

Guest Preacher - Rev. Donald N Martin

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Preacher: Rev. Donald N Martin

[0 : 00] And the psalm with which we began our service here today is probably very likely to have been one of the psalms that was being sung as the ark was being carried into the city of David into Jerusalem.

So let me take you to that area of the world today, to the mountains of Israel, where so much of the Bible took place after the Israelites had returned from captivity in Egypt.

Now just a little bit of the history before we come to the text we have before us. Leading up to 2 Samuel 6, we read that David had become Israel's second king after King Saul.

And David had a much larger vision for the kingdom than Saul's predecessor ever had. David conquers Jebus, as it was called then. He renamed it Jerusalem and founds a new capital city there.

And in doing so, he takes all the tribes of Israel together as one. Now, in our own experience in the present day, we know from our new governments that take over that they complain about the legacy their predecessors have left behind.

[1 : 18] And we saw that in recent days. And King David had every right to do the very same thing. For under Saul's kingship, worship, the worship of God had suffered badly.

This is what Samuel wrote in 1 Samuel 13 to Saul. You acted foolishly, Samuel said. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God you gave us.

If you had, you would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. Now there's a new king, King David. 1 Samuel 4 to 6.

We read of the removal of the Ark of the Covenant from the tabernacle at Shiloh. That was the center of Israelite worship after they came back into the Promised Land.

Shiloh had been Israel's first capital after their return from Egypt, before the construction of the first temple in Jerusalem. And Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had taken the Ark with him into battle.

[2 : 25] It was more or less a good luck charm. Well, it didn't work. And Israel lost the battle. And the Philistines captured the Ark and placed it in a pagan temple, in Dagon's temple in 1 Samuel 5.

Now, David, who had been anointed and appointed as king over Israel, longs for the nation to return back to God.

He wants to bring the Ark, the presence of God, back into the city of Jerusalem, which would signify that the Lord, the true King of Israel, is once more in the midst of his people.

1 Chronicles 13 records David's speech before the whole of Israel. And it says there in verse 2, If it seems good to you, and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our brothers throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pastoralists, to come and join us.

Let us bring the Ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of the Lord during the reign of Saul. So David wants the restoration of the worship of God.

[3 : 48] That was his number one priority for his people and for his nation. I've often thought that if the leaders of our own nation would turn to God, we would be in a far better place than we are today.

Anyhow, Samuel the prophet was but a child when the Philistines had captured the Ark. And we're reading 1 Samuel 4 and 21 that the glory had departed Israel.

It was as if they had been left to their own devices. The Ark was that trophy of war for the Philistines. And it was paraded throughout their cities. And as I said earlier, it was taken to Dagon's Temple in Ashdod, on the Mediterranean coast there.

And 1 Samuel 5 tells us how sickness fell on the Philistines at that time. You can read of these strange happenings in 1 Samuel 5 yourselves. We haven't got the time to do it just now.

And the Philistines couldn't bear the pain. And after seven months, they sent the Ark towards the city of Bethshemish on a new cart, pulled by two cows that had never been yoked together.

[5 : 12] At Bethshemish, the people who were working, harvesting wheat, had first rejoiced when they saw the Ark of the Covenant on the back of the cart. But then disaster struck them for looking into the Ark.

For God had laid out specific instructions that the Ark should remain covered. Numbers 4 and 6 there says, Then they are to cover this with the hides of sea cows and spread a cloth of solid blue over that and put the poles in place.

You see, the Lord had specific instructions for the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant. Now Bethshemish, having looked into the Ark, now wanted to be rid of the Ark themselves and sent for the people of Kiriath-Jerim to take it away.

1 Samuel 7 says, Then the men of Kiriath-Jerim came and took the Ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on a hill and consecrated Elias and his son to keep the Ark of the Lord.

It was a long time, 20 years in all, that the Ark remained at Kiriath-Jerim. And what we read from 1 Samuel 7 to 2 Samuel 6 spans some 20 years.

