On the eve of another election, I think about those families who have left a lasting legacy in American political life. I’m intrigued by the enduring legacy of the Kennedy clan. Many Democrats today wrap themselves in the Kennedy mantle. The Kennedy legacy produced a president, two senators and several ambassadors. If your predilection is Republican, you may be partial to the contributions of the Bush family, who contributed two presidents, a senator and a representative. In the early years of the 20th century, the Roosevelt’s were a virtual dynasty. This family supplied us with two presidents, a vice president, two governors and four representatives. Or you can take it all the way to the beginning to John and Abigail Adams, who contributed two presidents, a vice president, a governor, a senator and a representative. The most enduring dynasty in American politics is the Thomas Lee family. Lee was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses in the early 1700s. His two sons, Francis and Richard Lee, served in the Continental Congress and signed their names to the Declaration of Independence. Their family includes such notables as General Robert E. Lee and President Zachary Taylor. When Blair was elected governor of Maryland, he became the 21st member of the family to hold elected office.

Today, I want to talk about King David’s dynasty. David’s story is the most enduring family legacy in Scripture.

After 40 years of fighting to stay alive, David has reached a point in our story where there are no more rivals to his throne. King Saul has died in battle and the Philistines have been decisively defeated. David, our lesson tells us, enjoys rest from all his foes (7:2). He has successfully united the north and south into a single kingdom and established Jerusalem as its capital city. He’s riding the crest of popular acclaim.

Our once homeless king now enjoys a permanent residence. He lives in a swank home, a palace paneled in expensive cedar. Now that David is no longer on the run, he has time to reflect. It doesn’t seem right that he lives in a palatial mansion while God dwells in a tent. David talks over his building plan with his pastor, Nathan. Nathan encourages David to go for it. What could be better than to build a house for God?
That night, Nathan reviews David’s plan with God. Nathan learns that he has spoken too fast. God doesn’t want David to build him a house. So, Nathan goes back to David and pulls the building permits.

There’s a play on words regarding this word house. David wants to build God a house yet God insists, ‘David, I want to build YOU a house.’ One of the alternate meanings of this word house is dynasty. While David wants to build God a house, God wants to build David a dynasty.

God is the subject of 23 verbs in this passage and each of these verbs carry the action. David is the object of the action in each of these verbs. Nathan tells David that his building plans for God will interfere with God’s building plans for David.

God reminds David of his faithfulness in the past in verses 8-9: “I want you to remind him that ‘I took you from the pasture to lead my people’” (7:8), “I have been with you wherever you have gone” (7:9) and “I have cut off all your enemies (7:9).” Midway through this speech, God shifts his focus to the future: “I will make you a great nation” (7:9), “I will prepare a place for my people” (7:10), “I will give you rest from your enemies” (7:11), “I will establish a home for you” (7:11), “I will raise up your offspring to succeed you” (7:12), “I will establish his kingdom” (7:12), “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (7:13) and “I will be his father and he will be my son” (7:14).

We’ve been asking two questions of this story for the past several weeks. What does this story tell us about David? And what does this story tell us about God?

First, let’s consider David. From my Sunday school days, I regarded David as something of a hero. I can’t tell you how many times I learned about David’s improbable victory over Goliath. Yet, we are learning in this sermon series that David is something of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde sort of person. He’s saint and sinner in the same person. He has his virtues; he has his flaws. If you haven’t figured it out by now, David represents every last one of us!

David wants to build a house for God in the worst way. David also has a self-serving streak in him. Sure, he wants to build a house for God. He also wants to draw attention to himself as king.

Why does God put the kibosh on David’s plans? Eugene Peterson writes in his book *Leap over the Wall*: “Do you know what I think? I think that David is just about to cross over a line from being full of God to being full of himself. Outwardly, everything is the same. He isn’t conscious of doing anything different, not self-aware of any shift within. But David, riding the crest of...
acclaim, having decisively defeated the opposition, united God’s people and captured the allegiance of all Israel, heady with success, is now going to do God a favor.” David is all about working for God. He’s far less receptive to letting God work through him.

I have struggled in my life to learn the same lesson. When I first began in ministry, I desperately wanted to do something for God. I wanted to win people to God, plant churches for God and build buildings for God. I wanted to do things for God more than I wanted to be with God. I’m now learning how to be with God so that I can discern what God wants to do through me.

So much for David; what do we learn about God in this story? God doesn’t seem the least bit interested in having a house built for him. He actually prefers being on the move with his people. Having no fixed address suits God just fine.

Scripture tells us time and again that God doesn’t live in buildings made with hands. God declares, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1).

Yet, religious people like us show a predilection for putting God in a box. Maybe it’s because we are uncomfortable with God’s immensity and vastness. We like God accessible and convenient so we reduce him in size. We assign to our God carefully prescribed roles. We try to force God into a box. We try to domesticate God. Yet try as we might, God will not comply.

David is anointed king in 1025BC. His reign lasts 40 years. David’s son Solomon ascends to the throne and his ancestors serve in the role as kings through the duration of Israel’s monarchy, ending in 586BC. David’s dynasty lasts a long time, 450 years to be exact. That’s right up there with the Ming dynasty and the Yankees dynasty. Yet, it doesn’t last forever. Didn’t God promise David a kingdom without end?

Yet hold the phone. The angel Gabriel announces to a virgin whose name is Mary, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most high. The Lord will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (1:31-33). Luke announces that Jesus will be given the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. This promised Son of David will save his people from their sins.

At age 19, I was full of myself. Someone shared with me the diagram on your screen. As a point of reference the “S” in the diagram stands for self, the cross represents Christ and the dots of various sizes represent our everyday interests.
In the left circle, self is on the throne. The cross is depicted outside the circle of this person’s life. Since the interests of this person revolve around the self, they appear confused and disordered.

In the middle circle, the self remains on the throne. Although Christ is now inside the circle, he remains on the periphery of this person’s life. Since the self is still on the throne, the interests remain driven by the self.

In the right circle, the self has been dethroned. Christ is now on the throne. Christ’s reign in this person’s life has resulted in a greater degree of harmony regarding the various interests in this person’s life.

When the person who shared this diagram with me asked which circle represents my life, I didn’t hesitate. I pointed to the left circle. I knew that my life revolved around me—my self-interests and my self-centeredness. I was the epitome of the Invictus poem, “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” Later that summer, I made a conscious decision to become a Christ follower. I climbed off the throne and yielded myself to Jesus as Lord. This decision changed the trajectory of my life. I could never, ever imagine in my wildest dreams talking to you today. I wouldn’t be here today had not Christ knocked on the door of my heart.

I still vacillate between the middle and right circles. I’m still tempted to enthrone myself and relegate Christ to the margins. Christ continues to bring me back to the right side of the page.

What circle represents your life? If you’re ready to move to the right circle, join me in the following prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess that I have insisted on being master of my fate and captain of my soul. I have endeavored to live as my own lord. I have labored hard to be on the throne of my life. My interests have been driven by self-interest and ambition. Today, I’m yielding the throne of my life to you. I am acknowledging you as the Savior for my sins; sins that are too real to hide and too deep to undo. I yield myself to you as Lord of my life. Come, reign in my heart. When I am tempted to climb back on the throne, graciously remind me that you are Lord. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.