

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19

Opening Prayer: Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord. Be our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen

Pastoral Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for being the God of love. That you gave your only Son so that he would undergo great suffering for our sake. Seeing this suffering, we believe you understand our suffering and the suffering of this world. We believe you've walked in our footsteps and know that you've lived through trials and tribulations. You have heard our request, as we offer our prayers to you. We pray for the sick, the lonely, the tired, the hungry, the weak, and those who are troubled. Be with those who have suffered great loss due to storms and disasters, reassure them that they will never be alone. We pray for wisdom that we may demonstrate compassion & understanding. We pray for courage so that we may live out our faith giving witness that you are the Messiah. We pray for the will to take up the cross and follow you wherever it may lead. We pray for healing of those we've mentioned and those request that are too private to share. And, we pray for guidance for those who are making decisions for our country & community. And now we pray as you taught us. Our Father...

2 Samuel 6:12-17 New International Standard (NIV)

In our scripture this morning, we read about how King David danced before the Lord as they carried the Ark of the Covenant. Now, I have to admit that for a few seasons, I enjoyed watching "Dancing with the Stars". You see, Pastor Terri will tell you, under no uncertain terms that dancing is not one of assets as I have two left feet. But you see, that was part of the reason that I enjoyed watching others that CAN dance, I CAN NOT Dance!!

As we start this morning, here's a little of background into the Significance of the Ark of the Covenant & then you could understand why David was so happy. The Ark was the first thing God asked Moses to build. The Ark was small box 4 ft X2 ft wide & 2 ft deep made of incorruptible wood overlaid w/ pure gold

* **Contents of the ark:**

- a golden pot of manna or daily bread,
- stone tablets of the 10 commandments,
- Aaron's rod that was budded (once dead & alive again)

* **Purpose of the Ark:**

- To give power to those who possessed it. Ark was a meeting place for God & His people. The Ark was God's sanctuary. The design of the Ark was given by God to Moses. Ark was representative of the Lord Jesus Christ

Initially, in bringing the Ark back to the people David allowed his enthusiasm to run away with him and his first effort ended in tragedy. His motive was good, but his method was wrong. There was great celebration in bringing the ark back, but the man that tried to steady the Ark the first time as it crossed some rough road was struck dead. So, the moral of that story is **"There's a right way & wrong way to handle the power of God"**

So, when David realized that his way was not God's way & discovered with his changed attitude things turned out remarkably better. So, when the Ark came into Jerusalem the town went into a frenzy of Worship & Celebration because they knew the power of God was back in their presence again. And, David danced. Two of our passages today mention dancing: **Mark 6:14-29 and 2 Samuel 6:1-5 & 12-19**, so the Lord led me to that being the focal point of this message. David danced before the Lord as the ark of God was being brought to Jerusalem. And, the daughter of Herodias danced before her stepfather Herod

and his dinner guest. Most people like to dance sometimes, so it never ceases to amaze me with few exceptions we never dance in church, particularly in the United Methodist Church, and it is biblical to dance before the Lord with joy.

So, as we turn to this morning's text, we find that King David is not only passionate in song but he is a passionate dancer as well. **Verse 14 in II Samuel 6** says David danced before the Lord with all his might. Not only is David dancing with passion he is dancing out of his clothes. He dances until he is down to his underwear. The Bible says David danced out of his fine linen clothes until he was only girded with a linen ephod. David and most of Israel was excited because the ark of the LORD had finally been brought home to Jerusalem. The ark of the LORD was significant because it represented the very presence of God on earth.

The ark of the Lord had been away from the heart of Israel for twenty years. That is a long time to be in a spiritual drought. Twenty years is a long time to have the presence of the LORD away from your faith community. Strange things happen to your leaders and the people when God's presence is not felt. Just ask King Saul and he will tell you that when you don't have God to guide you, you will go left when you were supposed to go right. When God's not around you will lose patience and you will lose focus. When you don't feel God's presence you begin to fear the people more than you fear God and you will make bad decisions. When God is no longer in your camp you will lose battles that you use to win with little to no effort.

David a man after God's own heart knew the value of the ark of the LORD. David knew the value of God's presence. So shortly after David becomes King, he goes to get the ark of the LORD and as he leads the processional of Israelites into Jerusalem he dances passionately as they have a Holy Ghost party!

As I stated, I enjoyed seasons of Dancing with the Stars, so I'd like to make several points using some thoughts on dancing.

- **Point #1 - Is choose the right dance partner!**

David may have chosen some inappropriate dance partners later on in his life but at this point in his life he chose the best dance partner you could ever choose. David danced before the ark of God. David was dancing in the presence of Almighty God. God was his dance partner! Near the end of chapter 6 of II Samuel, David rebuked his wife Micah when she criticized him for dancing all the way down to his underwear in front of slave girls. He told her it was before the LORD that I danced! I will celebrate before the LORD!