[6 : 42] And during that time, the Ark of the Covenant remained in Kiriath-Jerim. Now what did the Ark contain? Of course it was the tablets of the law, it was the manna, and indeed the rod of Moses.

Now 13 years after the Ark had been taken into the house of Abinadab, King Saul was killed by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. And Abinadab was also slain in that battle.

And for the next seven years, the Ark remained there, taking it up to the 20 years. We read in 2 Samuel 6 and 3, they set the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on a hill.

The Ark, the Ark signified the Lord's presence with the people. And whenever the Ark set out on their journey from Egypt, Moses would say, Rise up, O Lord, may your enemies be scattered, may your foes flee before you.

Whenever it came to rest, he said, Return, O Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel. At the time David conquered Jerusalem, the Ark wasn't there.

[8 : 16] And without it, the Lord's presence was also absent. And so they go to the house of Abinadab and Kiriath-Jerim. And on one of our tours to Israel, we were in Abu Ghosh, that's Kiriath-Jerim, and it's said to be the Emmaus, on the road to Emmaus, after Jesus had been resurrected.

And looking up, looking up on a hillside, there's a church there to commemorate the fact that the Ark was in the house of Abinadab all these years.

And it was here in the vicinity in which we were standing in that day that all of this takes place. And when we go to these places, we'll read the relevant parts of Scripture, portions of Scripture, relating to these places.

And David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with songs and with harps or lyres, tambourines, cisterns, and cymbals.

In eagerness, they couldn't wait to get the Ark back to Jerusalem. It was a new acquisition for them. And if you're like men or like me, in any case, we set aside the instruction booklet.

[9 : 39] We want to get into the new tool we've got, or whatever it is. And this is what David did. He didn't refer to the manual. David hadn't read God's instructions in the Torah, in the law.

He didn't seek the Lord as how to transport the Ark when God had set out specific instructions to transport it.

They'd done just as the Philistine delivery men had done, and they lifted the Ark onto a cart, and that was a no-no. Over the gold altar, they are to spread a blue cloth and cover that with hides of sea cows and put its poles in place.

And all of a sudden, as they near the city, the music, the dancing, the celebration comes to an upper apport, for Eusa collapsed in a heap beside the cart.

Why? Was it a heart attack? Well, verse 6 reveals the reason. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Eusa reached out and took hold of the Ark of God because the oxen had stumbled.

[10 : 56] The Lord's anger burned against Eusa because of his irreverent act. Therefore, God struck him down, and he died there beside the Ark of God.

This reminds us of the tragic circumstance that already happened at Beth Shemesh, 1 Samuel 6 and 19. But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting 70 of them to death

because they had looked into the Ark of God.

Is this really a God of mercy and justice? Is this the kind of God we can commend to others? Eusa's story goes against our human inclinations because we still want to be able to tell God how we do things and disregard practices which God has prohibited.

Eusa was struck down for not following God's command. And the explanation goes back to when God had given Moses specific instructions as to how to carry the Ark.

[12:13] After Aaron and his sons had finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, when the camp was ready to move, the Korites had to come to do the carrying.

But they must not touch the holy things or they will die. The rules were the Korites were not to touch. They weren't even to look upon the sacred items lest they die.

You see, what this teaches us is that God was looking for obedience from his people. Then, as he does now.

And in love, he gives us rules for people to live and not die. It seems that David's men, and especially Eusa here, had no warning.

They had ignored God's instruction. And David became angry in verse 8 because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Eusa. And to this day, the place is called Peres Eusa.

[13:18] Now, what David had done was with the best of intentions, I'm sure, because he wanted to honor the Lord in the new capital city. But the celebration before hundreds, even thousands that day, ended very badly.

And David is humiliated. And the people now ask, is the Lord with David or not?

For Eusa had paid such a high price for his action. But you may ask, why did he die when the Philistines didn't?

Simply Eusa, as a Jew, who would or should have known the Torah, the law of God, he was expected to obey God's rules.

Just like we are today. God's command was the ark that was to be carried with poles through the rings of the ark.

