

“God’s Faithfulness Through All Generations” I Kings 8:(1,6,10-11, 22-30, 41-43)
September 6, 2009 Rev. Joyce Kirk-Moore San Dimas Community Church

Today’s text describes the dedication of the temple which was completed by King Solomon. All the people gather round; the ark of the covenant is ushered to its new place within the temple; a cloud covers the assembly as though the very presence of God hovers in a blessing as the temple is dedicated. Then King Solomon recounts the acts of God and God’s promises to his father David which have now come to fulfillment. Solomon prays for God’s continued faithfulness to follow Israel in all the days to come. Solomon interjects into his prayer the notion that God cannot dwell within the walls of the temple. God dwells in heaven; yet, God is both transcendent and incarnate, above and below, behind and ahead. God lives and moves and has being with all creation. To follow the family tree idea of the children’s message, God is the ground of all that is, the ground of being, as the theologian Tillich put it.

It is one of God’s great miracles that God is not thwarted or contained by anything of human design. Even in our weaknesses, in the muck we make of life, God’s miracle of possibilities can still work divine purpose. We cannot ruin things for God. God is faithful through anything and throughout all generations.

God’s faithfulness took form within this congregation on May 22, 1912. Less than 3 years from now, we will celebrate 100 years of God’s faithfulness through this church. Through the tenures of pastors, the rise and fall of the citrus industry, the building and remodeling and additions of this building, through choirs and potlucks, Sunday schools and youth groups, food bank and mission, and even the rise and fall and rise of membership, nothing has thwarted God’s faithfulness to the people who have found here a place of worship and ministry.

About a month ago, I asked one of our members for sermon ideas, and I was given a list that included the question: “Why do we come to church?” I think we come (like the assembly came to dedicate the temple long ago) because we know we belong to something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our own individual lives.

We come to acknowledge that God moves through history and that we are part of that movement and we are grateful for God’s acts in history. We come to encourage and be encouraged.

We come to share burdens that are too heavy to be born on just our shoulders. We come to be inspired and energized to live lives with meaning and purpose.

We come to discern how God can use us as faithful servants in our generation and in our world. We come willing to open our eyes and ears and hearts to a God who is dynamic, ever creating, ever present, and whose presence is revealed through acts of liturgy, prayer, and song.

We come to share this meal of Holy Communion that connects us back in time to the first Passover meal when God announced God’s presence and act of deliverance--liberating a people enslaved in Egypt and giving them a future of hope.

We remember them; we remember centuries later when one of their lineage named Jesus, made the Passover a sign of God’s faithfulness in a different time and place, an act of liberation for Jesus’ contemporaries and liberation for us today.

Some of us come here with heavy hearts longing for a word to encourage us “to keep on keeping on,” to hear again that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Some come in mourning because of recent or long ago losses of those they’ve loved and they come to remember that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Some come with the burden of financial difficulties, the stress of not knowing if their homes and jobs are safe and secure. They need to hear that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Some come with the anxiety of parenting, the challenges of raising children in our world today, the struggles of relating to children who sometimes break our hearts but never break our love. They need to hear that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Some come aging and all that goes along with it--loss of memory and mobility, loss of the ability to drive and socialize, to participate as they once could, to have vital and active roles in church, community, and work. They come with life changed and in some ways diminished. They need to hear that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Some come with medical problems either life threatening or life limiting. They come in various stages of physical distress or pain. Some come not knowing what is wrong; others come knowing and fearing. They need to hear that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Some come to church longing to find strength in their daily lives. They are teachers, laborers, retirees, managers, caregivers, and volunteers. All people whose work poses challenges, stress, and problems and here they come to rest and wait on God and to be reminded that **God is faithful through all generations.**

We come because we belong to each other, to this community, and to God. We are not our own; God made us and into God's hands we place our lives and our futures because we believe that **God is faithful through all generations.**

Like Solomon long ago we petition God through prayer and praise to journey with us as we promise to do our best for one more week; and yet, the prayer is as much for us as for God's ears because we know already that **God is faithful through all generations.**

My professor, James Sanders, wrote a short book, *God Has a Story, Too*. The end of the book has a summary of God's faithfulness through the generations. And that summary ends like this: *If God could go with Abram from Ur of Chaldees to Palestine, down to Egypt, out of Egypt with a motley crew of refugee slaves, through the desert, conquer Palestine with Joshua, and take Jerusalem with David--why not Bethlehem?*

After all, it's only five miles down there out the Jaffa Gate on the old road that runs by Rachel's Tomb.... And if he was with Joseph in prison and granted his presence in the huts and hovels of slaves in Egypt with Moses, don't you reckon he could crouch down into the cradle of a Jewish baby in Bethlehem, if he was of a mind?

...The point would be that you just don't know what God's already been through if you think he couldn't get into that cradle in Bethlehem and onto that cross on Golgotha--and roll a stone away from a tomb, for that matter, if it was his mind to do so and on his agenda to bring righteousness and salvation to the world in that way.

God's story is that God is faithful through all generations. So today we give thanks and praise. We share this simple meal which to others may seem an odd ritual, but to us is a way to show that we know and remember, that **God is faithful through all generations**, and God is faithful to us today.