

2 Samuel 6:1-23

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[0 : 00] Thank you, musicians, and good evening. I have rarely spoken to a group when I was more excited about the passage which I was asked to speak on than I am tonight.

Nor have I been more apprehensive that I might fail to communicate the true excitement which is in these passages.

So let us pray together. Father, we thank you for the wonderful truth of your word. We thank you for the privilege of being here tonight and opening your word.

Father, that I don't have to stand here and propound my own wisdom, but we have wisdom from yourself. Lead us by your spirit.

Take your word and make it extremely real to us and allow us just to bask in the glory of your love for us. We pray this for our good and for your glory.

[1 : 21] In Jesus' name, amen. Tonight we're going to talk about when God comes near. And there's three parts to our time together from this point on.

First, we're talking from 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, chapter 6, where David is bringing the ark into Jerusalem.

Second, we're going to talk about Psalm 24, which was just read to us. A psalm, I believe, written by David to celebrate the coming of the ark into Jerusalem.

And third, we're going to celebrate communion together as we see how God comes not just near us, but into us as we celebrate our relationship with him and what he has done on the cross to allow all of this to make any sense.

As part of his U.S. tour last week, Pope Francis celebrated Mass in Philadelphia. You've probably read about that.

[2 : 40] They planned for a crowd that was larger than any previously seen in the city. It's supposed to be over a million people. Preparations had begun months ahead of time.

A five-mile security perimeter was established. Streets were closed. Public transportation rerouted. Why? It was out of respect and celebration for this esteemed man who was coming into their city. Our passage today in 2 Samuel 6 is not about a famous, good, and well-loved man coming to a city. But this chapter talks about God himself coming to Jerusalem.

What if you were given the task of planning such a great event? How would we want to prepare for the coming of God himself to our city? I guess the first question was, would we really want him that close?

Now, I know in one sense, God is everywhere, and God always was in the city of Jerusalem. But in the thinking of the ancient Hebrews, God was especially present in the Ark of the Covenant.

[3 : 58] And it was the Ark of the Covenant that is being brought into Jerusalem. And it's David's job as the king to plan and supervise this event.

So before we get into our passage, a little more background. First, the Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred thing in all of the ancient Jewish world.

Its construction had been ordered and described by God to Moses when he received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. The Ark was viewed as the actual throne of God on earth.

And even in many ways, including our passage tonight, was actually equated with God himself. It was basically a gold box, a wood box covered with gold.

And in it were three specific things. One, the stone tablets upon which God had written, and then Moses had rewritten, the Ten Commandments.

[4 : 59] First, symbolizing God's moral law. Second, Aaron's rod that budded, symbolizing God's power.

And third, a jar of manna, symbolizing God's provision. On top of the Ark, there were statues of two cherubim, angels that were looking down on a plate that was between them called the mercy seat. And God's instructions to Moses were that once a year, the high priest would enter the tabernacle, where no one else was allowed to go at any other time, with a blood sacrifice to pour on that mercy seat, so that God temporarily would be able to forgive the people for their sin.

That was done yearly. That's what the Jews of today celebrate as Yom Kippur, which was, what, just two weeks ago? And they were conscious of God covering over their sin.

The Ark would remind people of their sin, of God's forgiveness. It would remind them that he wanted to be near them, his imminence, but it would also remind them how different he was, and how different his requirements were from any human being, God's transcendence.

[6 : 41] And all of that is part of the symbolism of the Ark. Now, it wasn't too many years prior to this that the Ark was taken into battle very foolishly as a good omen as the Israelites were fighting against their local rivals, the Philistines.

The Philistines had captured the Ark, thinking it would bring them the favor of the God of Israel. But in fact, it was the start of one tragedy after another. And it wasn't too long before they returned the Ark to the land of Israel.

The Israelites who received it, of course, rejoiced that the Ark had been returned. And it was stored in the house of a priest, Abiathar, excuse me, Abinadab, who kept the Ark in his home for 20 years. And that was in the town of Kiriath-Jiaram, otherwise called Baal-Judah, which was right on the border with the Philistines. So for 20 years, the Ark had sat in that home of that priest and wasn't with the rest of the furnishings for God's tabernacle.

Now, as we saw last week, as Justin talked about 2 Samuel 5, David was king over Israel. He was king over all Israel.

[8 : 12] And he had just recently conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital city. He had recently won two major military victories over the Philistines and in the process had carried away their idols representing their gods.

Now, that would have been a huge embarrassment for the Philistines. And David, I'm sure, expected revenge. Now, what form would that revenge take?