[14:27] And it was to be carried by the Levites. This was the way to be carried, no shortcuts, no other way. To do otherwise was to dishonor the commands of God.

James, in the New Testament, James 4 and 17, says, anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it. Sins. David was to discover that God is interested in detail.

He still wants us to do his will and his way. Nothing else is pleasing or honorable to him. We need to consider the detail in our own Christian lives, in our own Christian living.

for sometimes we do become a little bit familiar with God, our maker, thinking, what I'm doing doesn't bring any harm to anyone else.

I'm not harming anyone, so it's okay for me to do it. It's not the case if we're going against God's will.

[15:44] David and his people had done as the Philistines had done. And he made a new cart and that cow's pull it.

David thought he was doing right, but it wasn't in God's way. Now, the decision by some denominations in our own day and generation to allow what scriptures don't is an affront to God's biblical standards.

And there is a price to be paid leading to an absence of God's presence and God's blessing. Verse 9 says, David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, how can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?

He was not willing to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom, the Gidite. The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom, the Gidite, for three months and the Lord blessed him and his entire household.

Now, King David was told, the Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has because of the ark of God. So David learns of how the house of Obed-Edom had been blessed and he comes to realize that the ark itself was not the issue for when David begins to consult the Torah, the law, he realizes how it's supposed to be done and he wants the blessing of God to come to the city of David.

[17:33] No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God because the Lord chose him to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever. So it was only the Korah clan of the Levites who were issued the instructions to carry sacred objects into Tabernacle.

And as it happens, Obed-Edom is that Levite from the Korah town of Gath-Roman. You see, God covers every little detail in our lives.

David has come to understand that God's true intent was to bless the people of Israel and not to destroy them through the ark.

So David goes to the house of Obed-Edom and he brought the ark to the house of God in Jerusalem with great joy. Now the ark is being carried as God has instructed.

Verse 13, Now those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps and he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.

[18:50] what a difference there is here. There was now a sense of worship through sacrifice. This was a moment of holiness before the God of Israel.

God was right there in their midst now. Worship is more than just singing. Some people think that worship is singing, but it's more than singing.

Though we like to sing praise to God and we love to do that. It's being absorbed in the presence of a holy God for the wonders he has done in us and for us.

And whenever we experience that kind of experience, it is precious. It will never leave us. when we're absorbed in the presence of a holy God and nothing else matters.

[19:59] David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might. And while he and his entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and with sounds of trumpets, David is now personally absorbed in the joyful worship of his God.

This we see here is worship from the heart. There was a change in direction. Worshiping God with all that was in him.

David was dancing there in worship. He didn't care who was watching. He didn't care who was seeing him. Now as Presbyterians we can be quite inhibited in our worship by what others might think of us.

To say amen or to lift our hands up in worship is not for us. I remember many years ago we had a Presbyterian minister from Nigeria with us in Gardenston and he was amazed that we didn't move when we were singing our songs.

Because he would move. he would move all along the pulpit when he was singing the songs of praise to God. But do we not find ourselves at times absolutely absorbed in the presence of God?

[21:28] Absorbed in worship and forget that there was anyone else round about who God is speaking to us. I remember one time or maybe having a number of times with this particular time there was a young woman in gardens who invited a friend to church with her.

And what she said to a friend after the service what were you telling the minister about me? But she hadn't told anything. It was the Holy Spirit speaking to her heart.

and she would absorb with worship. Such moments are so special for us.

Is it not the Lord alone that we worship? Not man? After David had discovered that the Lord had specific instructions, he determined in his heart to move the ark as God had said.

Jesus said in John 14, If you love me, if you love me, you will obey what I command. Here was David.

[22:50] Remember how God had chosen him a man after his own heart. And here was David coming into that part of his life, a man of God's own heart.

For now he had the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and with the sound of trumpets.

When our hearts are truly in tune with the heart of God, there is a spirit of worship and praise in ours too. Is that how it is with us today?

