

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(January 28, 2024)

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: God's Life-Transforming Work**

(Studies in the life of David)

## **The Worshipping King**

(2 Samuel 6)

Study #4

### **Introduction: Legacy...**

Everyone leaves a legacy. We all leave behind something that friends and family will think of when they think of us after we're gone.

Everyone here today is a layered and complex person. Those who know you well will remember lots of things about you. But those who only knew you from a distance will remember one thing. Your legacy will be one thing.

Leaders on the world stage are also layered and complex people. But when we remember leaders from the past, we typically remember them for one thing.

- Abraham Lincoln had the guts to abolish American slavery.
- Winston Churchill galvanized the British people during the dark days of World War II, urging them to *"Never, never, never give in."*
- Richard Nixon resigned from the US presidency in disgrace.

If I were to mention other leaders - George Washington, Adolf Hitler, Margaret Thatcher, Lyndon Johnson - unless you had studied them in some detail, you'd likely remember one thing about them.

The characters of the Bible have also left legacies. Most of them are of the "one thing" variety.

- Abraham was the father of the faithful.
- Hannah brought her son, Samuel, to be dedicated to God.
- Jezebel was a wicked queen.
- Jonah was a disobedient prophet.
- Solomon was wise.
- Judas betrayed Jesus.

And then there was David.

Did you know that aside from Jesus, there is more space given to David in the Bible than is given to any other character?

He was a strong military leader who defeated Israel's enemies. And he was a gifted political leader who consolidated the twelve tribes of Israel into one mighty nation.

He reigned and ruled well for decades. He was a husband and a father. And (spoiler alert) he failed big, as we'll see next Sunday.

But even when it comes to the multi-faceted David, his legacy is one thing. Boil David's legacy down to the bare essential and it is this: David was all about God.

When our attention turns to David, we think about the middle section of our Bibles. We find one hundred and fifty psalms, songs written to and about God. David wrote the majority of them.

David was, first and foremost, a worshiper of God.

This morning, you and I have come together to worship. We call this time we have set aside a "worship service." During this time, we want to become heart-soul-mind-and-strength worshipers of God.

And to grow as worshipers we look to the **[1 Samuel 13:14] man after [God's] own heart** - David - to lead us into worship.<sup>1</sup>  
*Review...*

---

<sup>1</sup> See Acts 7:46; 13:22.

By the time we come to 2 Samuel 6, a lot of water has passed under the bridge in David's life.

King Saul, David's nemesis, is dead. Saul's son, Jonathan (David's best friend), is also dead. The line of kings in the dynasty of Saul stopped at one and David, from the tribe of Judah, began to reign.

He first ruled over the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin from the small town of Hebron.<sup>2</sup> After seven more years the remaining ten tribes asked David to reign over them.<sup>3</sup>

So, David ruled over all of Israel at the ripe old age of thirty. But even with a consolidated reign, all was not well in David's kingdom - at least not from where he sat.

David had never actively sought the throne. But he had always earnestly sought the Lord.

And as he surveyed his kingdom, the fly in the ointment was that the Ark of the Covenant was missing. The absence of the Ark of the Covenant from the capitol city of Jerusalem was a big deal.

*Preview: The Ark of the Covenant*

- A box unlike any other

The Ark was a wooden box. It was a very special box.<sup>4</sup>

At God's command and using His blueprints, Moses the great lawgiver, oversaw the construction of the Ark centuries before David.

The Ark was three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and two feet three inches high. A skilled craftsman named Bezalel built the Ark out of acacia wood. Acacia is a beautiful hardwood.

At each end of the Ark's cover were the likenesses of two angels (cherubim) made of hammered gold, positioned as if they were looking down at the ark. The cover of the Ark was called "the mercy seat."<sup>5</sup>

The Ark was gold-plated inside and out. It stood on four carved footings. Each of these footings had a golden ring attached to it. Into the ring, priests inserted a long pole of gold-plated acacia.

Whenever the Ark was moved from place to place, four priests would place these acacia poles on their shoulders and carry it by the poles. No one was ever to touch the Ark itself.<sup>6</sup>

- A box to be treated with reverence

For centuries, the Ark had been kept in the tabernacle, the tent used for the nation's worship.

