

Homily-Advent 4-December 24, 2017

I greatly admire those who can build, who have an eye for what something should look like, what the finished product should be.

Some of us become builders even if we might not want to be. For example, on Christmas day, some of you may have to assemble a bicycle or a toy or a game or a something. By the way, everything in the box is there for a reason. So, if you have parts left over at the end of the project, trouble may be brewing.

In our first reading, King David experiences guilt because he lives in a house of precious cedar, and the Ark of the Covenant, God's presence among the people, was housed in a tent. So, David wants to build a new house for God.

But, God intervenes through the prophet Nathan, and says that he does not want a house built right now. Rather, God wants to build up a people, the descendants of David. As a result, David's plans changed in favor of God's plans.

When we turn to the gospel, we have a young woman named Mary. She and her betrothed, Joseph, are also building...not a house, but rather a life for themselves. They have planned on getting married. But, then an angel appears to Mary and says that God's has different plans, very different from what she and Joseph had planned.

She will conceive and bear a Son, Jesus, who will redeem humanity. Talk about a change in plans! God intervenes in the lives of a young couple. Their lives, along with the fate of all humanity, radically change.

Whenever we experience a change of plans, we say that we have to pick up the pieces and start building again. David, Mary, and Joseph do exactly that. They pick up the pieces of their lives and make life work for them. Maybe they or you or I are not contractors or builders, but we know that we can plan our lives, but sometimes, somehow and somewhere, something happens, and the game rules change. A sudden sickness, an unexpected death, a relationship gone sour can force us to regroup, refocus, and rebuild.

How to react? This is where we need to take a deep look into ourselves. David, Mary, and Joseph were faithful disciples of God. Yes, Mary and Joseph found their lives totally reversed because of what God wanted. Their closeness to God allowed them to take what God wanted, and they made it their own.

What about our lives? How do we react when our plans don't pan out. Do we blame God? Do we blame someone else? Do we have a temper tantrum? Do we become unglued?

I am not suggesting that every event that changes our plans comes directly from God. I am suggesting that our closeness to God will allow us to handle those unforeseen changes in plans.

But, be careful. Closeness to God is not something that can be mustered up whenever we feel like it. Rather, closeness to God is the result of our daily union with God especially through prayer.

If we want God at our side when we face turmoil and change, then we need to make sure that he is present even when we believe that we master completely and totally our own lives.

Mary beautifully says "yes" to God's angel. How do we respond to God when the unforeseen suddenly invades our lives and changes our plans? Do we blame God or do we call upon him for his assistance? Hopefully, we can pray and say, as did Mary: "May it be done to me according to your word."