Are our hearts inflamed? Are we relishing being in his house with his people, praising him? Are we fit to burst praising his name?

Being the presence of God brings a certain awe. Psalm 2 says, Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

[24:04] Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Verse 16 says, As the ark of the Lord was entering the city of Jerusalem, Michal, daughter of Saul, watched from a window, and when she saw King David sleeping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

Like many a good man or woman, when the spouse is not one with them in the faith, it can cause difficulties within the marriage, and we see that here.

David's worship, David's dancing and praising is totally misunderstood by Michal's wife. Now, those of us who have been made one in both marriage and in Christ rejoice in that reality of being one in both realities.

And when David's wife sees him praising God, she rebukes him. In response to her rebuke, he tells her he's made up his mind, he's going to praise God anyway, he doesn't care what people think. Even if it makes him look a fool in the eyes of people, he's going to praise the Lord. He said to her, it was before the Lord who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people, Israel.

[25 : 30] I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more indignified than this. I will be humiliated in my own eyes, but by the slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.

Oh, Michal is concerned with royal protocol and dignity, I suppose you could say. She is concerned with the outward appearance, but we know that God is concerned with the heart, and what is seen here is the heart of David rejoicing before God, a heart that is now truly in tune with God.

David didn't care at that moment what the world thought of him. He was more concerned about being true to his Lord and his God. David had already prepared a place for the Ark of the Covenant. He and his people worshipped God with sacrifice and offerings, and everyone received gifts of food. What a change.

change in the change of kingships there, from not worshipping God to a people in worship. Are we, as we leave here today, are we going to be seen as men and women who worship God, who are men and women after God's own heart?

[27 : 09] Are there lessons for us in this story? Well, there are quite a number, but here are some of them. We should do things God's way, and when we do like you'll be did and we shall be blessed.

Many can look back and see how God has blessed them through obedience in their lives. We should joyfully worship looking unto Jesus, our Redeemer and Savior, not to what others think of us.

Oh, sing a new song to the Lord, sing all the earth to God. A modern-day song by Don Moen says, Ascribe greatness to our God the rock.

His work is perfect, and all his ways are just. So must we ascribe greatness to the Lord our God. Now, there's another thing we saw here in Michael, David's wife. wife. We mustn't allow bitterness into her hearts, as she had done.

[28 : 13] She was despising David's enthusiastic worship of God. It's never good to be bitter. And if that's the case, let's confess our wrongs before God.

Seek his face. Ask for his forgiveness, that he might revive us again as individuals, and as a church, that he might fill us with that spirit of awe, of wonder, and of praise.

That we might worship his holy name in true abandonment, as King David had done on that day on Science Hill. Amen, and may the Lord bless to us these thoughts from his holy word.

Let's pray. Father, help us to take a leaf out of David's book there, and follow you, and do your will. May your will be done in us, as it is done in heaven, we prayed earlier on. And so, Lord, lead us into this day and this week, as we put our hands in the hands of the man who stilled the waters.

[29 : 36] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Let's, uh, yes, yes, you can.

Slide change. Psalm 119. Psalm 119. Psalm 119 in the Psalter at verse number 89.

Thy word forever is, O Lord, in heaven settled fast, and to all generations thy faithfulness doth last. that's on page 407 of the sing-sams.

Thy word forever is, O Lord. Amen. Thy word forever is, O Lord, in heaven settle fast. unto all generations thy faithfulness doth fast.

[31 : 04] The earth thou hast established and it abides by thee.

This day they stand as the wardens for all thy servants be.
Unless in thy most perfect glow! my soul delights hath found.
I should have perished when as my troubles did abound.
thy precepts I will never forget thy!

[32 : 18] name to me brought.! Lord, I am thy know, save thou me, thy precepts I have sought.

! For me the wicked have laid weight be seeking to destroy.
But I thy testimony! is true consider will with joy.

An end of all perfection here have I seen, O God, but as for thy commandment it is exceeding broad.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all and all whom you love this day and for ever more.

[33 : 59] Amen. Amen.