Well, David was a good general. David was a military man. And I'm sure he saw the Philistines here. Just inside the border of their country was the Ark, which stood for Yahweh, the God of Israel. Well, certainly the Philistines would be wanting to recapture that Ark to revenge the loss of their idols, which they had forsaken and the Israelites had taken.

So the Ark was, in David's mind, I'm sure at risk of being taken by the Philistines. David also wanted not only to protect the Ark, but just having captured Jerusalem and just made it his capital city, I'm sure David wanted to enhance the reputation of Jerusalem through the country.

[9 : 41] And having the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem would have certainly raised Jerusalem's stature in the minds of the people of Israel. And finally, I suspect David just wanted to have God nearby.

He wanted to have the clear and unmistakable presence of God in his life. So David planned to have his palace and next to it a tent, which would house the Ark of the Covenant.

So I think there's good reasons why David wanted to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. Now, we want to turn to 2 Samuel 6. So if you're turning your Bibles to page 258, exactly 200 pages back from where Psalm 24 is, and let's read it together.

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000, and David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baal-Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, who sits enthroned on the cherubim.

And they carried the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the Ark of God, and Ahio went before the Ark.

[11 : 16] And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen had stumbled.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down because of his error. And he died there beside the Ark of God.

And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez Uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day.

And he said, How can the Ark of the Lord come to me? So David was not willing to take the Ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite. And the Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. 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.

[12 : 36] So David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing. And when those who bore the Ark of the Lord had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal.

And David danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing 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.

As the Ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michael, the daughter of Saul, looked out of her window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord.

And she despised him in her heart. And 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.

And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and 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.

[13 : 50] Then all the people departed, each to his house. And David returned to bless his household. But Michael, 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.

David said to Michael, 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 celebrate 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.

And Michael, the daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death. Well, let's just review the story. David is bringing the ark into Jerusalem.

It was a trip of about nine miles. To do that, he assembled an entourage of about 30,000 representatives from the nation, likely soldiers, political leaders, musicians, and many others from different parts of the land of Israel to accompany the ark into Jerusalem.

[15 : 21] I'm sure he wanted this vast number not only to protect the ark, but also to celebrate it and make it an event to unify the nation. Now, out of respect for the ark, he had a new cart built to carry it and gave the honored positions just before and just after the ark to the two sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio, in recognition of the care they had given the ark while in their home.

It was a grand procession, complete with singing and musical instruments, but there was a problem. The problem was that as good as David's intentions were, he had not followed the explicit instructions given to Moses for the transport of the ark.

God had specifically said the ark was never to be touched, but was to be carried by golden rods which were inserted along its sides on the shoulders of the priests.

furthermore, God had said in Numbers 4, 15, they must not touch the holy things lest they die.

Now, David was not ignorant of these rules because one of the requirements for a king of Israel was that before he became king, he sat down and copied out longhand the Torah, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible where all these instructions were clearly laid out.

[16 : 54] David knew what was to be done. David chose to do it his way. The procession was slowly going up to Jerusalem and as they were crossing a threshing floor, one of the oxen tripped and the ark became, the cart became unstable.

Uzzah reached out to steady it and just as he had promised, God struck him dead. Whoa there. That was not on David's agenda.

That was not what he had planned for the day. And David's response was to become angry. Now, David very well knew that he was the one who had planned this event.

He was the one who had ordered the cart. He was the one who was in charge and he had done what was wrong. Did he get mad at himself?

No. He was human like us. He got mad at God. How inappropriate that was. God, I'm sure, should have been mad at David.

[18:13] But in the midst of that tragedy, there was one good result. David was humbled and David developed a true fear of God.

for as the book of Proverbs tells us, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now, perhaps David had second thoughts.

Maybe he was not so sure that he wanted God right in his city, even right next door. Perhaps God really wasn't all that safe and he didn't want to be so close to this God.

We're not told the exact reason, but at any rate, David put a halt to the procession and they took the ark and put it in the home of another priest, Obed-Edom, and it was housed there for three months. But during those three months, Obed-Edom had been uniquely blessed. Now, we don't know what the nature of that was, but we also know that David was aware of it. And David reconsidered and he again decided to bring the ark on the last part of the journey to Jerusalem.

[19:24] This time, he planned an even greater celebration. He had learned his lesson and he assured that the commands of the law were followed and the ark was carried exactly as prescribed to Moses.

As part of their celebration, every six paces, they stopped and had a sacrifice. Perhaps that was a bit of thinking of the Sabbath.

