

David - Planting Trees You Will Never Sit Under. 1 Chronicles 22:2-19

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Let's begin with a few predictions from some famous visionaries.

1. In 1859, Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist well drillers in his search for oil. *"They said, you want to drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy."*
2. In 1899, Charles Duell, Commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office said, *"Everything that can be invented has been invented."*
3. In 1927, H.M. Warner, of Warner Brothers, when asked about adding sound to movies said, *"Who wants to hear actors talk?"*
4. In 1929, Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics at Yale University said, *"Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau."*
5. In 1962, a representative at Decca Recording Company rejected the Beatles saying, *"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."*
6. In 1977 Digital Equipment Corp. founder Ken Olsen's quipped, *"There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in his home."*

Predicting the future is almost impossible, but preparing for the future is indispensable. An old proverb teaches, ***"Blessed is the one who plants a tree under whose shade they will never sit."***

Today, as we come to the end of our stories from the life of David, we witness him doing just that – planting a tree under whose shade he would never sit. What I'm referring to is the preparations he made for the temple that God would not allow him to build. This story begins in 1 Chronicles chapter 22. But let's first catch up with David's life to this point.

As a young shepherd, having been anointed by the prophet Samuel to be Israel's next king, David spent his adolescent years as a servant in King Saul's court, and his young adult life fleeing from the same mad king. At the age of thirty, with Saul's death, David was finally crowned as king over Israel; a position he would hold for the next forty years.

King David spent the early years of his reign defeating Israel's enemies and consolidating the nation around Jerusalem as its capital. After winning the peace for all of Israel, David's next triumph was in bringing the Ark of the Covenant to permanently reside in Jerusalem.

David had wanted to build a Temple in Jerusalem to house the Ark, but having been told by God that as a "man of war," he could not do so, David still began faithfully gathering all the necessary materials so that the next king might accomplish what he could not.

In his later years, David also had several sons who wanted to be that king. **Amnon**, David's first-born son and the heir apparent to his throne – was murdered by **Absalom**, David's third-born son, in revenge for raping their sister Tamar. Then, after seven tumultuous years of struggling with his father, Absalom led a rebellion against David, only to be killed in battle.

When David was very old, **Adonijah**, his fourth-born son, next sought to claim the throne. But some years earlier, God had told David that his and Bathsheba's second son would be the next King. God had instructed David to name him **Solomon**, "The Peaceable One," because he would be a man of peace, much loved by God, and that he would be the one to build the God's temple (2 Samuel 12:24-25 1 Chronicles 22:8-10).

The problem was that at this time when Adonijah was trying to claim the throne, Solomon was still a sheltered youth, only seventeen years of age. So David quickly crowned Solomon king and spent the last few years of his life as his co-regent, preparing Solomon to wisely rule Israel and also to build God's temple.

Now, the scripture we read today, records when King David fully handed over the throne to Solomon, charging him to always honor God and to build God's temple.

Though it does not specifically say so, this text is about greatness—about making an impact that will last and that will make a difference. This story would have us lift our eyes from the present to the future. If we will but look with the eyes of faith, we will see that through these words of King David, **God is instructing us to live for what can be, rather than squandering what we have on a passing moment.**

*Great people
plant trees
They will never
sit under."*

There are many ways we measure the greatness of a person, Some may be considered great because of their talent, their possessions, their wealth, or because of their service to their country or to other's less fortunate. Rephrasing that classic proverb, philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said, "*Great people plant shade trees they will never sit under.*" Immediately you know what he meant; such an individual is unselfish, visionary, and dedicated. Their grasp of what must follow is greater than the pressing demand of the moment.

Knowing that what we do today will affect those who walk after us, that those who follow will inherit both our folly along with our wisdom, how tragic that not all our plantings are good. It is inescapable that not only our good deeds, but also our sins and our negligence will shape the lives of those coming after us.

"Planting trees," would have us carefully consider the future impact that our present work will have far beyond our immediate enjoyment. In an age which generally lives only for the moment and which is enamored with building its own monuments, such far sightedness is desperately needed.

Today, we need a revival of men and women in the churches, in homes and in the nation who will plant trees for others. Nowhere does our need to see the big picture, to understand the broader future implications of our actions, become more apparent than in the work of the church. In order to understand this pressing need, let's review David's preparations for building the Temple of God.

TO PLANT TREES YOU WILL NEVER SIT UNDER REQUIRES A GREAT DREAM.

David had a long held dream of building a house to the glory of God. The nation had prospered under David's rule. National peace had been won through great sacrifice in defeating every outside threat to Israel's security. The people now lived in luxury and enjoyed an affluence they could not have imagined before His reign. But David, as a man after God's own heart, was painfully aware of the marked dissimilarity between Israel's economic wealth and their spiritual indifference. God was blessing His people, but they seemingly cared little about showing their gratitude!

David could not imagine that God was pleased seeing His people live in luxury while His house was neglected. He mused to Nathan the prophet, "*Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent*" (1 CHRONICLES 17:1) At first, Nathan agreed with David's ambition to build, but that night God relayed through him, that not David, but his son would be the one to build God's temple (1 Chronicles 17:3-15)

So David began to plan, determined to build the Temple through the son whom God had promised. Although prohibited from actually building the Temple, he could accumulate materials for its construction. And, even though he would never see or enter what was built, he could design this Temple for God. It was a mark of David's greatness that seeing the current need, he planned for the future of the people of God; a future that he would never personally enjoy.

