

October 9, 2016  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: *The Life of David*  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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**DON'T LET YOUR GOOD LOOK LIKE EVIL**  
**2 Samuel 6:12-23**

We know that God is the sovereign ruler of the entire universe. The extent of His creation boggles human wisdom and cannot be comprehended. We know that He is in all places in His creation at the same time and cannot be confined to one place on earth. Solomon grappled with this truth when he dedicated the temple to God. *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27).*

Yet, this incomprehensible, ever-present God, who knows all things at all times, condescended to make His presence known to His special chosen people Israel. When He delivered His nation from Egypt, God instructed Moses to build the special ark where He would meet with His people in the work of the High Priest at the mercy seat that covered the ark. Thus, the ark became known as the “ark of God.” It was a physical symbol of God’s presence with His people.

Because the ark represented God’s presence, He required that it be treated uniquely. Because God is holy, separated from sin and from the ordinary or mundane, the treatment of His symbol must indicate that holiness. Therefore, it was to be transported only by the members of one specific family, the Koathites, who were descendants of Levi, a branch of the Levites. They were to carry the ark on poles so that no human would touch it. The ark was to be covered with animal skins. All of this declared plainly to the people that God is holy.

David forgot about those rules or chose to ignore them when he first attempted to take the ark to Jerusalem. It was a costly mistake in which God killed Uzzah for treating His symbol as a common piece

of furniture. David learned his lesson. After a few months he decided again to move the ark to Jerusalem. This time he did it correctly, and the move was accompanied by great rejoicing.

This Old Testament picture should remind us that we, who trust God and desire to serve Him, trust and serve the same God whose presence was represented by the ark. Too bad we don’t have something like that today, right? Actually, we have a better representation of God’s presence. Jesus, God the Son, our Savior taught us, *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20).* That being true, we who are gathered in this place today in the name of Jesus are just like the ark. We, the Body of Christ, are the representation of God’s presence. Paul taught Christians in the local church at Corinth, *“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).* Our meeting today represents the presence of God.

Because that is true, everything we do, think, and say here should reflect the truth that God is the center of attention. Our music should exalt Him. Our prayers should be centered on Him. The preaching should point to Him and draw us to Him. Our fellowship will reflect the result of His work in us for His glory.

We must at the same time acknowledge that there is a certain danger in us taking the focus from God and robbing Him of His glory even in “worship.” It is easy for us, who are so in tune with our flesh, to send conflicting signals. To that end, it is common for religious folks to gather in settings like this where they say things about God, but all the focus is on programs, or individuals, or even manmade creeds. When we send conflicting signals in our worship, we will almost always create conflicts. I think David did that.

**It is Good to Praise the Lord (vv.12-16).**

A cursory reading of this story reminds us that it is possible for some people to praise the Lord with abandon (vv.12-16). King David and the people certainly offered a fitting display of thanksgiving (vv.12-13). At the outset, we might wonder what the king’s motivation was to try again to bring the ark to Jerusalem. *And it was told King David, “The LORD has blessed the household of*

*Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.” So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing (v.12).*

Probably David was not motivated to take the ark of God to Jerusalem simply because God was blessing Obed and his family. Rather, God’s blessing indicated that God was not angry. Therefore, David chose to try again to remove the ark of God to the tent he had prepared. In that setting, we find David and the people rejoicing. A more complete account of this situation is found in 1 Chronicles where we read that *David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy (1 Chronicles 15:16). So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres (1 Chronicles 15:28).* The scene reminds us of a regular worship service.

David’s sacrifice indicated the sincerity of his own heart and of the people. *And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal (v.13).* Notice that the men who bore the ark of God this time were consecrated Levites. Again the account in 1 Chronicles informs us that *David said that no one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, for the LORD had chosen them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister to him forever (1 Chronicles 15:2).* More than that, David also required that the Levites consecrate themselves first (1 Chronicles 15:12). He even admitted that they did it wrong the first time. *“Because you did not carry it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule” (1 Chronicles 15:13).*

At the outset of the journey (which might have been just short of ten miles), the procession stopped to make a sacrifice. This statement does not necessarily mean that they offered a sacrifice every six steps for ten miles. That would have been over 4,000 sacrifices which would have taken about a month to make the journey. When they arrived at the tent David had prepared for the ark, the Levites sacrificed. *And because God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven*

*bulls and seven rams (1 Chronicles 15:26).* Okay, this time they were doing everything right.

Along the way there was quite a display of joy (vv.14-16). David, in particular, displayed all of his emotions. He danced with all his might. *And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod (v.14).* Wow that was wrong! We all know that dancing is not right. Actually, dancing was a part of celebration in Israel’s history long before David’s time. However, it is true that according to the Old Testament record, only the women were involved in dancing at times of celebration. We find that to be the case when Jephthah’s daughter danced in celebration of dad’s victory (Judges 11:34). David had seen the young women dancing to celebrate his victories (1 Samuel 18:6).