The Ark was the single most tangible symbol of God's presence, holiness, judgment, leading, provision, and mercy.<sup>7</sup>

The Ark was critical for the nation's worship. It was present at Israel's every major crossroads from Moses' life forward.<sup>8</sup>

Everyone was to treat the Ark as holy. Even the High Priest was not to approach the Ark except in the prescribed way, or he would be put to death. (Numbers 10:33)

---

<sup>5</sup> On the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the priest would sprinkle the mercy seat with the blood of a sacrificed ox, for the cleansing of Israel from sin.

<sup>6</sup> See Exodus 25:13-14; Numbers 4:15.

<sup>7</sup> The ark held the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, two quarts of manna, and Moses' robe which had budded. The priests placed the Ark in the most isolated spot in the Tabernacle - the Most Holy Place - where the glory of God dwelt.

<sup>8</sup> During the forty years of wilderness wanderings under Moses, the Ark always traveled at the front of the procession. When Israel crossed the Jordan River to possess the land of Canaan, the Levites who carried the Ark waded into the river first. Before the first battle in the Promised Land, against Jericho, the Levites carried the Ark around the city while other Levites blew their horns.

---

<sup>2</sup> As the men of Israel had asked Saul to be their king earlier, so here the men of Hebron ask David to be their king.

<sup>3</sup> This happened after their king, Ish-bosheth, Saul's second son, was killed by two of Saul's former commanders. David put both of these men to death after killing and beheading Ish-bosheth. They had violated his own oath that he would see to the good treatment of Saul's descendants.

<sup>4</sup> Such an ark was unique in the Ancient Near East. (scholar Kenneth Kitchen)

But when David began to rule as king, the Ark of the Covenant was not in Jerusalem. Here's what had happened to the Ark...

- Not a “magic” box

A few years earlier, when Eli was presiding as a judge over Israel, the Philistines defeated the Jews in battle, and they took the Ark as plunder. (1 Samuel 4-6).

This was such a serious thing that when he heard that the Ark had been taken, Eli fell backward and died and his daughter-in-law died in childbirth, naming her son Ichabod (the glory has departed).

Obviously, to lose the Ark was a terrible loss.

But the Ark didn't benefit the Philistines like they thought it would. They had believed that the Ark was a magic instrument, and that if they had the Ark, they could control God.

They had nothing but trouble for the entire seven months that the Ark was with them.

They had stolen the Ark, so the LORD caused the statues of their gods to fall over. He afflicted the Philistines with disease.<sup>9</sup>

It wasn't long before the Philistines were eager to get rid of the Ark. They loaded it up on an oxcart and sent it packing to one of the cities of Israel, where it stayed for twenty years.

During all that time, Saul was Israel's king. Saul neglected the Ark because God's presence didn't mean that much to him.<sup>10</sup>

But now David is king. And David wants that Ark, the visible evidence of God's presence, with Him in Jerusalem.

The story of the return of the Ark to Jerusalem begins at the beginning of 2 Samuel 6.

### **They Did It Their Way (6:1-11)**

#### **Everybody's “In” on Ark Transport (vv. 1-4)**

David took thirty thousand soldiers with him to the city where the Ark was being stored (Kiriath-jearim; about five miles away from Jerusalem) to fetch the Ark.

They went *[2]...to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of armies who is enthroned above the cherubim.*

They loaded the Ark on a brand new oxcart to carry it to the tabernacle in Jerusalem. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of the priest, Abinadab, were walking alongside and ahead of the Ark.

This is super exciting. The Ark is returning to Jerusalem! And King David put on a musical extravaganza to welcome the Ark home.

#### **Everybody's Really Excited! (v. 5)**

*[5] Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord with all kinds of instruments made of juniper wood, and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.*

This was a red-letter day in the life of the nation. Everybody was overjoyed to see the Ark making its way toward Jerusalem.

However, a problem seed had been sown on this happy day - and we're about to see a bitter harvest.

#### **Uzzah's Irreverent Touch (vv. 6-7)**

*[6] But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it,*

<sup>9</sup> Some translations of the Bible refer to the physical affliction as hemorrhoids.