Take six steps, you pause, you rest, you worship God. I don't know. At any rate, the ark was finally brought into the tent.

It was brought into Jerusalem and there they had further sacrifice, burnt offerings, peace offerings and David offered a prayer, bless the people and finally, David gave each one who attended a gift, a loaf of bread, some meat and a raisin cake.

It was a glorious day, a glorious celebration and everybody was, I'm sure, very pleased. But not everyone. All was not well.

[20:40] David's wife, Michael, the daughter of King Saul, had not attended the celebration. She'd stayed home, observed it through the window. When she saw David celebrating and dancing before the Lord, the text says she despised him in her heart.

Now, David's final act of the day was to go home and bless his own household. When he did, Michael came at him as it were with both barrels loaded.

She was upset. David responded, she mocked him for not behaving with the dignity that she thought a king should show.

David's response to her defended his right to focus on God, to celebrate his presence. It's interesting, if you look at your Bibles in verse 22, David says, I will be abased in your eyes.

But the real Hebrew there is in the footnote in the English Standard Version, says, I will be abased in my eyes. David was willing to be abased and thought low of if he could celebrate and focus so on God.

[21:57] and that was his intention. The end result was that Michael had no children till the day of her death. Quite a story.

I think we can learn a lot for ourselves from 2 Samuel 6. I think we see here three different ways of responding to God when he comes near.

first, David's initial response. Excitement, celebration, careful planning, but, you know, choosing to do things his way, not God's.

Secondly, we see David's final response. He showed the same exuberance and celebration, perhaps even more, but now he was careful to do things God's way.

He's not thinking about himself or those around him. He's simply focused on God. I think it's also of note that he responded generously with gifts to all of his people.

[23:00] Then he went home to bless his family. And then thirdly, we see Michael standing back, refusing to get involved, watching out the window, criticizing the emotionalism of the celebration, not being willing to be involved.

Now, I think it's only fitting that we need to ask ourselves, how would we respond? Do we like to plan and be in control and do things our way?

Are we overly conscious of what others think, thinks, so that we are somewhat inhibited in our worship of God? Or are we willing to give our whole beings, our minds, emotions, and bodies unreservedly to him?

That's the story from 2 Samuel 6. Now, there's almost a commentary on it in Psalm 24. So you may want to turn in your Bibles, go forward 200 pages to page 458 to Psalm 24.

And I believe this Psalm gives us just a totally different glimpse of the ark coming into Jerusalem because I think Psalm 24 was written by David to celebrate that day.

[24 : 24] And I'm sure as they were in this procession coming up to Jerusalem, they were singing Psalm 24 over and over again. See how he starts.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

David starts by reminding all who heard who God is. He is the one who made us and controls us. He is the great God and not only the physical world but all the inhabitants of the world belong to him.

Good theology should start everything, shouldn't it? Then he says, who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?

The ark is coming up the hill into Jerusalem, be housed in the temple or in the tent which would eventually be where the temple mount was, is.

[25 : 40] But David, when he thinks about the ark coming in, stops and he asks a very important question. If the ark is in Jerusalem, if it's on the top of the hill next to my palace, who should be allowed to come up?

Who should come near to God in the ark? Who can legitimately come near God? Can just anyone come up? David thinks of four distinct qualifications.

One, he who has clean hearts. Two, and a pure heart. Clean hands. Two, and a pure heart. Three, who does not lift up his soul to what is false.

And four, does not swear deceitfully. So first, he who has clean hands. Good start, David. We don't want people who have been doing a lot of dirty and messy things, coming near to God.

That would not be appropriate. But then, David starts reading what he just wrote. And I think he paused and said, but wait a minute.

[26 : 52] Do I have clean hands? Perhaps he thought of all the innocents he had killed to obtain a dowry when he married Michael. Perhaps he had thought of all the other evil and bad things killing people that he had done in the past.

and I think David would have said, perhaps with a tear in his eye, I don't have clean hands. And a pure heart.

In David's thinking, the heart was the center of the soul. It's where our motives and inner longings came from. Was his heart pure? Perhaps he thought of the time when he fled from Saul and hid in a Philistine city pretending to be insane.

Could that be called a pure heart? Who does not lift up his soul to what is false? This means not having false values or trashy values.

As David begins to think, he recalls the time when he became frustrated with Saul's constantly pursuing him. So David went over to the Israel's enemies, the Philistines, valuing his own comfort and safety more than pursuing God's plan.