In fact, the Old Testament indicates that worship might have involved such dancing on occasion. Miriam and the women at the Red Sea crossing danced (Exodus 15:20). This display was in connection with praising the Lord for deliverance. We could call it worship. Through the psalmists God even commended dancing in connection with worship. *Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! (Psalm 149:3). Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! (Psalm 150:4).*

But because dancing can easily be an expression of emotions (i.e. the flesh), it can get out of hand. For example, at the Golden Calf incident, the people were worshiping with dancing (32:8). But they were worshiping their own creation (the calf) and, therefore, worshiping themselves. It was kind of like a church service in which everyone is hyped up about the band, the lights, the smoke, and the overall loudness, which is all the creation of their own hands.

Our text reveals that David danced with *all his might*. That phrase signifies extreme physical activity as when a warrior fights with all his strength. Apparently, David was so caught up in his joy about God’s ark that he expressed his emotions without any guard or restraint. There is no doubt that he was sincerely celebrating the LORD’s blessing. But his jubilation without restraint might cause a question about whether he was in control or out of control.

Often the issues we grapple with are not clearly right or clearly wrong according to Bible teaching, but are questionable.

Questionable things can cause God's people to convey a confusing message. An example of the problem is found when Paul gave instruction to the church in Corinth in order to bring order to their worship where chaos ensued. Their practice was for anyone and everyone who thought they needed to say something to stand up and speak up. It was utter confusion, not worship. To that end Paul warned that the true prophets were to keep their spirits in subjection (1 Corinthians 14:32). A spirit out of control will cause conflicts. Therefore, even when we are rejoicing in the Lord, it is good to do so in an orderly manner in order not to take the focus away from the Lord and put it on ourselves.

What David wore could also have generated questions. It wasn't that David was clothed sensually, like just an apron or loin cloth. He wore a linen apron over a linen robe. *David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers. And David wore a linen ephod (1 Chronicles 15:27).* So why a question? The linen ephod was the clothing of the priest not the king. That actually might have been appropriate in this case because David was leading the "kingdom of priests" as a priest of God. Had not God told His people through Moses, "*And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6)?*" In a sense, David was serving much like Melchizedek the "king/priest" friend of Abraham who lived in ancient "Salem." However, the text in 1 Chronicles seems to indicate that it was the priests who actually offered the sacrifices.

No doubt David's joyful worship influenced others. *So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn (v.15).* David was not the only one who was shouting and jumping and dancing. Surely everyone in attendance was ecstatic about taking the symbol of God's presence to Jerusalem.

But emotionalism is contagious. We have all been in circumstances in which someone begins to laugh and pretty soon everyone is laughing even though the point was really not that funny. Or in times of sorrow or times of heartfelt joy, someone begins to cry. Suddenly like opening the gates of a dam, everyone's emotions burst forth and all are crying. A most obvious expression of contagious

emotion is found at a ball game where two teams are locked in intense and close battle. The referee makes a bad call and what happens? The place turns into bedlam with boos and shouts and threats—even from the little old lady on the front row! She would never do that at the Ladies' Missionary meeting.

Not everyone was impressed with David's method of worship. *As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart (v.16).* David's wife despised him. To despise is to have contempt for something you count as worthless. Michal concluded that David certainly did not display the high value of a king.

Why wasn't she part of the celebration instead of looking on from a window? Maybe what little we know about her answers that question. We know that she was the daughter of Saul, the previous king, who God displaced with David. She could have reasoned that her father was dead because of David. We also know that she had been associated with teraphim (1 Samuel 19:23), which are idols connected with a false god—an association the true God considered to be an abomination. We know that David had stolen her away from her second husband and added her to his harem probably for political reasons.

In the end, there is little doubt that Michal had an attitude against the king her husband. In a moment, we will consider how a bad attitude like this can be expressed. As a result of her attitude, Michal was obviously not focused on the ark of God. She turned her focus from God to an individual who was "demanding" attention—and it wasn't good.

David would have been the first person to agree that we should worship the Lord in holiness (vv.17-19). He would have been confident that God is pleased with offerings He approves. And so to that end, *they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD (v.17).* We learn here that David had ordered the construction of a special tent to house the ark. We know that the tabernacle was still in Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39). Therefore, it seems a bit odd that David and the people did

not follow God's prescribed plan for housing the ark in the tabernacle.

Nevertheless, David offered sacrifices to the Lord. Again, it seems obvious from the 1 Chronicles account that the Levites did offer the sacrifice. But David was in charge. In a way, on this special occasion David represented the people before God like a priest would do.

