

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

20 & 27 December 2020—Christmas

and layout emulated the instructions for the Tabernacle in the most minute detail. Nathan had the unenviable task of informing David that he will not be the one to build God a home, but will be the father of a great dynasty of God's people. 'I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed...I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.'

The House of David. It is very human to think in terms of structures and buildings, we still do, but that is not what God is talking about or what God wants. He is talking about his people being secure and settled. He is talking about a bloodline that will honour God—'I will be his father, and he shall be my son.' What God is establishing through David is a new way of doing things. The rulers of the past have failed. The people have gone astray. Now, God is building through David a people that will finally fulfil the covenant given to their ancestors. 'Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.' Well, we know that this expectation was never fully fulfilled. Successive Kings failed God. The Kingdom of Israel fell,

time and time again. So how are we to understand God's promises to David? Are they empty? Are they meaningless?

Royal David's City. Putting all the pieces of the Biblical jigsaw puzzle together we can see why Joseph who 'belonged to the house and line of David' takes his expectant bride 'to Bethlehem the town of David'; and why the angels declare to the shepherds, 'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.' The promise of the covenant, the promise through the royal line of kings, the promise through the prophets, are all fulfilled in the Son of David born on that holy night so many years ago. The Son of God had no permanent home, and has no Temple other than the wonder of his creation and the hearts of all those who now know him as Saviour and Lord.

SUGGESTED SONG

In The Bleak Midwinter
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlgOmrtAP3I>

BLESSING

'Glory to God in highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.' (Luke 2:14)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and always. Amen.

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Dear Friends,

Many of us remember the first Nativity play that we were in. Some of us never got to play the character that we wanted. Others of us were never in a play at all. Looking back I remember standing on the school stage and having to recite some verses about the star. What those verses were, I dread to think. Over the years I have learned to think more critically and realistically about what we are doing when we put on such plays.

Understandably we want to be able to tell the story in an accessible and dramatic way for children. Yet the story often gets altered and added to in ways that do not represent the original, and ends up being quite disrespectful of the Bible text. Different parts of the story get conflated, characters are added in order to involve as many participants as possible, the more difficult or horrific parts of the story are edited out, and we are left with a parody or caricature.

Sometimes we make things worse when as adults we try to mimic or playact our way through the nativity story in the way we remember from our childhood. The power, significance and importance of the opening sections of the Synoptic Gospels surely deserve better from us at

this time of year. And before you accuse me of being The Grinch who comes to spoil Christmas, I swiftly add that I love it when the story is simply and effectively portrayed. I love it when the stories are accurately told, and a nativity tableau unveiled. It is just that the nativity is not a pantomime, and is not to be treated as an act of sentimentality.

This year by not being able to put on a nativity event, we have the opportunity to treat the story with the respect that it deserves. Matthew and Luke tell the stories so that we might know who this child truly is, and that the destiny of the whole universe is foretold in his birth. The redemption and salvation of the world cry out from this infant, the boy who was born to die, even as the angel host sing glory to God in the highest.

This is not really a story for children in the sense that we have usually treated it, but for all who come to faith in the Son of God and who are born again as sons and daughters, co-heirs with Jesus. This is not a story for the Peter Pans of this world who want to stay young for ever, but for those who will respond to the Gospel story and be prepared to mature and to grow up in Christ no matter what sacrifices there might be.

Zoom is the safest way for most people to meet at this time and will continue to be the main way that we will be able to meet for a little while yet. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 10.30am today and 27 December; our Zoom Prayer Meeting is at 7.00pm on Monday. The Zoom links will be sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you'd like us to send you the links, please let us know. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can also click on the readings and songs. There is lots more information on our website which you can find at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

BIBLE READINGS—20 DECEMBER

[2 Samuel 7:1-16](#)

[Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-21](#)

[Romans 16:25-27](#)

BIBLE READINGS—27 DECEMBER

[Isaiah 61:10-62:3](#)

[Luke 2:22-40](#)

[Galatians 4:4-7](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

But when the time set had full come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' (Galatians 4:4-6)

IN THE BLEAK MID-WINTER

What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him—
Give my heart.

FOR REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Each week for our prayers during Advent we have been using a verse from Christina Rossetti's well-loved Christmas carol. This last verse is perhaps why the carol is so special to so many. It continues the contrasts of the previous verses, this time between poverty and wealth. Reflecting the relative poverty of the shepherd and the relative wealth of the wise man, from the Christmas story, it concludes that we all have all that is necessary as an offering to lay before Jesus—our heart! What has been a carol of Christmas celebration that we can sing together, now becomes in this final verse a prayer of personal devotion. None of us is really poor in this regard. The question is asked of each and every person. What can I give to Christ who has given everything to us. There is only one acceptable answer—our heart!

A SELECTION OF CAROLS

Angels From The Realms Of Glory
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=megj0eH-ZNc>

O Little Town Of Bethlehem
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Q6b9ZdaD9U&list=LL&index=5>

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SviZ9F2tX0s>

Once In Royal David's City
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRIZ22dn-XY>

Away In A Manger
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bw_yH55dBIA

O Come, All Ye Faithful
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGt8yxX2cnY&list=LL&index=3>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

I've never really thought of 2 Samuel 7:1-16 as a Christmas reading, but it tells us a lot about expectations and misunderstandings and plugs directly into the familiar Christmas narrative. It also raises lots of questions that pre-existed and would go on existing (even up until today) for God's people. These questions may appear to be quite esoteric, yet they turn out to be more important than you'd think. Where does God live? What do we mean by the House of David? How are the promises of God through the prophets intended to be fulfilled? Who is the promised Messiah?

A Royal Palace. Kings are supposed to live in palaces, well that is what we have come to expect. As our passage begins that is where David is settled, protected

from his enemies. Yet it occurs to David that while he is nicely surrounded by a permanent new cedar wood home, God is still living in a tent—or Tabernacle. The prophet Nathan reassures David that God is with him and he is free to go ahead with whatever he plans to do. As we know, David's plans to build a Temple are thwarted, plans which are only finally fulfilled through his son Solomon, only to be later destroyed and then rebuilt by Herod the Great. That same night, God speaks to Nathan and says something quite different to what David has in mind. Remember that God only reluctantly gave Israel leaders and rulers like the surrounding nations; it wasn't part of the original plan to appoint Judges or Kings. God had been gracious to David in his weakness, and understandably David wanted to respond in honour of God. But is this what God wanted?

God's Bigger Plan. The truth is that God had never needed a dwelling other than a temporary resting place at the head of his people on the move. 'I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.' Over countless generations, God had never once queried why he had not been built a permanent home. A tent is what he had commanded, giving the detailed instructions to the people through the law of Moses. It is fascinating that even when a Temple was eventually built, its plan