



Today we continue our journey through the Life of David. He was a complex man after God's own heart, and this morning we will see one of the most interesting, maybe even humorous, events from his life. We are in 2 Samuel 6:1-16. At this point, since our last message, King Saul has died, and David has now ascended to the throne. I want to read the passage in a few different sections and answer some questions that arise for in them. Then I want to spend a few minutes considering what it really means to worship God. I believe that is the main point for us to take away from this passage. What is worship? What does it look like to worship from the heart? So, let's dive into today's passage, 2 Samuel 6. We'll read the **first five verses** to start with....

So, **David is leading a procession to take the ark of God, or often called the ark of the covenant, from Baalah to Jerusalem.** David has established Jerusalem as the home base from which he will rule. The ark was an ornately decorated and carefully constructed box, described in detail in its construction back in Exodus 25. **(Photo)** It was the place where they believed God "dwelled" and met them. (More on that later.) It was about 27" high, 27" wide, and about 45" long. This photo of the ark is not actually the ark. In spite of Indiana Jones' efforts to find the lost ark, it is still lost 😊 – it has been for about 2500 years or so. It was designed to be carried suspended between two poles, that would be held at either end by men as they walked along.



Later, once the temple is built by David's son, King Solomon, the ark of the covenant resides in the innermost room of the temple, usually called the "Holy of Holies." Until then it actually resided in different temporary locations, even in some private residences (as we read about today). So, you'd have company over for dinner, they'd see this box in the corner of your living room, and they'd be like, "What's in the box?" And you'd say, "Oh, you know...God." And of course, if you're the one who lost the box and God is really in it, that's a pretty big weight to be bearing, you know? Who wants to lose God?

Now: **We would say, and they would agree, that God can't *really* be kept in a box.** They didn't believe that God was contained in the ark, and that God has now been missing for 2500 years. But this was their holy and physical representation of the presence of God. I suppose the closest we come to this today is communion elements. We believe God's presence is in them, they're not just a symbol of God, but it's not like when we consume the elements that God vanishes because he's in them and only in them. God is present in the elements in a spiritual way, but he's also in eternity on his throne, and also throughout the earth in his own unique way through the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, God cannot be contained in a box, but this ark is holy and to be treated with absolute reverence. **It's the place where heaven meets earth, where God is "enthroned" before them.** The lid was actually called the "mercy seat" where God's presence would "sit". There were specific details back in Exodus 25 not only about the ark itself, but as I mentioned a moment ago, even how to carry it – suspended on a couple of poles that would be carried along horizontal to the ground. The way it's described being carried here was not following the directives. It's being rolled along on a cart, which was a method they got from the Philistines (see 1 Samuel 6). So, it's being mishandled and carried casually rather than reverently. Let's keep reading, **verses 6-8.**

So, this judgment comes upon Uzzah, and it feels a bit extreme to us. But it's not just about him, even though he bore the punishment. **It's not just about a particular moment, but about how all of them were casual toward the ark, and in essence, casual toward God and his presence with them.** This is the holiest of holy objects, where the holy presence of God met them and their worship was centered around.

His punishment is also a reminder that sin against God is just that (sin against God!), and how we *feel* about sin and how we *feel* about any consequences of sin is really kind of irrelevant. Sure, we're created in God's image...but we have completely and totally fallen short of his glory. God is God, he's the one on the throne. He's the one who sets the standards. He's

the one who is holy and pure...and when we sin, we sin against him. It's a big deal. **So, to be in God's presence (whether with the ark, here in church, out in nature) is an act of grace.** I mean, we are sinful beings, and we deserve Uzzah's penalty ourselves. They *all* did, as well. And we do die physically, but we live spiritually eternally through Jesus. We're fortunate that Jesus has taken that judgment upon himself. When we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus for our forgiveness, he absorbs what we deserve. That is mercy. And we receive the blessing of eternal life because of his resurrection, which is all grace. We get to be in God's presence. That is grace. So Uzzah's death is a wake-up call to them, and us, about the holiness of God and our sin against him, and what it means to walk in relationship with him. How we feel about sin doesn't matter; what matters is how God defines it. Let's continue reading: **verses 9-16.**

So, the ark is on the way to Jerusalem (The City of David) but the journey takes a hiatus for a few months because of Uzzah's death – David doesn't want it anywhere near him in Jerusalem. Instead, he leaves it with Obed-Edom the Gittite. He did what King David didn't want to do: take the ark after Uzzah died for mistreating it. He's a hero. I know David is a popular name, but if you're expecting a baby boy – Obed-Edom the Gittite is worthy of consideration as well. Later on, he serves as a gatekeeper and worship leader in the temple. In today's text it says that he's blessed by God for housing the ark. We don't know what that looked like, but he steps out in faith and takes the ark into his home, and God blesses him for it.

Then David goes and gets it again. And this time, they've learned their lesson: **No more new-fangled, ark-carrying carts...they're going old-school, back to the way it was supposed to be done according to Scripture, and they carry it suspended between two poles.** I know the text doesn't go into detail about how they carried it, but it's clear that it is no longer rolling on a cart; the text says they are *carrying* it. They took those three months and evaluated everything, went back and read Exodus 25, learned from their mistakes, and got back to the Lord's ways.

The fact they went 6 steps and then rested to praise God probably is not super significant. I mean, some people read into it a symbol of the 6 days of

creation followed by a day of rest. Maybe. But it's also not like they followed this pattern all the way to Jerusalem. Probably it was simply that they took those first steps cautiously, in holy fear of the Lord because of Uzzah's death a few months earlier (first step...everyone still with us? Let's take another!) – and after 6 steps they felt like, “ok, we're in the clear...no one died...let's worship God.” So that's what they did.

