

A Solution For A Fragmented Nation

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[0 : 00] at your point of the year, and we know that you stand at the center of eternity.

Make us in all the limitations of time and space. Grant us to lift up our hearts to worship you, give thanks and praise to you, and to be responsive to your word.

That your word may find expression in all the circumstances of our lives and our relationships. We ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Yesterday, in the course of a discussion, David Short told us that we're all using worship the wrong way.

In case you don't know who David Short is, that's him over there. So what I'm going to try and do is preach a sermon about worship without using the word. And to see if I can get around to the issue that he wants to put before us, which I think is valid, but worship has become so much, as a word, has become so much part of our world that it's difficult to know how to cope with the idea of speaking without using that word because we so often use it incorrectly.

[1 : 38] That's one thing I want to say. The other thing, I mean, another thing I want to say is that this is, you know, we're closing in, I think there's a holiday coming up this week, which is Canada Day.

And perhaps it's wise to think a little bit about Canada. And a sociologist has written a book about Canada, which he calls *Fragmented Gods*.

Very interesting book. And how the whole sort of religious structure of our country is falling to pieces into fragments. And we represent a fragment that is meeting together this morning, trying to wonder how the whole thing could be brought back together into one piece.

And I certainly desire that that should be. And I continue to be impressed that our forefathers chose for the motto of this country, from sea to sea.

And they took that motto from the prophet Zechariah, chapter 9 and verse 10, which said, And he shall have dominion from sea to sea.

[2 : 53] And I can see that a fragmented country could be brought together if indeed he had dominion from sea to sea.

And that dominion would have to come, I think, in terms of the acknowledgement from the hearts of all of us and each of us, that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And he shall have dominion. Well, I give you that story of our fragmented country because David begins chapter, the story of David in chapter 6 of 2 Samuel in page 274, is David as king of a fractured country and what he tried to do with it.

And how he tried to put it together. You will know that there were 12 tribes of Israel.

David was of the tribe of Judah. His predecessor Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin. They were called corporately the children of Israel.

[4 : 08] Israel. And they lived among the Amalekites and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Hevites and on and on they went to all sorts of people among whom they lived.

And it was the purpose of David as their king to bring them together as one. Now, in the time of King Saul, the presence of God was exploited in that God had, from the time of Mount Sinai, led his people through the wilderness and into this promised land.

And the presence of God among his people was that at the center of their encampment was a tent. At the center of the tent was the Ark of the Covenant.

You may find it helpful to discover that one of the great films of the last few years was about this subject, called *The Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

I don't commend it to you for biblical information, but it just is an association which you might have in the back of your mind.

[5 : 27] A long way back, I would suggest. However, it was this Ark of the Covenant which physically and demonstrably represented the presence of the Lord of hosts seated on the cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant, which was the mercy seat, and the Ark contained the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.

And so it was, in a sense, the outward and visible sign of the presence of the Lord among his people.

And David, who had just been made king and was developing as the capital of his kingdom, the city of Jerusalem, the city of David, Zion, knew that the way to bring these people together would be to bring the presence of God into the midst of the city.

And the presence of God symbolized by the Ark, So he built a tent in the middle of the city, and then went down, as we're told in the story, in 2 Samuel chapter 6, to Baal Judah, where the Ark had been left, and he proceeded to bring it up to the city.

And it was a great celebration when they came up to the city. They had a new cart. You can check with Dr. Will Johnson as to who was responsible for transporting the Ark.

[7 : 18] And they brought it up, and all the house of Israel was making merry before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

Note, if you will, that when the passage begins, David gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000, and arose and went with all the people who were with him to bring home the Ark.

So it was a great occasion. 30,000 people were involved in this great procession. And the prayer which we say Sunday after Sunday comes from this great procession.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness and make thy chosen people joyful. That was the concern which underlay this great procession which David put together to bring the Ark back into Jerusalem. And so with all the musical instruments and all the dancing and people celebrating before the Lord with all their might, one of the oxen stumbled.

[8 : 31] Uzzah, the Kohalathite who was nearest to it, reached out and touched the Ark and dropped dead. And God was angry with his people whom he took to be presumptuous.

And the result was that David was angry with God whom he felt was presumptuous. And in that little encounter, you have the story of the hearts of all of us.

Probably God's anger expressed in our lives is the basis of our anger for God and our unwillingness to celebrate before him.