[28 : 10] Yes, David knew that he had lifted up his soul to what was false and does not share, swear deceitfully, telling lies.

Then perhaps David remembered when he was running away from Saul, he saw refuge with Abiathar the priest and he lied and told him he was on an errand for Saul. The end result was that Abiathar was killed.

David admitted, I have sworn deceitfully. David knew that every one of the four requirements he was writing would exclude him.

He would not be allowed to ascend the hill of the Lord. But does this not ask us force us to ask ourselves, would we meet those criteria?

Could we have clean hands? Do we have pure hearts? Or do we have false values? Have we told lies?

[29 : 17] The answer for most of us is, yeah, we would not qualify either. David must have felt totally defeated. But to me, it is fascinating how he responds.

Notice, he will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. after acknowledging that he, and by implication, everybody else, including us, don't deserve to enter God's presence, David makes this profound and earth-shattering statement.

Catch this. Those who are willing to come into God's presence, those who choose to ascend the hill of the Lord, will not only receive a blessing from God, but will actually receive righteousness from God, and that will lead to salvation.

How much more exciting could you get? That it doesn't depend on our clean hands. It doesn't depend on our pure heart.

[30 : 33] It doesn't depend on our values. It doesn't depend on how much we tell the truth. Our righteousness, David knew, came from God.

David's mind is ever active.

He continues to meditate on who this God was who gives his blessing, righteousness, and salvation. And he next says, such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Selah. Now, what do we know about Jacob? Jacob's name means crooked.

He was a cheat. He was a schemer. He was out to get his own best. Jacob was not the darling person of God.

[31 : 43] But who accepted Jacob? God accepted Jacob. And I'm sure David thought, well, if God could accept Jacob, maybe God can accept me.

And it's even more fascinating that because in the Hebrew, the words God of are not there. Those are inserted by all the translators.

What the text really says, who seek the face of Jacob. Now, are the translators wrong to say God of Jacob?

No, I think that's the point. But the text says that God was so able to identify with one who was such a rascal as Jacob that he would actually allow himself to be called Jacob.

To me, that is amazing. That is amazing. Now, I don't think Jacob had any much idea at all of how God would come near to him.

[32 : 57] Jacob was familiar with sacrifices. he'd seen his grandfather Abraham present sacrifices. He'd seen Isaac present sacrifices. He did so himself. But he really wasn't sure the whole meaning of it.

David knew a little bit more because David had the ark, knew the mercy seat, and knew that forgiveness could come through blood on the mercy seat.

But how much more do we know why God is able to give us his righteousness? And the reason is Jesus.

The reason is that Jesus gave his own life as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sin so that God could accept us, so that we could draw near to God.

Hebrews says that Jesus came to put away sin once, once for all, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

[34 : 08] David did not know that, but we can know that. Just thinking those thoughts overwhelmed David. David could no longer hold it in, so he breaks out into exalted song, welcoming God into a city.

Lift up your heads, O gates, be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory?

The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of glory. Open up the gates of the city. The Ark is coming in.

The King of glory is coming in. The Lord of hosts. He will be near us because he allows us to experience his righteousness, his forgiveness.

[35 : 16] God is not the only one to ever welcome God into his life. Tonight, we have the privilege of celebrating God coming into our lives.

As we take communion, I think we should learn lessons from the Ark coming into Jerusalem. 1 Samuel 6 is about God coming near.

Communion is about God in the person of Jesus actually coming not just near, but into us, becoming a part of us.

We must recognize that we are no more worthy to ascend the hill of the Lord, to come into his presence, to have him come into us, than David was.

When you examine our hearts, we realize if it's up to us and our goodness, we're not going to make it. David knew that it was only by God's forgiveness, love, and grace that he could be righteous.

[36 : 21] He did not know how. We can look at the bread and the juice and be reminded that it was by no less than Jesus himself taking our sins on him, suffering the wrath of God, the inhumanity of man, that the just penalty of our sins could be paid and we could be forgiven.

We should respond tonight as David responded, holding intention, a fear of God that fills us with reverence and prompts us to do things exactly as God wants, while at the same time, in our own hearts and perhaps even with our voices, exuberantly celebrating as we offer our sacrifice of praise to God.

God, we can with exaltation invite him into our lives. I wonder if I could ask you all to stand. And would you be willing to put your arms out to welcome the King of glory?

Just in your minds we're welcoming him into our lives. Lift up your heads, O gates, be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

[37 : 56] Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of glory. May we welcome him into our lives.

You may be seated. Well, tonight