<sup>10</sup> Even Samuel stressed direct repentance toward God rather than emphasizing the Ark, but not for the same reason Saul did. The nation had come to view the Ark as superstitiously as the Philistines did, thinking that the Ark was “God in a box.”

***because the oxen nearly overturned it. [7] And the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.***

How was it irreverent for Uzzah, the son of the priest, to have tried to keep the Ark from falling to the ground?

Wrong question. The problem concerned the whole Ark Transport Project.

Remember that God told the priests (Numbers 4) how the Ark was to be transported from place to place.

Long, strong acacia poles were to be placed through rings at the four corners of the Ark. The poles were then to be placed on the shoulders of four Levites and carried, so that the Ark would never be touched by human hands.

So, where did the Jews ever get the idea to carry the Ark on an oxcart? Easy. That's what the Philistines had done. The Jews were just copying neighbors.

But God had a certain way for His Ark to be carried. It was reverent to do it *only* in the prescribed manner. Uzzah, a Levite, knew better than to load the Ark on to an oxcart.

What he did reflected an "*any old way to approach God is OK*" mindset. And so, acting contrary to God's explicit instructions, Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark, and died by God's hand.

Now, listen to David's response to all of this.

### **David's ANGER and FEAR (vv. 8-9)**

***[8] Then David became angry because of the Lord's outburst against Uzzah, and that place has been called Perez-uzzah to this day.***

David was angry.

And he may have been angry at God for having killed Uzzah, angry at Uzzah for having touched the ark, and angry at himself for not having given proper oversight to the Ark Transport Project.

Anger flashes for all of us, and it flashes suddenly. It is the instinctive reaction to plans that go south. We can't shut off an emotional reaction to something that is disturbing to us.

But we can allow anger to morph into something redemptive. That's what David did. David's anger morphed into fear.

***[9] So David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"***<sup>11</sup>

This is David growing in his reverence for God. Among the basic thoughts behind "***the fear of the LORD***" is that when God says to do something a certain way, that is the way to do it.

And this story makes its way into Scripture to warn us.

Yes, of course, God is personal and gracious and loving. But God is also holy.

Uzzah stands as the patron saint of those who embrace a way of doing things without regard to who God. Uzzah warns us against using technology (like an oxcart) that may violate what God commands.

I'm not referring to the dangers of social media and texting, but to any technology - any "how-to" - that gets in the way of personally dealing with God.

A well-designed oxcart is undeniably more efficient for Ark transport than four slow-footed Levites. But the oxcart is also impersonal.

It's what you would use to transport hay or furniture or farm implements. Not the Ark of God.

---

<sup>11</sup> This is the fear of the Lord. David's son, Solomon, tells us, [*Proverbs 9:10*] ***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.***

So, we note this:

When we deal with God, we are dealing with a Being who is personal, so we must never treat Him impersonally. And He is holy so He must be approached with reverence.

Now, following Uzzah's death, David left the Ark at the home of a man named Obed-edom for three months.<sup>12</sup>

When those three months ended, David made plans, again, to bring the Ark home to Jerusalem.

He re-read his instruction manual for Ark transport (**THE BIBLE!**) and prepared to get it moved.

The first order of business was to recruit four strong Levites to carry it. With that done, it's time for an Ark parade!

### **Read and Follow Directions (6:13-19)**

#### **Carried, not Carted (v. 13)**

***[13] And so it was, that when those carrying the ark of the Lord marched six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened steer.***

King David was at the head of the parade. He was leading in the sacrificing, and in the service of worship.

And with the Ark coming home to Jerusalem, David was also the lead celebrator.

#### **King David Dances (v. 14)**

***[14] And David was dancing before the Lord with all his strength, and David was wearing a linen ephod.***

This was no solemn procession. I, who am not a dancer, am intrigued by the descriptions of David's dancing.

Don't look at this as a staged dance. This isn't choreographed, *a la* "Dancing with the Stars." This is an intense, spontaneous, leaping, jumping, running-alongside-the-Ark dance!

