

## GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Stuart Mennigke - 22nd December 2002

Luke 1: 26-38; 2 Samuel 7:8-16

Faithfulness story

The book of Samuel deals for the most part with the lives of kings Saul and David – Israel's first two kings. Samuel is the forerunner and anointer of these two kings (much like John the Baptist is for Jesus...)

This part of the story read today is, in its context, God's promise to David that through his line, God's name will be glorified through him and that God will establish the throne of his kingdom forever - through David.

What it is in essence - is an ode to God's faithfulness. The touching story of God recalling for David what his history is: "This is where I took you from, I have been with you, cut off your enemies, and now I will make your name great." What is NB about it, is that while it tells David's story, actually, it recalls God's faithfulness - which is God's nature. There is a sense in which all of our stories are a part of God's story...and so all our stories tell God's story of being faithful.

For us, before Christmas, it is the reminder that what we are about is celebrating God's faithfulness. What's in the stories told again and again? What's in the repetitive procedures – children (and all of us) wanting things the same as always...What is in our wanting our church to stay basically the same?...it's the remembering that the story/ practice spells out for us faithfulness.....God did it , God will not let us down.

That is the huge hope of humankind isn't it? Will there be anyone there who will remember how I like it done? Will there be anyone who will hold my memory when I've gone? Will there be anyone there who will be there for me when I need them?...

And what is the cry of people who do not believe in God – often it is – though they do not know it -:"I have not experienced God's faithfulness – so is there a God?" Of course, we do not need to 'prove' anything about God – God is...and the history of his dealing with us is the proof...if one ever needs one.

The scriptures are the reminder of the story of that faithfulness...the whole of the OT is that reminder...and at the end of Advent we perch at the edge of that faithfulness. ...."The promise to David is about to come true..." ...that's why God is faithful!

The gospel echo's the reminder of the faithfulness. " ...Angel Gabriel to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph – *a descendant of David* says Luke. *The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David...he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.*" (vs 33) It's the same promise made to David in Samuel. You see, God's faithfulness is seen in how God fulfils promises. So, this is just before the birth. In a couple of days we'll read the passage about the birth 9 months after this one...and it will say:" So, Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth

in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he *belonged to the house and line of David*.

So, you have the promise to David in about 1003 BC. Then the angel Gabriel's announcement - 9 months BC, then the gospel story about going to Bethlehem - a few days BC...

Then, of course, there is us – 2003 AD after all those events- now reading it all again. And what we are reading is the reminder of God's faithfulness through that time once again. The challenge of course is to look for the fulfillment of that faithfulness now. How do you see it? In your own life – and in history? Generally we see it afterwards. We experience life and its events, get scared by them maybe, go through them, and then look back, and then we see God's faithfulness. We may have hoped for it before – but it was risk – we had to trust God – experience and then see.

That is not unlike how we see it in scripture all the way through. God promises faithfulness, we need it, we live it, we look back and see it. When the people of Israel experience God's faithfulness, that is how it is too. "Remember when you were in slavery/in the desert/in a foreign land...and you cried out to God, then remember how I took you, held you, blessed you, maybe chastised you, but was faithful to you. And it is in the repeating of the story that we remember – and can thank God, bless God for his faithfulness.

To end, (prayers come up) recall an aspect of God's faithfulness this year which affected you. Think of the situation, the need, the risk, the looking back, the remembering of, the seeing/realizing...and thank God.