



For 15 days this past August I hiked the Superior Hiking Trail from what's known as the 270 Degree Overlook just south of the Canadian Border at Grand Portage, down to Gooseberry Falls State Park just a bit north of Two Harbors, Minnesota. It was an astonishing experience. I can honestly say that covering 145 miles over two weeks was, without a doubt, one of the most rewarding and challenging things I've ever done—on every level. Along the way I tried to capture and contain—well, everything. At night I'd write pages and pages in my journal about what I was thinking and feeling and during the day I would take dozens of pictures and record videos of rushing streams and the massive Superior National Forest as it stretched out in front of me—through aspen, birch and cedar forest and along the breathtaking ridgelines. But by day three I realized that if I took a picture, recorded a video or tried to write about every moment that captured my attention, I'd still be on that trail this morning. It was just too magnificent, too majestic, too vast, just too powerful to contain. And ironically, in the end, it had contained me.

You've had moments like that, I know you have: moments that just take hold of you and wouldn't let go: a song you heard, a book you read, a meal you shared with some good friends or family members. Maybe it was a movie, a short walk, a long hike, a kiss, and embrace, a vacation—some amazing experience that left you both amazed and at a loss to contain it.

That's David's story. This weekend we encounter another hero of the faith; a hero who had that same experience. David wanted to contain God. David—the simple shepherd boy, turned powerful, beloved king of Israel, wanted to contain God; wanted to build four walls around God and put a roof over his head—he called it a temple. And David discovered that even with good and honorable intentions

of containing God, it was impossible. God was just too amazing, too indescribable, too uncontainable. In the passage I want to read for us, David is in a rather reflective moment—he's dealing with the fact that while he's living in a good amount of comfort, God does not have a place to reside—no chapel, no sanctuary, no church, no temple. So in the Hebrew vernacular of the day, he asks, "What's up with that?!" But as usual, God has other plans; God wants to build a home for David. But what God wants to build is not built out of wood and stone, but rather of flesh and blood. Let's look at this passage together [2 Samuel 7:1-17].

So there it is: another ancient story of the attempt to contain the creator of the universe. Just when David thought his life was all settled and tamed, just when he thought he had God figured out, nailed down, and tidied up, he was reminded that God is uncontainable. And not only that, but God is on the move. And so when we read a story like this, we come to find out that God is still uncontainable, still on the move and inviting us to participate in the next expression of the ever-emerging kingdom. And so to let this passage do what it is intended to do—that is, to speak powerfully into our lives today, I want to lift up a couple of things that we just can't overlook. And I'd like you underline a couple of things with me. So let's do that.

First of all, let's look at the context in verse 1: "Now, when the king (David) was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." I want you to underline "When the king was settled in his house..." and, if you would, write the word "settled" in the margin.

David was in a settling mood and wanted to build a floor and some walls and put a roof over the whole thing. O, for sure, David wanted to honor God with "a place." Ancient kings, after all, showed their allegiance and affection for their god's by doing just that. But God would not be contained. God's place is not just in brick and mortar, wood and stone. God's home is in the hearts of people. God is on the move and cannot be contained.

But I wonder: have you ever just settled for something because you didn't have the energy or the strength to keep pressing ahead, and your "get-up-and-go-just got-up-and-went" and you just decided to settle for whatever happened next? That can happen in our walk with Christ. I know for me, personally, when I get settled, I get lazy. I stop reading scripture. I put off praying. I can make all kinds of

excuses for why I'd rather serve myself and neglect others. I think of it this way: when we just settle into too much comfort, our spirited edge comes off, our creativity wears a thin, our goals become small and insignificant. Our sense of spiritual adventure gets lost when we just settle for the way it is. And when we do that, we lose the wonder of where God is trying to take us.

Second, and as usual, God has a better idea; a wilder, more colorful, exotic and maybe, just maybe a more dangerous idea. And in order to convey that wild, colorful, exotic and possible dangerous idea, God has to get our attention. So let's look at verses 5 and 6. God says to Nathan the prophet, "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle."

You can almost hear the utter disbelief in God's voice, can't you? 'Are you serious? Nathan? Really? You go and tell David, 'thanks but no thanks... I've got a much better idea. Instead of you building me a house of stone and wood, I'm going to build you a house of flesh and blood—a house that will stand forever. Look with me at the middle of verse 11 through 13:

"... Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

Friends, the promise that God made to David is that the house to be built would be a house of heart and soul. And in these verses, God is pointing far into future history to the coming of Jesus and the body of Christ that would be built into the future right up to this very moment this morning. Look at the last part of verse 11 again: "the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house." Go ahead and underline that part of the verse: "the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house."

Ever wonder what it means to have God build a home within us? Ever wonder what it means to say that our heart is God's home? Think of it this way: You know how it is when you have house guests; when someone comes to stay with you? You live differently, don't you? You're sort of on your game a bit more. Perhaps there's more attention to detail, more care given to the way you interact with your guests and with members of your own family. There's more hospitality, more love, more kindness, more goodness all

around. Maybe that's the work of the spirit of God in us when we're living with the understanding that God is at home in our lives; there is more attention to the fruit of the spirit. And maybe that's a little unsettling for you. That's okay. Maybe that's part of the relative danger of having the creator of the universe being at work in and through you to enrich the lives of those around you. And maybe, if God is moving in and through us, then perhaps there are some things that need to go in order for the presence of God to fill us up.

So, what do we do with this as we move into the week ahead? How do we make room for this wild, colorful, exotic and maybe just a little dangerous presence of God in our lives in the days ahead?

I believe the place to begin is to open ourselves up to and give thanks for the good news that God is on the move and desires to build a home in us. As a community of faith stepping boldly into God's future for us, creating a space for people to gather and experience the goodness of God is an essential piece of our work together. A way to be part of that is to pray for wisdom and guidance as the process continues here at Prince of Peace.

Beyond that, here is what I want you to take home today: God desires to make your heart God's home. This is the place in you where God continues to live and move and breathe. In order to help bring this to mind every day this week, I want to ask you to join me in doing this simple, yet profound little exercise: two phrases, one breath. As you breathe in, say to yourself, "My heart..." And as you breathe out, speak softly, "your home." Breathing in, simply pray the words, "My Heart..." And in that moment give your heart to God. Give yourself to our majestic, indescribable, uncontainable God. When you breathe in and say "my heart" you're opening yourself up to giving yourself away to this God. Then, as you breathe out, pray the words, "Your home..." And in that moment you're inviting our awesome, powerful untamable God to reside in you; and to create a holy space in you wherever you are—you become a home for God not made of stone and wood, but of flesh and blood. And in doing that, you become a living expression of this God who cannot be contained, but a God who is on the move in a through the people of God everywhere.