- **Point #2** - When Pastor Terri was a child her granddad used to say in response to several things, **"Darlin, you need to dance with the one who 'brung ya'"** In his world that meant staying in your marriage, being loyal to your country or a longstanding employee or friend. So, God created you & gave you the chance at eternal life through the sacrifice of His son. Shouldn't you be loyal & praise His name. 2 praise songs remind me of this **"Oh, Victory in Jesus"**- *"He sought you & bought you with His redeeming blood"* by Eugene Bartlett 1939 and the Casting Crown's song, **"Praise You with the Dance"** - *"I'll sing glory halleluiah & lift your name on high & sing Holy cause you're worthy, I'll praise you with the dance..."*

- **Point #3 - The closer you dance with someone make sure they are Christ centered.** King Herod, on the other hand is no King David. Herod married Herodias his

brother's wife and, in our text, today we find in Mark 6 that he is so enamored, he is so pleased with his stepdaughter's dance that he promises to give her anything up to half his kingdom. Well, his stepdaughter does not ask for money, she does not ask for land or even power in King Herod's court. After consulting with her mother, she asks for the very head of John the Baptist on a plate because Herodias had a grudge against John and wanted to kill him.

King Herod did not like John the Baptist but at least he had the good sense to fear doing him any harm. The Bible says King Herod gave orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. Because John the Baptist had been saying to King Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herod feared John and protected him, because he considered him to be a righteous and holy man. So even though he had put John the Baptist in prison he refused to execute him because he knew John the Baptist was a prophet. Somewhere along the way King Herod had learned the scripture that says touch not my anointed and do my prophet no harm. But he forgot that valuable lesson when he was mesmerized by the dancing of the daughter of Herodias. King Herod lost his mind and was led astray when he began to dance to close with someone who was not Christ centered. It took me till I was in my 40's to realize this. When I was in my teens & twenties, I'd date people who weren't Christ centered & figured I could convince them to come to God's team. After spending about 15 years in the "Methodist Convent" I decided things would go better if we built the spiritual foundation first.

- **Point #4 – Give God/your dance partner priority over possessions.** *Don't need the best dance costume or tap shoe, He will equip you. You only need to bring your staff (walking stick) to follow Jesus.* Proverbs 3:9 Honor the Lord w/your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase – first fruits defined as **"first, beginning, best, chief"** **Food bank example.** "Sorry It was an expensive trip to Wal-Mart this week, I've got nothing for ya God" Or "I'm too tired from my paid work to do church work." Make best efforts for your partner-To partner w/God.

- **Point #5** - My final point is **Let the Lord Lead.** If you are dancing intimately with someone and both of you are trying to lead there will be confusion, there will be unnecessary tension, there will be some pain if both dance partners try to lead. Conversely, if you follow the lead of the Lord while you are dancing you will find joy! You will find peace! You will find love! Because we serve a LORD that will never leave or forsake you! This one is tough for me, too. I need to keep reminding myself-Thy will not My will!

Another reference to dancing comes in Malachi and I think of Malachi as two bookends. At one end is the beautiful statement found in Ch 1 verse 2: **"I have loved you."** On the other end we find a promise in verse 2 of chapter 4: **"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall."** The prophecy of Malachi begins with God's love in the present and ends with God's promise in the future. And everything in between is God's program to get us from here to there. Again, if we let God lead & follow his plan, great things will come that are worth dancing about!

As part of His program for our spiritual progress, God longs for us to give Him our best and we need to **Embrace an authentic faith.** In Malachi -What we see right away in verse 6 of chapter 1 is that there are two sides to the Father's love. One side is tender and the other a bit tougher. He is relational in His giving, *and* He is resplendent in His glory, and as such, we must honor Him: **"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a**

father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD Almighty...” John Piper argues that we must hold these truths in tension. We should have a childlike security in His care for us *and* we should have a childlike reverence for His authority. To “honor” someone is to consider them weighty or worthy. Genesis 4 records what happened when two brothers, Cain and Abel made sacrifices to God. Cain was a farmer and brought the first fruits of his harvest and Abel was a shepherd who brought the first of his flock as an offering. For some reason, God accepts Abel’s offering and rejects Cain’s. People have suggested all sorts of reasons why God would do this but it has nothing to do with the offering and everything to do with the attitude of the one making the offering. 1 John 3:12 tells us that the reason Cain’s sacrifice was not accepted was that he had a heart full of evil. Hebrews 11:4 says that the reason Abel’s offering was accepted was that he had a heart of faith. God looked at the sacrificer and then at the sacrifice. He looked at the offeror and then the offering. He was looking for authentic adoration; not a sacrifice that was in essence a spiritual sham.

If we want to give God our best, we must first embrace authenticity. We must stop just going through the motions, refuse to play church, and do whatever it takes to keep the fire burning. There are some individuals that will dishonor God and count Him contemptible when we try to live on what Charles Swindoll calls, “**three dollars’ worth of God.**” He writes, **“Some of us would love to buy three dollars’ worth of God. Not enough to explode our soul or disturb our sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine...I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I want three dollars’ worth of God, please.”**

In closing, everyone works hard to be able to take the Mirror Ball trophy home. **1 Corinthians 9:24-25** ²⁴***Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.*** ²⁵***Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*** This morning I’m asking you to allow God to lead us here as we work smarter and dance with great enthusiasm in the streets as we celebrate that God is here.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, you have come into the world to be our salvation and to draw us into yourself. We remember that in you, we live, move, breathe and have our being. Help us to be a community of love and concern and the people you have called us to be. In your Son, Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

Benediction: Wise and all-knowing God, may we receive the Holy Scriptures, feed the flock of Christ, defend them in God’s truth and be a faithful steward of Christ’s Word as we walk this week. Go in peace, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen