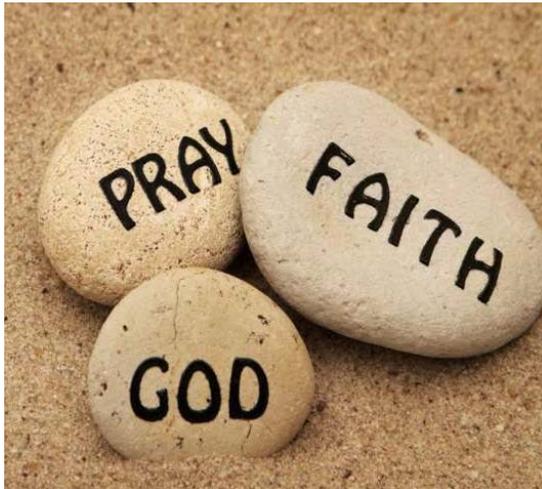


OCT 25 2020 ... START HERE ...



Prepare for our time together from afar

- Find a quiet and comfortable space
- Turn on some soothing instrumental music, maybe with headphones
- Consider the stillness of a lit candle
- Take 3 deep breaths and calm your mind



Pray as you are comfortable – read silently, say out loud, whisper

God, guide me through the day
God remind me of Christ's presence
Under me, over me
On my right and on my left
God, breathe in and through me

May it be so.

TIME FOR THE ANCIENT STORY

Read silently or aloud – let these ancient words tap into your imagination.

Here's the backstory for today's story :

Samuel, the prayed-for baby from last week, has grown up and become a prophet for God. He has reluctantly anointed Saul as king, then David. David grew up as a shepherd but became a military leader over time before Saul died. While David made many mistakes – some of them horrific, he remained in relationship with God. Samuel dies and Nathan takes his place as prophet. Eventually, David's battles with neighboring countries settled into peace and he rested in his palace. David then begins to dream of building a palace for God.

Now for the ancient story ...

When the king was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "Look! I'm living in a cedar palace, but God's chest is housed in a tent!"

Nathan said to the king, "Go ahead and do whatever you are thinking, because the LORD is with you."

But that very night the LORD's word came to Nathan: Go to my servant David and tell him: This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build the temple for me to live in. In fact, I haven't lived in a temple from the day I brought Israel out of Egypt until now. Instead, I have been traveling around in a tent and in a dwelling. Throughout my traveling around with the Israelites, did I ever ask any of Israel's tribal leaders I appointed to shepherd my people: Why haven't you built me a cedar temple?

So then, say this to my servant David: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over my people Israel. I've been with you wherever you've gone, and I've eliminated all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great—like the name of the greatest people on earth. I'm going to provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them, as they had been earlier, when I appointed leaders over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

And the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make a dynasty for you. When the time comes for you to die and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your descendant—one of your very own children—to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a temple for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me. Whenever he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod, with blows from human beings. But I will never take my faithful love away from him like I took it away from Saul, whom I set aside in favor of you. Your dynasty and your kingdom will be secured forever before me. Your throne will be established forever.

Nathan reported all of these words and this entire vision to David.

David's story is long and tangled ... start with the Veggie Tales episode of Dave and the Giant Pickle.

- 2 Samuel 7:1-17 CEB

SO WHAT NOW?

Read silently or aloud – some thoughts on this story

Listening well is an art form. Can you believe I took a whole class in seminary on nothing but listening? I did! And I learned a *lot* - not just how to pay attention to what someone is saying, but how my body language and my vocal hmms and ooohs could be perceived, and what to do with the constant train of responses in my head. I also learned that listening is more than just understanding the other person's words – listening means putting aside all of my “I know what you're going to say” thoughts and letting go of what I think is right.

Listening is as much connecting to understand the *person* and their life experiences as it is understanding the words.

That's the trouble now – I suspect many of us, kids and adults, want to be heard and understood and accepted sooo badly that we talk over and under and around everyone else, instead of listening. We tend to be preparing our response while the other is talking instead of setting that aside and welcoming what the other person is saying – especially when what they are saying gets us ready to fight. Because we would rather be right than be in relationship, I think.

What I also learned in seminary in my listening class is that deeper underneath listening well is humility. I don't mean being a door mat. I mean knowing that I didn't know everything, I don't have all the answers, I haven't experienced everything someone else has, and I can still learn from another person – even if they are everything I am not, even if they hate everything I love, and even if we can barely be civil to each other.

That's humility in a nutshell – that there is so much in the world to learn, and I will *never* get it all. Will I open myself up to the experience of listening (even when I totally can *not* agree with the person) so that *I* can grow?

And adjust? If I need to?

That's what I saw happening in our story today – David has finally gotten to a place where the constant fighting with the Philistines and other tribal groups around Israel's land has stopped. We are a long way from David as a young boy, shooting a stone with a slingshot at Goliath. We are a long way from David as a young man playing the harp for King Saul and becoming close friends with Saul's son Jonathan. We are a long way from David running for his life from Saul, and hiding in the wilderness around the palace for years – becoming a warrior and leader. Where are we then?

Saul has died, Samuel has died and David is relaxing in his palace as King of the Israelites. All of a sudden, David realizes God doesn't have a house – only a tent. Well, the ark of the covenant any way – that is the chest that holds the two tablets where the ten commandments are written. Although David doesn't say this specifically, we can gather that he wants to build God a house that is even fancier than David's palace.

And God says in verse 7 – have I ever asked you to build me a fancy house? Ouch.

