal from the US, whom he knew well, was standing next to Pope Benedict, but he was looking in the distance in a thoughtful mood. In the video you can see him looking into a distance. Bishop Barron had asked him, "Your Eminence, what were you looking at, and what were you thinking when the Pope was declared?" He said, "I was looking at the arch of Titus " That is the arch that was built after Titus destroyed the temple and destroyed Jerusalem and renamed Judea Palestine. Palestine is coming from the name of the worst enemies of the Jews, the Philistines. They were given the land and everything was destroyed. They show the menorah being carried by the troops of Titus, the Jews had been destroyed, the kingdom gone. The arch is still there, but Titus and the Roman Empire is gone.

Then he said he looked at the Colosseum where the Christians were tortured from the second century downwards and their children were given up. The Colosseum is destroyed, the Roman Empire has fallen, but the King is still ruling on earth. So the King has come. His reign will never end. But we need to understand, if we are at the human level, we can be an utter failure. But if you open your inner eyes, you will recognize He is faithful to every word He has promised.

Let's see how all these promises were fulfilled. I'm thinking, the principle of David worked in the heart of Jesus -- the heir of David, the King. The principle worked in the heart of Jesus. What was the principle? When Jesus met opposition, he took these men and their actions from the hands of God. Through them he heard the voice of the Father, through them he saw the figure of the Father and because of that he responded to the Father and not to them.

This is the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone wanted to drag him down into the mud. Everyone wanted him to become like them. But because behind them, through them, he saw the hand of the Father and he saw the presence of the Father, he never fell to their level. What did he do? He responded to the will of his Father.

Can you see how David saw that in his life? He understood this. That's why he had rest in the end. That's why he had the favour of God in his life even though they had made many mistakes. Now you can see the greatest person who ever did this is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself -- accepting the beatings from the hands of His Father. "Not my will but yours." Accepting it for humanity, accepting the humiliation from the hands of the Father. That's why when Pilate asked him, "Why are you silent? Don't you know that I have power over you, power to free you or power to kill you?" Jesus answers, "You have no power over me." He was there with Pilate but he was hearing and listening and responding to the voice of his Father. He accepted the sentence Pilate gave from the hands of his Father. Because of that, his inner responses were bringing these promises to fulfilment.

When we did the Strength in Weakness programme in Australia, we had the privilege of having Bishop Prowse and Fr. Augustine Vallooran who shared the day with us. Fr. Augustine brought this concept out of receiving everything from the hands of the Father, and then he built it up step by step. Then he said,

when Judas came to kiss Jesus, Jesus didn't receive this kiss from Judas. He received it from the mouth of his Father. He was accepting the mission of laying down his life for the world. Therefore, it was not anger that was there in his heart. Therefore, it was not a reaction, it was not a curse, it was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Because of that, look what happened! Jesus himself was free from within, so light and death could not hold him because he had love, he had mercy and forgiveness in his heart. So he said, "Father, forgive them," and he said, "My job is complete. It is finished. Father, I have done your will. In everything I responded to your will," and his spirit lifts into the heart of God. Death is defeated. Human life and eternal life are linked together. The King has come to sit on the throne. All the promises are fulfilled because he held to the voice and the arms and the hands of his Father.

But the blessing was not only for him -- it was for the whole world, it was for you, it was for me. The forgiveness of sins, the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life, the inner journey, Jesus coming to live inside us through the Holy Eucharist and the mighty move of God on the earth.

Then we realise there are two ways to journey on earth. One is with our own wisdom, with our own understanding we walk in our own ways and we try to please God with whatever we can, but we are in control of our lives. The other way is we are walking with Him like David did, we are walking with Him like Jesus did, listening to the voice of the Father and receiving events and people in our life from His hands. Because of that you give an inner response not to those people but to God in those people. When you start doing that, we have the breakthrough. The kingdom comes down into our world.

The greatest example I can think of is St. Stephen of the early church. Receiving this light into his heart, he takes persecution from the hands of Jesus. He takes that stoning from the hands of Jesus. He is elevated, he has a vision of Jesus Himself and He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is lifted into heaven and his inner response smashes the heart of the great Saul. Suddenly there is a breakthrough that changes everything.

Tonight, this Christmas, let the light shine from our hearts -- the light that will show the hands of the Father, of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit coming to us through the events and the people around us. The voice of the Father coming to us through what is happening around us and we instead of reacting to those people, responding to the Father in the life of those people. Then Jesus will be known in our lives and their lives as well.