David went home. He left the Ark at the home of Obed-Edom. Went home and said, how can it be possible that God can come to me in my city?

And for three months, that was the way it stayed. Then with this anger between God and David, it's the anger which I think is endemic, I think is the right word, to the whole of our society.

[9 : 54] Because our society, which doesn't believe in God, doesn't like the way that God, which they don't believe in, behaves.

And so that this burning anger is found in all sorts of ways and expressed in all sorts of ways within our society.

And that was the kind of situation that existed for David and the Ark of the Covenant was left. Well, after three months, it was discovered that Obed-Edom, who was a Philistine and lived perhaps 10 miles from Jerusalem, was prospering under the blessing of having the Ark of the Covenant on his property on this hill outside of Jerusalem.

And David decided that if it would bless a Philistine, it would surely bless him. And he went down once again and put together a great procession.

And the great procession proceeded to bring the Ark back into the city of David. And when they had gone six steps, David, a little anxious about what the Lord of hosts might do, stopped the procedure there and an oxen was sacrificed and a fatling was sacrificed and the blood was spilled before the procession went on any further.

[11 : 29] And we're told that having done that, things went very well indeed. David danced before the Lord with all his might and David was girded with a linen ephod.

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn. And the sound of the horn was the shofar which announced the coming of God by its very sound the coming of God into the center of the city which was at the center of the nation and brought the people together in a time of peace and prosperity and God very much blessed the land in that way.

Well, where does such a blessing lie for us? The part of this passage which intrigues me greatly is that David danced before the Lord with all his might.

And that seems a good thing to do. Previously it had said not only was there lots of instruments there but David and all the house of Israel were making Mary making Mary before the Lord with all their might.

And they had all the musicians there too. Well, you see how David was seeking to bring his whole nation together around the presence of God in their midst.

[13:26] You know the aspiration that we have as Canadians that he shall have dominion from sea to sea and that that's the only way that we will ever bring this nation of fragmented gods together if the Lord God of hosts who is seated above the cherubim over the mercy seat if somehow that Lord God of hosts could bring us together and as a people we could make Mary before the Lord dance with all our might with lyre and harp and cymbals and castanets and tambourines and all these things would come together.

Well, that seems legitimate to me. Now I want to start and tell you how I see our country working and how I think we're trying to bring it together.

Currently, there is a jazz festival in Vancouver. We're looking forward to the sea festival and now a month there will be a folk festival.

This morning, if you want to, you can go over to West Vancouver and pay \$18 to run in a long-distance run of some kind.

We provide marches in one of the great countries of the world which used to celebrate Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday. This season of the year is known as Wimbledon Week.

[15:05] An American TV company will pay \$400 million for TV rights of the Olympic Games in Calgary. A boxer who I think has a fight this week will receive \$20 million.

The young golden god of Canada, Wayne Gretzky, will marry a Hollywood star next month. A beautiful thing.

Endless baseball scores are chanted at us all day long on the television and radio. One of the weekly rituals that's established itself in North America is Monday night football.

We have TV channels devoted to sports. The great festivals in our year are the Grey Cup and the Stanley Cup and some people are even in favor of the Lakers winning the NBA.

All this is part of in a sense the story. Massive that I think brilliant coup which some advertising company must have sold to some oil company for which millions of dollars was paid but it was a brilliant advertising coup called was it Follow the Flame or some such thing as that and went through every town and village and city in Canada in which there was a tremendous stirring of people in order to do you know I mean it's very like the story of David bringing the Ark into Jerusalem was that flame thing that went across Canada.

[16:53] Think of the international implications of the America Cup race. What does it mean all this? Well I want to quote to you from a very learned authority which says this humans play only when they are human in the full sense of the term and we are fully human only when we play that the fullest expression of our humanity is when we play and so it's not surprising that millions upon millions of dollars are centered on the business of playing.