It is a tragic truth that many of us, especially in our modern churches, have ceased dreaming such great dreams. We are so cowed by the concerns and crises of daily life that our capacity to dream has practically died. We are trapped by the possible, the feasible and the practical. What a shame that so many of us have lost the capacity for fantasy and dreaming and thus can never escape the present. So, the work of God plods along, content to maintain the "status quo," instead of daring to dream of great advances. We desperately need to get off the treadmill of the present and dream about some tomorrows. Like the current fad for electric cars, we design technical applications

without a vision of what we are doing for the future. Content to focus on the moment we are unaware of the greater impact of our actions on those who will follow. Like David, our dreams for tomorrow should include the children of tomorrow.

TO PLANT TREES YOU WILL NEVER SIT UNDER also REQUIRES HUMILITY.

There are limits to what any one person can do. David had won peace for Israel through a lifetime of conflict. Consequently, when David proposed building a Temple for the Lord, God's word to David was,

"you shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood in my sight on the earth. See, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name. He shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever." (1 Chronicles 22:8b, 9a, 10).

Some things disqualify us from building the House of God. We are each limited by our history, our abilities and our opportunities. One individual attempting only what they are capable of doing is limited in the good they can ever hope to achieve. How much better to recognize our individual limitations and to realize our dependence upon one another?

If the Temple building commission Christ gave us is to prosper, we must do it together. We must learn that we are not indispensable; that we need to share in every great work. Responding to a friend's question, "*How are you?*" the man answered, "*I am fine; I have resigned as President of the Universe and the resignation has been accepted.*" He understood this principle of mutual dependence.

Not everyone can be a pastor of the congregation; a preacher requires listeners. Not everyone can direct the music; someone must sing and others must rejoice in the music produced. Not everyone can conduct the service; there must be a congregation to unite in worship. Not everyone can teach Sunday school; a teacher needs students. When we begin to compare ourselves to others feeling that we are perhaps being slighted in recognition, it is a fair indication that we have ceased to work together, united in a common vision of future benefits, and that we have begun to live for the moment.

Friends, the work of the moment is destined for dust, just as are the deluded souls who live for the moment.

The Apostle Paul was never jealous of the works he established; he rejoiced in their victories and agonized over their failures. Looking back to the Church in Corinth he spoke of the workers God had raised up to bless those saints.

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1

CORINTHIANS 3:6).

Notice the change of tense? Paul worked, though he didn't see his work come to fruition at that time. Apollos watered, also not seeing the immediate blossoming of the work. Both did their work once and for all; but God continues giving the increase! God continually superintended the work, even after the workers had moved on.

Paul would later instruct those same Christians:

"Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit ... So that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27)

President Ronald Reagan was fond of repeating a Harry S. Truman quote, "**It is amazing what can be accomplished when it does not matter who receives the credit.**" We are all individually limited by talent, by circumstance, by opportunity. But if we are willing to do our part and humbly leave the rest for others – if we are willing to help plant trees we will never sit under – there is no limit to what our life can mean for the cause of Christ.

When a people are united in a common dream they cease to compete and begin to complement. No longer does it seem important to do a task simply so that you may be stroked or that your effort may be recognized; you then begin to labor because the task in which you are engaged is a great task and you share in the dream. The dream may not be realized in your day, but you live and labor in anticipation of the benefit for those who follow.

Finally, **TO PLANT TREES YOU WILL NEVER SIT UNDER REQUIRES A SENSE OF PRIORITY.** The cause is what is important. That cause must be big enough for me to want to go forward, far beyond my credit or my days. The House of God was to be where David sought to restore the religious zeal of his fellow Israelites.

David's life would soon end; in submission to the will of God he surrendered his desire to build the Temple and instead set himself to making preparations for that task which another would perform. This was the mark of David's greatness.

Seven years after his death, David's dream came to fruition under the guidance of Solomon. Constructed of stones quarried near Jerusalem, along with trees brought from distant lands, and precious metals gathered through the years, the Temple rose to the glory of God. The building was magnificent indeed. At its dedication, Solomon declared: "*I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.*" (1 KINGS 8:13) . David had built a house he never entered, but he entered a better one, one not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. David planted a tree he never sat under, but he

found the shade of a better one, the tree of Life. The cause was first; and the aged king performed an incomparable work for God.

But where is the application for us?
What should we take home from this lesson?

Though we might see from this story the need for a new vision for our homes or for our nation, we also need to catch a vision for our greatest work. While rebuilding our nation is a great work, building the nation is not the greatest work. While building stronger families is an even greater work, it is not the greatest work. The greatest work in which any of us may ever engage remains in building the House of God.

The House of God, I am referring to is the "holy catholic church," what the Bible calls "the better Temple" – the only one God truly lives in – made up of all who by faith have come to Christ; and it is in this labor that we need to become far sighted.

- Honoring of the Risen Savior through living righteous lives.
- Building up of one another in the church.
- Advancing of the kingdom of God on Earth.
- Discipling the nations, baptizing and teaching them everything Christ taught us.

These are the charges God has given us. This is the greatest work to which we should aspire.

What is your vision for this church?
What is your vision for the work of God in Bedford Virginia?
What is your vision for advancing the kingdom of God in this nation?

We serve a great God; such service demands a great vision.

If Christ delays His return, Bedford will become a vastly different town in the future. Whether that difference will be for better or for worse will depend in no small measure upon the churches of today, including our own congregation. The churches that minister in that future town may not be the same churches, though they must have the same message.

Whether this church will honor God, or stand as a monument of past failure will be determined by our present response to the changes occurring in our world.

On this World Communion Sunday as we gather around Christ's table with brothers and sisters around the world, I urge each one of us who shares in the life of this congregation, that we work to plant trees under which we will never sit; that like David that we determine to help build a great Temple to the glory of God.

May God bless this vision. Amen.