The specific offerings focused on a right relationship with God. The burnt offering was the most common sacrifice in the Mosaic sacrificial system. The priests were to offer this offering on the altar each morning and evening. The individual offered this sacrifice as a symbol of expiation of sin. That is what the sacrifice of Christ accomplished for us—the removal of our sin and the guilt that accompanies it. Also, the burnt offering expressed thanksgiving. David offered sacrifices that focused on God's redemptive work and thanksgiving because of it. So too our sacrifices of praise should exalt God because He has forgiven our sins. For that we are very thankful. Each worship service, our praise and thanksgiving for God paying for our sins should not only be obvious but should be central.

The peace offering expressed the assurance of peace with God. The word for the offering is the same as the Hebrew greeting, "Shalom," which simply means "peace." A person could offer a peace offering to celebrate peace with an adversary. But generally a person made this sacrifice as a reminder that he has peace with God. This too is what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross won for us. Our worship is not an attempt to gain peace with God, but a joyous expression of thanksgiving because God already offers us peace through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the conclusion of our worship services should never leave us talking about mundane things like, "Why does the pastor insist on wearing dark suits?" or "I don't think the soloist hit those high notes very well," or "Wow, weren't the musicians impressive today?" or "The pastor told the funniest story I ever heard," or even wondering what the dance team was actually trying to convey. We should always go away thinking, "God is so great to give us salvation through Jesus Christ." "What an amazing God we have!"

God would surely approve of the king blessing the people. *And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace*

*offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house (vv.18-19).* Generally, this part of the story leaves us quite satisfied. We watch David and the Israelites going to their homes glad to have been worshiping God in the retrieval of the ark, the symbol of His presences with His people.

### **It is Not Good to Cause a Conflict (vv.20-23).**

All was not well in Camelot. Michal had a problem (v.20). David discovered the problem when he came to bless his household. *And David returned to bless his household (v.20a).* Like the other Israelite heads of households, David went home to offer a blessing to his household. But his household was too large.

We cannot think about David's household without thinking about his harem. That he served as the priest of his family was a wonderful thing. But why did he think it was necessary to have multiple wives? Offering God's blessing on a dysfunctional family smacks of hypocrisy. What did David say to them? Surely he didn't say, "May the God who created male and female and who established the plan for one man to have one wife shower His blessings on this harem of mine." David, the king who God appointed to express His will for the nation, could at one moment praise God with abandon and the next moment walk into familial chaos that he had created. He was a lot like folks.

The wife was not happy about what she had witnessed that day (v.20b). *But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "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!" (v.20b).* What was her gripe? As we have already mentioned, David was not dressed sensually. He wore a linen robe (1 Chronicles 15:27) and an apron over that. He did not literally uncover himself physically. Rather, Michal's statement alluded to the fact that David did not act in a kingly fashion. Her gripe was that David's boundless praise made him look like a fool.

In a sense, Michal was right. For David to dance and shout with abandon did put him in the class of those vulgar fellows who have no concern for what others may think. It is great for us to be overwhelmed with God's grace and mercy. But even as we express that joy, we must do so in light of God's other instruction: *So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil (Romans 14:16)*. That warning comes in the context of us exercising care not to run roughshod over another believer's weaker conscience. David kind of ran roughshod over a lot of people.

David's response to Michal's accusation was not exemplary (vv.21-23). Essentially he told her, "I'll do whatever I want to do." *And David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will make merry before the LORD. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor."*

It was nice for David to mention the name of Yahweh. No doubt he was sincere in his making merry. But again, *making merry* can be misunderstood because the very word has negative connotations. It is good for us, like David, to see ourselves as contemptible. That simply means to exercise genuine humility before God. But wearing sheep skin, sleeping on a bed of nails, and going about with a sullen look does not necessarily indicate genuine humility.

Part of the problem here is that in spite of his claim to praise God in humility, David's focus was on David's desires. He made it very plain that he would do whatever he chose to do, Michal's opinion notwithstanding. Likewise for us to declare, "I will worship God any way I choose; and if you don't like it, you can take a hike" is not humility. It is gross and uncaring arrogance that does not display the heart of Christ at all.

The result of all of this mess is very sad. We read that Michal was childless. *And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death (v.23)*. On one hand, this statement might indicate God's judgment against Michal and ultimately against the house of Saul as it would have died out. On the other hand, the statement could be interpreted as evidence of David's vengeance against Michal. God does not give us a hint in this story either way. Therefore, it would be

presumptuous for us to demand either interpretation. However, common sense tells us that this would not make for peaceful relations in the harem.

This story reminds us of the wonderful truth that God is incomprehensibly great. That He condescends to make His presence with us is indeed amazing grace. Therefore, we should praise and worship our great God. But we must be careful to always keep God Himself as the focus of our praise. When we call attention to ourselves, we rob God of His glory and will cause conflict with others. Let's not allow our good to be spoken of as evil.