We used to play at war but we've been given respite from being involved in war so now we play at various kinds of games and I saw one scornful person yesterday who put a bumper sticker up which impressed me and you no doubt have seen it but it said he who has the most toys when he dies wins and that sort of concept of playing but there is something I think deeper than that which you see when you look at 2 Samuel chapter 6 and that is that David and all the people made Mary before the ark with dancing and shouting and singing and it was very like I think the beginning of the Olympic Games it was that there was somehow a deep association between the offering to God praise and enjoying yourself there is some profound connection between these two and the only thing perhaps

I have against the absolute addiction to sports that we have in our society is that it hasn't any ultimate focus in the praise and acknowledgement of God the greatest services of praise that we have ever seen in this country I suppose are at the closing of the Los Angeles Games and at the closing of the Calgary Games liturgy beyond compare something the book of alternative services has never even dreamed of was written and carried out in front of everybody except there was no acknowledged presence of God and that what what I think happens here is that we must somehow be aware that to love our God with all our heart mind soul body and strength is at the very center of

our being and that doesn't just consist of endless cerebral activity it consists I think in rejoicing in our God in loving him with all our body mind soul and strength in dancing and singing and shouting and procession in all those things by which we acknowledge our God's presence among us our God as Lord over us our God as the one in whom the ultimate meaning of our life is found our God as he has made himself present among us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ that somehow we've got to live our lives in such a way that we are in a sense like Olympic athletes disciplined to the business of giving in every part of our life praise and glory to the God in whom we believe and who by his incarnation has made himself present to us in our world a weary stressed lady I know said to me not long ago

I'm tired of work I want to play for a while and in this play is recreation because that's what we call it in this play is rest because we go away from a life of comparative inactivity and we work like mad for two weeks in the sun doing all sorts of terribly vigorous exercises and we come back not exhausted but rested for some strange reason because somehow in that is rest and the ark of the covenant leads us as it I mean God leads us to the place of rest and relaxation and freedom and recreation that's where that's where we are led to and that's the central activity of our lives is the acknowledgement of our

[22 : 16] God and the great disaster of our country is that we have so many activities which should ultimately be I think to the praise and glory of God which are dead-ended by paying somebody twenty million dollars a year or a fight to do it and he goes on drugs because he can't stand the strain of being in that kind of place and so instead of expressing ourselves in all that we are and all that we have in you see I want to say worship but I can't in the praise of God in the way that we conduct the whole of our lives that's what's important and that that activity consumes us completely you know it absorbs us totally you know so that people who are making a million dollars a minute downtown can't wait to get away to the place where they can give expression to something of the reality of who they are but that expression falls short of coming to the place where it becomes the acknowledgement and the praise of

God in the way that David and all the people of Israel danced and made merry before the Lord with all their might a hockey game is nothing more than a rather complicated dance so is a football game or a basketball game they're just in a sense a form of dancing there's a certain different rhythm to each of them but there it is and somehow that's what happens and that's what brings people together and you see the gray cup will never accomplish it and the Stanley cup will never accomplish it all those things will fade because they don't go far enough people don't and you know you you find that among athletes you find the athletes in action meeting for prayer breakfast before a big game you find a world champion running a race and there before the TV cameras of the whole world he kneels down and prays at the end of the race why does he do that why you find some you may think

I'm an idiot but probably the wiser man in our society who goes to the I mean he's at least courageous goes to the golf championships and holds up a sign saying John 316 because there is a dimension missing in the whole of our life a dimension that we don't understand and that is that in the praise and merry making and celebrating with all our might before God we are in a sense being who we are really meant to be we're all meant to be in a sense Wayne Gretzky Christians you know people who are skilled and disciplined and whose business it is to find our fulfillment ultimately in giving praise to God in what we do with all our heart mind soul and strength to express that love to God anyway I

I want to read you a verse just to quit with and you know how the I told you how the Olympic Games ended in Calgary and you probably saw I want to tell you how it's all going to end and just to give you the picture but I want you to have the Los Angeles Games coming to a close if you want or the Olympic Games in Calgary coming to a close and just listen to this just for a moment round the throne on each side of the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind the first living creature like a lion like an ox like the third with the face of a man and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle and the four living creatures each of them with six wings are full of eyes round and within and the day and night they never cease to sing holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come and whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne who lives forever and ever the twenty four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever they cast their crowns before the throne singing worthy art thou our Lord and our God to receive

glory and honor and power for thou didst create all things and by thy will they existed and were created a tremendous picture of the throne of God set in the midst and everyone gathering around to acknowledge the glory and the worthiness of God and ultimately that reality has to be at the center of our lives and that reality has to be at the center of our country and that's the thing that jazz festivals and folk festivals and kite festivals and film festivals and everything is about ultimately if it doesn't come to the place where it says worthy is our

[28 : 05] God to receive honor and glory and power then somehow they fall short and they demonstrate the desire and longing of our hearts but it never finds the fulfillment which belongs to it and that is the acknowledgement of God in our presence in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with his promise Amen