Then they continue carrying it along, and **David is leading a worship parade, essentially, and he's doing so in his most unkingly clothes – his linen ephod.** It's not quite equivalent to dancing in his underwear...and he was definitely not, as some people seem to understand, dancing naked before the Lord as he led this parade. That seems to come from verse 20 where Michal, his wife – though she's identified as “Saul's daughter” which is probably intended as a regal contrast to David's child-like dancing even though he's the king now...as well as connecting her to Saul's outsized concerns with how others think about him, so she's got the same issues – she says in verse 20 (sarcasm in the first phrase), **“How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!” (2 Samuel 6:20).**

He didn't “uncover” himself to the point of nudity, however. He stripped down to his “linen ephod” – which is not real helpful for us to figure out what he was wearing. How many of you have one of those in your closet? No one, just what I figured. But essentially, it was a light, sleeveless undergarment that was frequently worn under a robe – like a king's robe, for instance – but ephods were also what priests wore for their priestly duties. It was about not looking prestigious. Priests didn't go before the people in leading worship in hoity-toity clothes. It was a physical way of representing their humility before the Lord as they led God's people in worship.

And that is why David wore it here. He's not a priest, but here he wears priestly garments as he leads the people carrying the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. **By taking off all his kingly garb, it's like he's saying: “The real King isn't me, but is in the ark/represented by the ark...God and his presence is what matters...He's the real King and that's the real**

throne. My clothes are nothing compared to the regalia of the Lord. This isn't about me, it's about God." That's what he's demonstrating as he strips down to his linen ephod.

Now, as I mentioned, Michal, his wife, chastises him for his behavior, that it's unkingly. Modesty really wasn't the issue. She's all concerned about his status and image. Remember, that's what King Saul, her dad, was concerned about. David doesn't care about that. He says to her, in essence, that he's king, he can dress how he what he wants, and he wants to give God all the glory...and the people will still respect him as king. It's not about his own throne or his own position or power or whatever...he's there with the people praising God...literally dancing with them because of the joy they have at the ark of the covenant coming home.

And so, when you put all of this together, we see in this chapter what the heart of worship is all about. **True worship flows from a heart centered on God's holiness, presence, and grace, not human pride or performance.** Human pride and performance crept into how they carried the ark. They didn't carry it God's ways, they carried it in the ways of the Philistines. They disregarded God's word – and that's dangerous. God's word is instructive for us in our worship – keeping in mind that worship is more than singing, and more than an hour or so on Sundays. We are called to worship all the time.

Romans 12:1 (New Testament) says, **"...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."** The key phrase is "living sacrifice." "All of you," while you are still living, is presented to God in worship. You don't hit the pause button on life to worship, you don't worship for just a set time, or when you're in a set place like a church building...it's all the time. So, God's word tells us this, and we don't want to disregard God's word. They already did that earlier in this passage, and consequences came. We want to honor God and worship God from the heart.

So, worship is centered in God's very being – his holiness, his presence, and his grace – and is informed by his word as we worship him all the time. **We also see that worship is joyful: David danced before the Lord.** The people

are praising God as they come into and go through Jerusalem. This is more Pentecostal sounding than Presbyterian, if you ask me. I love our Presbyterian heritage and the robust, Biblical theology. Ours is a faith not rooted in feelings, or having the right atmosphere through lights and fog machines and hyping up the crowd...but rather, we are rooted in God's word and renewed by the transformation of our mind as Paul writes in Romans. But sometimes our worship – on Sundays or maybe in our personal lives as well – is stuck in our heads and could use a little more joy of the heart. Maybe it's our pride that gets in the way, like Michal's response to David...we think we need to be dignified, because emotion isn't really dignified. Have you ever watched a video of yourself a few weeks or months or years after a time when you expressed unbridled emotion? I mean, you watch something like that, and you might think, "Oh, that's so embarrassing to watch."

But maybe we need joy to be expressed more in our worship – on Sundays and the rest of the week, too. Maybe we need to cut loose a bit, and not worry about what others think...because when we worry about that, that's pride talking to us. Maybe we need a little more emotion. A little more dancing. A little more cheering. A little more spontaneous "hallelujah and amen." Amen? 😊 A little more peeling off the outer layers and letting the inner spirit – where God has transformed us – to burst forth in worship. David shows all heart here. He just surrenders himself to the Lord in worship – not as a king dressed in proper clothes, but as a man created in the image of God, dressed in his ephod. He's not concerned with what others think. He just wants to praise the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. I love it, and it's filled with incredible joy.

You put it all together, and this is the heart of worship. **True worship flows from a heart centered on God's holiness, presence, and grace - not human pride or performance.** David show us this here. I hope you are able to worship God in that way – not just here on Sundays, but all the time. It doesn't have to be rude and imposing itself on others, but our worship, our relationship with God, *can* be more expressive. And in the end, that's attractive. People are drawn to others who are confident in what they believe. Real worship is attractive...real faith is attractive. We do it first for the sake

of our relationship with God and pleasing him...but we are called to shine the light of Jesus so that others would be drawn to it and glorify their father in heaven...and so second, our worship can do that, as well. Let's worship God with joy-filled hearts that are centered on God's holiness, presence, and grace. That's what we want to share with others so that we would lead people toward Jesus where we live, work and play. And the fact is, what Jesus has done on the cross is worth every ounce of joyful worship we have to give. So, let's worship him, from the heart. Let's pray...Amen.