The defining mark of this dance is un-self-consciousness. That may be the mark of all good dancing. But the Bible tells us here that he danced with all his strength. He held nothing back.

For David, the entrance of the Ark into Jerusalem was a time to - in the language of the athlete - leave it all on the court.

I don't know what it looks like when you "leave it all on the court" - in basketball, at work, or in worship. And I'm not out to make anybody feel bad about how they do or don't express spiritual passion.

In fact, in the phrase "***dancing before the Lord with all his strength***" I am more impressed with the words "***with all his strength***" than I am with the word "***dancing.***" (Sure, that may very well be because of my lack of dance-ability)

Outward expressions of zeal will vary from person to person. Someone's lack of outward expression is not necessarily evidence of a lack of passion. Standing stock-still is not always a sign of godly self-control.

Outward exuberance is not necessarily a sign of genuine spiritual passion. But we shouldn't assume that the dancer is just showing off, either.

It is what is going on in the heart that matters. Sometimes, what is going on in the heart will bubble up through the face and eyes, through the hands, and even through the feet.

In David's dance, all of his energy was released for worship. Nor is this just a one-man show.

#### **All Israel Worships! (v. 15)**

<sup>12</sup> Evidently, Obed-edom was of a priestly family, explaining why David felt comfortable leaving the Ark there for a time.

***[15] So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with joyful shouting and the sound of the trumpet.***

Everyone was joining in the celebration, shouting at the tops of their lungs, with the accompanying trumpets blasting away.<sup>13</sup>

So, the story about Uzzah posts a worship warning. Align your worship with what you know of the holiness of God.

The parade tells us that when you are at worship there is no need for timidity or caution. You are invited to abandon yourself to the worship of a God who is both holy and personal!

Picture the scene.

Uzzah is walking alongside the Ark as it was carried on the oxcart. He is so concerned. He's afraid that the Ark is going to drop to the ground? He's got to take care of God.

Now watch David dance. He's not concerned at all. He's too wrapped up in worship to be cautious.

But David dancing IS David fearing the Lord! He knows that his God is not Someone that he needs to protect. He also knows that his God is not Someone he can handle.

He's content to deal with God as God is.

Today we worship.

And whether you yell and scream, sweat great drops of blood, dance with all your strength, lift your hands, bend the knee, stand stock still at reverent attention, drop to the ground, or whatever you do - make sure that you express the love that is in you with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength!

Well, finally, the Ark's short journey is over. It is now inside the city and David placed it in the special tent he had built for it.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps they were singing one of the enthronement hymns, such as Psalm 24.

After more sacrifices were offered, David provided a catered meal for the people. With the celebration over, it was time for everybody to go home. Including David.

It was a wonderful day, nearly perfect. And I say "nearly" because of the reception David got when he walked through the front door of his house from his wife, Michal.

### **Meanwhile, back at the Palace... (6:20-23)**

#### **David's Wife, Michal, is NOT Amused (v. 20)**

***[20] But when David returned to bless his own household, Michal the daughter of Saul<sup>15</sup> came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel dignified himself today! For he exposed himself today in the sight of his servants' female slaves as one of the rabble shamelessly exposes himself!"***

Whoa! Where did that come from?

Michal's not at all happy with how David behaved during the Ark parade. She accused him of "***uncovering himself***."<sup>16</sup>

If she was offended, it was because her husband had revealed his heart, not his body, in a public setting. David wasn't naked or near to it. But he had become intimate with the Lord.

And during the parade, Michal had looked out from the window of her house, seen David dancing, and had been disgusted. We read that she ***[16] was contemptuous of him in her heart.***<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The tabernacle was no longer around.

<sup>15</sup> Michal is proving to be a true, no-heart-for-God "***daughter of Saul***." (v. 30) Michal loved the national hero, the exalted king, but she held the man of God in contempt. Perhaps, too, being an idolatress, she had a personal stake in God's Ark not coming into the city.

<sup>16</sup> David hadn't undressed at all. He had on a linen ephod - a tight-fitting, armless, outer vest - usually hip length or slightly longer, worn under a longer robe.

