

# Overshadowed by Grace

Midrash on the Third Sunday of Advent (texts below)



In this passage G\_d is not remotely concerned with having a house (Temple) built for him. There is one strand of tradition that seems to believe G\_d needs a Temple, but another is more comfortable with the nomadic model. Nathan, the prophet, has

second thoughts about giving the green light for King David to build a Temple.

G\_d says “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...did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel ...saying ‘why have you not built me a house of cedar?’ ” (2 Samuel 7:6-7).

The notion of a nomadic G\_d is very appealing from an evolutionary point of view. G\_d accompanying the universe in this journey, creating space and time, as it all unfolds; G\_d implicate in the process, symbolized by G\_d moving about in a tent and a tabernacle”. A permanent Temple is the first stage of divine petrification, of nailing G\_d down to the ground—this perspective and only this perspective, these beliefs and only these beliefs, these rules and only these rules. The nomadic, evolving G\_d suggests an indeterminate future as well. Who knows where the winds of the journey will blow the whole procession. The G\_d of the tent is on an adventure. G\_d of the Temple is going nowhere. The priests will make sure of that.

So what he may have here is G\_d fighting for G\_d’s freedom, requiring that the priesthood be a little more nimble, a

little more alert to the promptings of Spirit, and a lot more ready to go when G\_d says it's time to pull up stakes.

There are some lessons for the church here obviously. In the United Church of Canada, we have not just one Temple to contend with but 1000's. Many of the temples are falling down. Many have mortgages that prevent communities from doing much of anything except fund raising. Many have heating bills because of inefficiencies that are shameful contributors to global warming. Others are filled with uncomfortable pews which for some members are considered to be a divinely ordained form of seating. Within a decade or so, if current membership trends continue, our commitment to identifying G\_d with a church building will come under severe stress.

The good news is that there are already more nomadic, creative alternatives springing up. The so-called [new monastic movement](#) is finding spaces to rent in industrial areas of the city.

The central mark of the new monastic movement is "*relocation to the abandoned places of empire.*" My friends Trevor Malkinson and Rhian Walker, in fact, are close to launching their own expression of this kind of church right here in Vancouver. And I need to say as well the the national office of the United Church of Canada is financially supporting new ministries like this one, (which is reaching across the globe), and others like the Rev. Bethel Lee's Yoga Chapel.

I think the kicker in the 2 Samuel passage comes at the end when Nathan says to David (paraphrased), "Dude, I didn't ask for you to build me a house, and we did just fine moving around in a tent. But I tell you what. I'll build *you* a house, if you're stuck on having a house." We so easily and egotistically assume that our vocation is to do stuff for G\_d, which is kind of laughable. And the truth is that more often than not, underlying all the posturing, is that we are doing most of it for ourselves. And it's so easy to forget that we are on the receiving end, that we are being lived by this Wholeness that religion calls G\_d. Our job is to feel it,

respond to it, and move, move, move when the Spirit says move.

## Midrash on Luke

Mary is our exemplar. The angel tells her that “the power of the Most High will overshadow you”. Jean Pierre de Caussade, (7 March 1675 – 8 December 1751) a little known Jesuit spiritual teacher, at least among Protestants, has a very helpful take on this text.



“This shadow, in which the power of God conceals itself to bring Jesus to us, is whatever duty, temptation, or trial that comes with every moment. These are in fact but shadows similar to those in nature that spread over visible objects and hide them from us. Thus in the moral and supernatural order the duties of each moment conceal under their outward appearances the true reality of the divine will, which alone is worthy of our attention.”

The title of his book, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, describes the orientation of the ordinary person toward the ordinary details, duties, and circumstances of one’s life. Devotional attention to the ordinary is the way that we discover and live from divine providence—what he calls “the sacrament of the present moment”. The so-called ordinary is actually the shadow that conceals the the divine light.

Even the angel who announces the good news to Mary is considered to be but a shadow. Mary just being Mary, attending to what’s next in her life, is the main attraction and locus of divine activity. “Draw back, archangel, you are only a shadow. Your moment passes and you disappear. Mary moves beyond you. She goes forward unceasingly. From now on you are

behind her. The Holy Spirit has entered her under the visible form of the mission and will never leave her.”

Mary’s “going forward unceasingly” (evolutionary grace) is born of an active passivity. When she consents to being a vessel of the birth of the Christ, she displays this active passivity which provides G\_d with a way to shape the evolutionary trajectory of the universe. “Let it be to me according to your word”. Her consent, a radical and unswerving “yes”, is the active aspect. Her surrender, “let it be to me”, describes the passive pole. We come full circle to what Nathan was charged with telling the King. “I will give *you* a house”.

When we find our “yes” we align ourselves with the divine creativity out of which a universe emerged and continues to emerge. We resonate with the primal “Yes” that was the Big Bang, and actually become ourselves vessels of this creativity. We conceive this yes within us, amplify this yes, (My Soul Magnifies the Lord) and give birth to a future that is shaped like a “yes”—congruent with and an amplification of natural grace and the holy yearning for a creation that reflects an originating love and wisdom. The Jesus lineage calls this “the birth of Christ”, or we could say “Christ consciousness”. This is what we are celebrating at Christmas, not the birth of the baby Jesus, but the ongoing birth of mind and heart that was in Jesus of Nazareth, and is in each one of us to the degree that with Mary we find the words to be true and right, “let it be to me...”.

## **2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16**

7:1 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him,

7:2 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."

7:3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

7:4 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan:

7:5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

7:6 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.

7:7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

7:8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel;

7:9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

7:10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,

7:11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

7:16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

### **Luke 1:26-38**

1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,

1:27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

1:28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

1:29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

1:30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

1:31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

1:32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

1:33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

1:34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

1:35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;

therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

1:36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.

1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”

1:38 Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has get increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get data that is reliable. You can find useful information fleetly and conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile dysfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about “[levitra cost](#)“. Did learned some about “[buy levitra online usa](#)“? Other problem we are going to is “[buy generic levitra online](#)“. In effect, a medicinal reviews found that up to three quarters of folk on such remedy experience side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual dysfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your associate and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this treatment. Talk to your health care purveyor to see if it’s sure to make the switch.