Once God gets David's attention – will David actually listen? Will David realize that his plans are not what God wants? Those answers don't unfold here – what is clear is God's care for God's people and David's family. It's weird – here David is wanting to build God a home, God turns the tables and lays out divine plans for building a home for the Israelites. And this space would be safe from enemies, a place where fear would disappear, and a place where the people could settle and feel grounded.

Could David adjust to a different vision of home?

Can we?

What if we listened to what the planet is telling us about how we are treating our home? About what needs to change?

What if we listened to folks in our families about how our homes need to be better? Can we admit our part?

What if we listened to folks who are homeless? Folks with no jobs? Folks living on the edge with no healthcare or no families or no hope?

Can we listen to God's ideas of home – safety, security, and a place to stay for a long time – can we listen and realize our ideas might not work? And then adjust to God's plans?

I'm not going to lie – it isn't easy. Especially when our ideas line up with most of everyone else around us. I think that's why Nathan thought David's idea was fine – wouldn't your God deserve a fancy palace if you had the means to build it? And wouldn't that fancy palace draw everyone to worship God?

But God doesn't do stuff like we do. That's why listening and humility and adjusting are so important. Will we join with God in the work?

CHAT WITH GOD TIME

Pray as you are comfortable – read silently, say out loud, whisper.

Hey God, I think I need to listen
What are you trying to tell me?

I keep planning things myself
Do I think I know better than you?

You have different plans than I
Am I humble enough to hear?

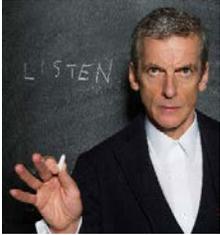
Pushing and pulling on my own
While you wait until I open my heart

Will you help me listen?
Will you help me adjust?

May it be so

LET YOUR SOUL RESPOND

As you wish, choose a theme, and participate in a response to the story and the message.



LISTEN

Practice awareness

- Who is speaking in your life that you listen well to?
- Who do you *not* listen well to?

What does listening well look like to you?

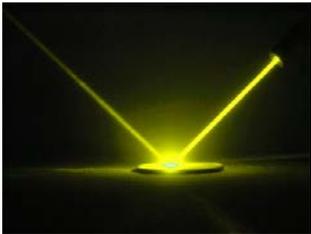


HUMILITY

Practice reflection

- Describe when you have tried to force something to happen.
- How does humility play out in your life – with you and others?

What happens when you try to force a solution?



ADJUST

Practice wisdom

- When have you had to adjust to something unexpected?
- Who helped you adjust well?

What does adjusting mean when you can't accept something?

Options to share your responses:
(see end of packet for online options)

- create a piece of art representing your thoughts
- choose a song or playlist that shares your thoughts
- write something that reflects your thoughts
- what else can you imagine?

LET YOUR MIND RESPOND

Choose a “thought & question” pair to think about. You can do one or as many as you’d like.

1. David wants to build a house for God – a **fancy** house. *What would a house for God look like if *you* built it? How do you understand where God lives?*
2. God tells David, through Nathan, that David’s plans aren’t going to happen – that God’s plans will. *What plans have you made that were overturned? How did you handle that situation?*
3. God promises David that his kingdom and line will live forever. *How important are family trees to you? What kind of legacy do you want to leave for people in 200 years?*

Options to share your responses:
(see end of packet for online options)

- create a piece of art representing your thoughts
- choose a song or playlist that shares your thoughts
- write something that reflects your thoughts
- what else can you imagine?

LET YOUR BODY RESPOND

What will you do with this experience?

Choose an action (or more) to act on what you've learned ...

- Take a walk outside and think about your deepest dreams
- Write a poem about becoming humble
- Create a playlist with songs about adjusting
- Visit a loved one (safely) and listen to anything they want to talk about
- Design a space (on paper or for reals) where you can be with God
- Draw your family tree and note one person whose legacy you are receiving now

Options to share your responses:
(see end of packet for online options)

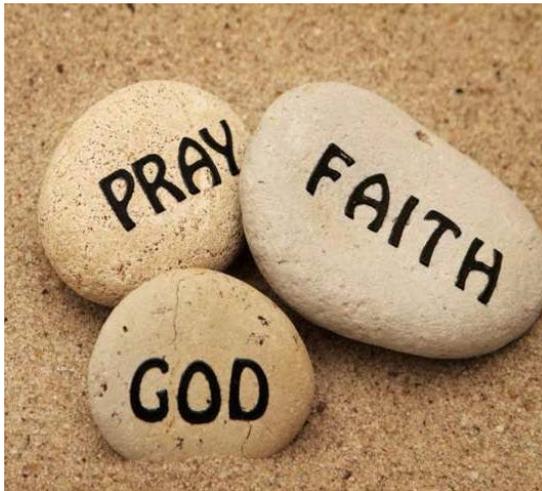
- create a piece of art representing your thoughts
- choose a song or playlist that shares your thoughts
- write something that reflects your thoughts
- what else can you imagine?

END HERE ...



Prepare for our return to our daily lives

- Take 3 deep breaths and calm your mind
- Consider the stillness of a lit candle



Pray as you are comfortable – read silently, say out loud, whisper

God, guide me through the day
God remind me of Christ's presence
Under me, over me
On my right and on my left
God, breathe in and through me

May it be so.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK! PASTOR CRISTINE

ONLINE RESPONSE OPTIONS

How will you share this experience with our youth group?

If you would like to share your responses online with our youth and leaders, make sure you are part of our MVCC Youth Google Group.

Email Pastor Cristine at youth@montevista.org for more information.

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