

**2 Samuel 7:1-14**  
**Ephesians 2:11-22**

Friday mornings are special at our house. They begin early, with pound and pounce. Two sets of little bare feet pound over the hardwood floors across the hallway, through a doorway, around a bookcase, behind the bed and up onto the bedside table immediately to my left, inches from my head. Then, for a fraction of a second – silence. I can hear them giggling quietly, jostling for position before the pounce. But before the pounce there's always a question: "Daddy, Daddy are you waking up now? Is this the day you're going to stay home all day? Are we going to play lots of fun games today?" And since Friday is my day off I say, "Yes" which occasions the pounce. The pounce, enemy of sleep, yet also the banisher of bad humor. Two little girls jumping, falling, rolling on their dad, on the bed, shrieking with laughter. They love to be tickled and wrestled with, then go downstairs for breakfast; maybe read a book afterwards or do a craft together; maybe chalk drawings on the sidewalk or soccer in the backyard. We'll eat together, laugh together, go new places together, work out arguments together – we'll take the day to reconnect as a family. Ideally...ideally.

This past Friday began much the same way I just described, except that instead of breakfast and playing I went out and started painting the windows and trim all around the house. I needed doing, no question. The old paint was beginning to peel and so there was a good bit of scraping, sanding and other preparation just to get ready to apply the paint. Initially I convinced Emmie, our four-year-old, that it would be a fun project for both of us. I could paint the windows and trim and she could paint the backyard shed. I gave her a paintbrush and a pail of water and she went right to it; gave the shed an outstanding brush bath. Meanwhile I concentrated on the painting of the house.

Emmie would check in periodically asking "What are you doing now?"  
"Still painting," I'd answer. After about an hour, with most of the shed painted, but only a small portion of the windows and trim finished, she said, "When are you going to be finished?"  
"Oh, sweetie, pretty soon, I've just got a few more windows to go."  
Then, "Well, can you be done now? I want to play with you; maybe even have a dance party."  
"Ummhmm, that sounds like a great idea Emm, just let me get a little more painting done..." and on it went, until she finally stopped asking and went in the house frustrated and tearful.

I'd like to be able to say that I immediately recognized the need to stop for a few minutes and go spend some time with Emmie, but that's not what happened. No, instead I finished the trim and windows only to realize that the porch trim also needed a coat of paint. But I was out of paint so I had to go to Home Depot for more – which I did alone because it's always a faster trip if I don't take the girls. Just get in, out and done – no having to explain why we don't need the special race car-shaped kid shopping cart just to pick up a gallon of paint. No having to buckle them into their car seats, or field requests for a drink of milk or a snack...it's just easier, more efficient without them in tow.

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And in preparation for the weekend the place was swarming. It looks like everybody and their brother is doing home improvement of one variety or another: decks, landscaping, additions, carpeting, redoing the kitchen, and a thousand other home projects. And for those myriad, wonderful, life-improving projects everyone seems to have one thing in common – the FACE: eyes slightly narrowed, mouth grim, brow furrowed, jaw set. I notice this because as I pass the display of bathroom vanity mirrors I catch a glimpse of myself, am a little surprised to see the FACE staring back at me; only to be more surprised that upon further inspection most of the other people I see are also wearing the same expression of concentration and grim determination. I continue to ponder this phenomenon as I opt for the self-checkout line, passingly thankful that there aren't any idiots or first-timers fumbling with the machines today. Those people can really hold you up, sometimes more than going through a regular check-out line and having to talk to the clerk, make small talk while she rings you up.

I made my way home through choked lines of traffic – everyone trying to get on with the weekend, trying to get to their own interests with all due haste. By the time I got home some of the irony of the situation was beginning to settle in – some twinge of conscience that I should reprioritize some of my time, reprioritize some of my interest in reconnecting with Emmie, Reese and Jess. And so I opened the car door, looked up to the front window, to three smiling faces welcoming me home, and felt a certain pleasant expectation, very comforting...well, that is, until my eyes briefly drifted to the left and noticed the peeling paint on the side-porch trim; an unfinished job, something I had to seize the moment to take care of – and so I did. And by the time I finished, then noticed that the grass needed cutting, well after that and a couple other must-dos, it was nighttime and my favorite three smiling faces were in bed asleep. Honestly, I felt exhausted and a little lonely. So much for my time with the girls.

See somewhere in the midst of all my prioritizing and resetting the agenda for the day I lost the part that made it special and enjoyable, the part that makes Fridays sacred – fellowship, sharing, intimacy. And without that sacred linchpin, that capstone, the whole day just sort of falls to shambles. That's my sense of what God is communicating to David in 2 Samuel by the way. David is offering, planning to take care of a little bit of home improvement for God, but God isn't asking for that is he?

*2 Samuel 7:5-16*

*“Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt 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 for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of*

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*cedar?’’ 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, that you should be prince over my people Israel; 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. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 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. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, 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 for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.’’’*

Rather, God promises that he will take care of David’s house (his dynasty) as a covenant fulfillment. In essence God’s answer to David is, “Don’t worry about the small stuff. Don’t get lost in the possibilities of need – rather, maintain your focus on being faithful and I will take care of all your needs and more. Keep the main thing the main thing!”

Likewise, in Ephesians, Paul drives towards faithfulness to God through the unity of the body of Christ. Here again home improvement is the theme, once again we have a promise from God that he will take care of our need for a home; by bringing us into his, through Christ right?

*Ephesians 2:19-22*

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

Paul is describing Christ as the capstone that brings the church, indeed our whole lives, into balance, into perfection. Without Christ it all falls to shambles. And what is it that Christ is the center of, the capstone of?

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The church. *In whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, v. 21*

And what makes up the church?

You. *In whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit v.22*

Listen now, I know there are about a million things you've got to get done this week; and frankly, time together as church, may not appear to be the most critical emergent need. Hear God on this! Don't miss the opportunity, the chance to reconnect in the life of your family, the church, for distraction by peeling paint. There will always be peeling paint, there will always be a thousand other "needs", demands on your time that take you away from the family. And yet, none of those "needs" is as worthwhile, as critical, as faithfulness to God – together.

In the weeks and months ahead we are going to be more intentional as a congregation about making the church our primary community. We are going to strive harder to make Paul's description, of this congregation, of the church, as a dwelling place for God, a reality. Please pray for wisdom, guidance, encouragement and obedient hearts both for yourselves and those who will be shaping and leading this effort. As new opportunities emerge for you to engage more fully in the life of the church: through mission, study, fellowship, worship and elsewhere, I hope that you will prayerfully consider what God's calling is upon your life as part of the church, as part of this congregation; no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.