<sup>17</sup> From Eugene Peterson's ***Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work***, p. 53 - "This world is no friend to grace. Seeking for intimacy at any level - with God or with

She was a true daughter of Saul. She wanted her husband, the king, to act with decorum.

Well, David heard what his wife had to say. Now we listen to what David had to say to her.

### David Justifies Over-the-Top Worship (vv. 21-23)

***[21] But David said to Michal, "I was before the Lord, who preferred me to your father and to all his house, to appoint me as ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. So I will celebrate before the Lord! [22] And I might demean myself even more than this and be lowly in my own sight, but with the female slaves of whom you have spoken, with them I am to be held in honor!" [23] And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.***

Michal's contempt provides a stark contrast to the exuberance of David's worship. She is clearly giving us a negative example.

But for what was she rebuked and disciplined?

Michal didn't participate in the parade. She saw David dancing from the house window. She's not rebuked for that absence.

It looks like she wasn't there when the Ark finally made its way to the tent. She probably wasn't present for the city-wide communal meal. And she wasn't called on the carpet for those absences, either.

As far as we can tell, Michal didn't worship at all. She isn't even rebuked for that.

---

persons - is not a venture that gets the support of many people. Intimacy is not good for business. It is inefficient. If love for God can be reduced to a ritualized hour of worship, if love of another can be reduced to an act of sexual intercourse, then routines are simple and the world can be run efficiently. But, if we will not settle for the reduction of love to lust and of faith to ritual, and run through the streets asking for more, we will most certainly disturb the peace and be told to behave ourselves and go back to the homes and churches where we belong."

What prompted the rebuke, David's rejection, and God's discipline was her ridicule of the genuine worship of someone else.

In the Bible we read about people lifting up hands, bending the knee, lying flat on the ground, and, here, dancing in worship.

These are all legitimate expressions of worship, but none of them are commanded and none of them are a litmus test of worship.

Over in Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 14) we are warned to not judge each other in matters where the Bible doesn't give a *"Thus saith the Lord!"*

Paul was writing about things like eating meat sacrificed to idols, drinking wine, and observing special days.<sup>18</sup>

I think we could just as easily apply what he says to judging expressions of worship.

So, here is my contextualized rendition of Romans 14, with respect to worship.

*"Let not the one who dances judge him who does not dance. And let not him who does not dance view with contempt the one who dances. One man raises his hands to the Lord. Another bows low in worship. One woman silently mouths her prayers, while another sings with exuberance at the top of her lungs. To their own Master each one stands or falls. And stand they will, for the Lord is able to make them stand."*

### Conclusion:

In 2 Samuel 6, we see David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. It's a great story. But there's more going on than Ark transport. The Ark's journey is the crust, but the core of the whole story is worship.

---

<sup>18</sup> *[Romans 14:4] Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he either stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

First, David's desire to have the Ark in Jerusalem shows his heart for God. His kingdom was not complete without the Ark because nothing mattered to him more than the presence of God.

With the Ark in place, David could confidently reign, because what he wanted most in life was not a kingdom. He wanted God.

Substitutes for God surround us. Money, food, drink, sex, family, career. All good things, in their place. But they don't satisfy. They aren't what we most want or need. We want and we need God.

So, thank you, David, for modeling a hunger for God. It is to God that we now turn. We turn to Him in faith. We give Him our worship.

Second, Uzzah's part in the story tells us that it just won't do to approach God in *"any ol' way."*

Whenever we deal with God, we are to remember that He is personal. He is holy.

To worship God right means that we treat Him with reverence.<sup>19</sup> To worship God right means that we never reduce our interactions with Him to an impersonal, rote routine.

Third, watching David dance touches something inside us. Zit moves us. He danced ***"with all his strength."*** And we want to join in worshiping God with all our strength, just like he did.

No, there is nothing in the text that commands us to dance. But if the story tells us anything, it tells us that God is calling us to worship Him with all our strength.

Our service of worship is not restricted to Sunday morning. All of life is worship.

So, as we sing, as we love our family and friends, as we work, as we go to school - in everything we do! - let us worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with all our strength.

---

<sup>19</sup> See Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 for powerful words about approaching God reverently.