

Text: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:26-38

Title: Surrender to God's Plans

Date: December 18, 2011

It seems that every time to channel surf by AMC they are playing White Christmas, that 1954 Christmas extravaganza starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney and Vera Ellen. For whatever reason, I tend to hit it when the Danny Kaye character is conning Bing Crosby into dressing as Rosemary Clooney and Vera Ellen to finish their act. If you've seen the movie you know what I'm talking about, and if you haven't, I can't demonstrate... the reason I bring this is Danny Kaye- granted, you just go to love the guy, but his portrayal of Phil Davis, the guy who has made a career out of conning Bing Crosby for his own good is classic. (he wants Bing to settle down and get married so he can get some time off) One of the sub plots of the movies is that question- is everything we do ultimately for our own benefit? Does everyone have an angle?

Of course the consummate angle player in the Old Testament is King David. Oh I know, most of us think of him as a great guy, the man whose was close to God's heart, but a lot of that is because he had some really great press- and it didn't hurt that he wrote some of our most beloved Psalms. But if I asked you to outline his career- what would you come up with? Most of us would start with the prophet Samuel anointing him to be King when he was a still a kid. While there are different accounts on how he came to King Saul's attention (some say it was because he was a musician, brought in to aid King Saul's anxiety attacks, others point out it was because of the Goliath episode) but everyone agrees that David was a fixture in Saul's court- a gifted military commander, best friend of the King's son Jonathan and husband of the Kings daughter. We -might point to the fixation that Saul developed convinced that David wanted to supplant him. David survived a number of assignation attempts, but warned by Jonathan and aided by his wife Michal, he escaped to the southern Judean desert.

As an outlaw, he first worked as an enforcer for the Philistines, but they didn't trust him- they brought him on to torque off Saul. David knew that this was not going to work out, so faking insanity, he moved back to south Judea and became an advocate

for those in debt, in distress or simply discounted- he started building the nucleus of an army loyal only to him, transforming himself into something of a warlord- offering protection from raiding bandits in exchange for money and supplies. Saul invaded the Judean desert several times unsuccessfully and eventually the Judeans proclaimed David their king, after he secured the borders from the Philistines, the Almaekites –or for that matter- anyone who opposed him.

Meanwhile, the Philistines killed Jonathan and Saul, and their general Abner set Saul's son in the throne, but ruled from the shadows. In the border clashes between Israel and Judea Abner was killed and Saul's son Ish- bosheth was assassinated- David maneuvered himself to be proclaimed king, uniting Israel and Judea under one rule. He conquered Jerusalem and set about expanding his borders through conquest. Eventually he would survive a coup attempt led by his son Absalom, but that is in the future.

We catch up to David wanting to build up a Temple. The writer of Second Samuel tries to spin this as a sign of David's devotion and not a way to way to secure God's divine stamp of approval for his regime. Rebel against me and you are rebelling against God! How many of our politicians would love to pull that one off? God is having none of it, and seeing through David to the real reason for this construction project, instructs the prophet Nathan to say no- and to assure David that *“your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever.”*

The reason I bring all of this up is: what do you think was the motivation for all of this. Was David simply motivated by ego? Or was he motivated by a desire to establish a dynasty. Neither one of those makes sense given what we read in psalms. There we encounter David as a genuine, transparent kind of guy and it is no wonder that we inspired the loyalty that he did. No, what I want to suggest that he was motivated by one of the most basic of human emotions: fear. Does that surprise you? I don't mean the “I'm frightened out of my mind” kind of fear- I mean the “ bad things can happen so I better make sure they don't” kind of fear.

This is the kind of fear that if we didn't have it, then the antiperspirant, auto, life and medical insurance and pension plan industries would not exist. The only reason we

buy those things is that we are afraid of what might happen if I don't. I might offend in crowded elevators. I might not be able to fix my car, pay my doctors or stick my kids with the funeral costs. You get the idea. There is nothing wrong with insurance or pension plans and there have been times I wish someone else had paid a few bucks for antiperspirant. But there is something about fear that turns everything we touch as a way to secure our own sense of well being. I'm not sure if I am at all comfortable with that. I mean, do we go to church because we don't want to go to hell- or do we go to church to deepen our relationship with Jesus, to worship the Triune God and be used to love others in His name? See what I mean? Fear, plus our egos has a way of making us all guilty of playing angles with the people we love.

In contrast to this, we have Mary. Luke tells us that the Angel Gabriel visits Mary. Gabriel is a big deal- for he is named as one of the 7 angels that is always before the Throne of God- getting a message from Gabriel is like getting a message from God Himself. Now if Gabriel appeared to me I would hoping that my life insurance was paid up- for I am sure that the shock would kill me. But Mary doesn't flinch, she just wonders what kind of greeting this is- that she is the favored one of God? A teenage girl in a poor village? This is God's favor? Gabriel quickly tells her not to be afraid- for once the shock wears off who knows what might happen?

I don't know that Gabriel was afraid of what might happen, but what floors me is that after she is told that she is going to bear the Messiah, the one who will be the ultimate King of David's line- her concerns are prosaic. "So, how is this going to happen?- You know I am a virgin, right?" Gabriel doesn't see this as an objection – there is no hint of "No- not me!" or "Go pick someone else, I have other plans." So he tells her not to sweat the details- for everything is possible with God- but just to be sure he reminds her that Elisabeth, who everybody just knew was unable to have a child was not pregnant. Then Mary said ,"*Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.*" In a word- fearless.

Mary was able to say this because she had complete confidence that God was in charge- that both literally and figuratively she had nothing to fear. For at the root of fear is the sneaky suspicion that we are all on our own, whatever life my bring, the only resources I have to meet those challenges are the resources that I have.

Not so with Mary- for at her fingertips were the resources of the One who created the universe; the one who formed her, chose her and did she really think that God would drop the ball now? Knowing that she was able to simply put her future in God's hands- knowing that she would not be put to shame.

That's the thing about the future. No matter what our strategies may be to meet it with a modicum of security- the future is unknowable. O sure, we are able to project trends; we know from past experience that it's going to rain, so we better put something away for a rainy day- but at its core- the future is unknown to us, and so is out of our control. The future is known only to one- One whose abilities include omniscience. Mary was able to put her trust in him, because in her heart she knew that- and so do we.

This is the last shopping week before Christmas- and I feel reasonably confident in my ability to predict frenzied crowds at the malls, distracted drivers on cell phones on the highway; and the excitement level in our kids ramping up even higher- for this is part of the season. Like Mary- we know that even through all of this that God is in charge and that we are able to meet whatever the future may be in complete confidence. There are no angles to play, for our future is secured- by the One whose coming we celebrate. Even better- knowing that we are indeed in God's will, we are able to greet and share with others fearlessly and selflessly. Let us pray.