

Some people call it the “nomad” life – be it living in a car with a tent; or truck with a pull behind pop-up camper; or a self-contained truck camper, Winnebago, or converted bus. Others think of it as the “turtle” life because you carry what you call “home” with you. But no matter what you call it, a number of people are choosing to live their lives without a fixed address, in a home on wheels – or a home onboard a boat. Some families chose to do this in the past year when both school and work could be done “remotely” from anywhere with an internet connection. Other people felt forced into doing this when they were laid off or their employment ended due to pandemic closures, and they found that they needed to radically cut their monthly expenses to stay afloat. Yet others have needed to restart their lives in multiple places, multiple times because of mental or physical or emotional health conditions, or to leave abusive situations, and have needed their own safe place to be in and to travel with. And you might recall that the Hebrew people started their own nomadic forty year journey to escape from a life of slavery in Egypt. And that God went with them on that journey.

That’s why the prophet Nathan was reminded that it is more important to God to “journey with” God’s people than to settle down in a house. So Nathan was directed to tell King David that God never asked anyone to build God a house. If God wanted a house – God could build a house. And while God does *not* desire to live in a cedar house (like David’s palace) – God *does desire* to build up a royal house that honors God. That’s why God made a commitment to David, and David’s family, for all time. The verses we read from Psalm 89 spell out God’s covenant with David. This covenant was rooted in God’s love for David. And it was described in very expansive terms of faithfulness and support, of readiness to help and protect. But you may have noticed that God’s loving covenant also included a few “parental warnings”:

*I shall be a father to him, and he will be my son. When he does wrong,  
I shall punish him as any father might*

*II Samuel 7:14* **REB**

*If his children forsake my law and do not conform to my judgements,  
if they violate my statutes and do not observe my commandments,  
then I shall punish their disobedience*

*Psalm 89L30-32a* **REB**

Yes, God made a covenant to love David and his children for ever. But God did not give them a free pass to do anything they wanted to do. If their royal house was going to honor God, then whatever David and his children did would have to align with God’s statutes and commandments. That’s the covenant restriction that God put in place, up front. I’m

sure God would have preferred to look at the future through “rose-colored-glasses” – to hope for the best – but this was not God’s first covenant with human beings. In making this covenant commitment to David and his children God chose to take a realistic view of the future. God knew that sooner, and/or later, David and his children would need to be held accountable, and it would be best to make it clear from the start that God would hold them accountable for doing wrong, for breaking God’s commandments.

Why do I think it is good for us to remember God’s covenant with David and his children? Because it is easy for us to focus on the expansive, generous nature of God’s love, while ignoring that God will also hold us accountable for our behavior.

Remembering this covenant might help us have a better understanding of what we can expect from God, and what God is probably expecting from us. If we understand ourselves to be children of God, then that means that we are part of God’s household. Don’t you think that our household would honor God? And as the children of God’s household, won’t God both love us and hold us accountable for our actions? After all, wouldn’t our household also be considered a royal household as the household of the Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory? A royal house that will last for all eternity? Isn’t that what we’re part of and where we’re at as the children of God?

Does this view of being a child of God make you feel anxious? Like the pressure is really on to live up to being a child of God, of meeting God’s expectations? Or perhaps the pressure or anxiety comes from not wanting to face God’s punishment for disobedience? To use a Wesleyan phrase, are you motivated to “flee from the wrath to come” because you are afraid of God? . . . Or is that not true for you? Perhaps this view of being a child of God reassures you because it helps you know where you stand? Do you feel safe in the knowledge that you are loved by God, and that what you do matters to God? Are you motivated to follow God’s commandments out of your own love for God? Do you encourage others to also fall in love with God because you want them to experience for themselves what it’s like to be a child of the living God, and to be part of God’s household?

The psalmist imagined David calling out to God, “You are my father, my God, my rock where I find safety.” May we also know God as our safe rock, our refuge, our home – no matter where we are, and no matter where we roam.

Amen.