

“DANCING DAVID”**Rev. Becky Stephens****God’s Word: 2 Samuel 6:1-15 NLT****Text: 2 Samuel 6:16-23 NLT****2 Samuel 6:16-23 NLT**

¹⁶ But as the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she was filled with contempt for him. ¹⁷ They brought the Ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the special tent David had prepared for it. And David sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. ¹⁸ When he had finished his sacrifices, David blessed the people in the name of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. ¹⁹ Then he gave to every Israelite man and woman in the crowd a loaf of bread, a cake of dates,^[b] and a cake of raisins. Then all the people returned to their homes. ²⁰ When David returned home to bless his own family, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him. She said in disgust, “How distinguished the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!” ²¹ David retorted to Michal, “I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD, so I celebrate before the LORD. ²² Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am distinguished!” ²³ So Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained childless throughout her entire life.

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This story of the Israelites moving the Ark of God into the city of Jerusalem is a Bible story that I have always loved. The vivid picture of David dancing with all his might before the Lord is one of the most wonderful glimpses of David’s early reign and his devotion to the Lord as King of God’s people, Israel. David has gathered thousands of chosen Israelites, and in great fanfare, with songs and instruments and dancing, they have gone together to bring the ark of God from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem. As the ark moves closer and closer to Jerusalem, David is so excited he can hardly contain himself. Actually, he is not able to contain himself at all!

Have you ever had moments in your life when you were that excited? For my sake, I sometimes get that excited on laundry days. (Yeah, that surprised you, didn't it?) You know, those days when you're throwing your laundry in the washing machine and you dip your hand into a pocket only to find a \$5 bill that you had forgotten you put there. Or maybe that money has gone through the wash already, and you find it weeks later when you wear that outfit again. It's like free money! I always feel like jumping around and dancing when I find some extra money in my pockets. But there are many other milestones in our lives that may bring us an even greater sense of joy: a graduation, a marriage, the birth of a first child, or landing that first job. Maybe we know that joy in baptism or in seeing a person come to Christ; or when we came to know Christ ourselves. What are the other things in our lives that get us so excited we can hardly contain ourselves? And when we get that excited, how do we express our joy?

As David brought the ark of God into Jerusalem, we are told that he is dancing before the Lord with all his might; that he even offers a sacrifice of an ox and a fatling. To some, David's behavior might seem really crazy. If we were to continue reading after this passage, we would read of Saul's daughter, Michal, confronting David about his behavior. She is angry, and we are led to believe this is so because she thought David's dancing was madness. John Wesley even suggested caution. He advised, "Public joy should always be before the Lord, with an eye to him, and terminating in him. Otherwise it is no better than public madness, and the source of all manner of wickedness." But what makes David's dancing so wonderful is the fact that his public joy is before the Lord, he is worshipping God.

David's dancing before the Lord is a model example of how we should worship God as well. In complete and reckless abandon, David offered all of himself in praise before the Lord. I'm not saying that we have to strip down to our underwear and do a jig, but what is important is that our worship be an offering of all of ourselves in praise of the living God. Our worship must be totally real, all of us, given in complete surrender before the Lord.

I love worship. It may not be obvious to you, but I have a passion for worship that at times is completely thought-consuming. I think worship should be the place in our lives where we can be completely and 100% authentic; the place where we give all of ourselves to the God who has given all of himself to us. And this is what David did as the ark of God moved into Jerusalem and he danced before it. David was so completely absorbed in his worship of the Lord, that he completely lost himself in the act. He did not care what onlookers might think; he was not worried about observers who might feel that his behavior was "not appropriate" for the King of a nation. David was

compelled only by his love and joy for the God, who through the covenant housed in that ark, had opened the doors for a relationship between God's self and that nation of Israel. And in gratitude for the great offerings and many blessings bestowed by God, David gave all of himself in worship to that same God. We, as ones whose lives are also greatly blessed by God in Jesus Christ, are also called to offer all of ourselves in worship to God. Because, you see, to abandon worship of God is to live with the illusion that somehow there is something more important than God in our lives.

Worship is the way we express outwardly and visibly (and sometimes even privately and personally) that God is the most important part of our lives. I love worship. Though I'm not a terribly emotional or excitable person, worship is something that I am passionate about. I like to experience worship in different ways and in different places, I like to read about worship, and think about creative ways of doing worship. I have dreams and ideals about how I would like worship to be. In my ideal, worship will happen in such a way that at any given service, on any given day, in any place around the world, any person can walk in off the streets, take part in that service, and find at least one way, through that worship time where they are able to connect with God and offer the pure, unhindered praise like that which David offered as the ark of God was carried into Jerusalem. Now, does that sound like a lofty ideal? Sure it does, but I believe such worship really is possible. I believe it is possible when all believers seek to be completely authentic in their praise of God, and give all of themselves without reserve or hesitation just as David did.

As the modern church in this modern day, we have managed to get caught up in what has often been referred to as the "worship wars." We have had a tendency to follow general stereotypes. Old people like "traditional" worship and want to sing hymns to the accompaniment of organs. Young people like "contemporary" worship and prefer to sing praise choruses and have worship led by rock bands. I am sure there are people here, even in this relatively small congregation that do not fit into those stereotypes, so imagine how many others around the world might not fall into these "categories." Should worship be contemporary, or should it be traditional? I want to suggest this is the wrong question. I believe the better question to be asked is this one, "Is worship authentic?" Or to think about it in terms of our text from today, "Am I worshiping in the way David worshiped." Are we Christians in this place and around the world engaging in worship that is a complete surrender of ourselves? When we come to worship, do we "leave it all out there" and lay all of ourselves before God as David did?

It should be the pursuit to which we give all of ourselves, the endeavor on which we spend all of our energy and "leave it all out there." As we live our day-to-day lives, it

should be evident to all around us that we are lovers and worshipers of the risen Christ, constantly laying our every burden at the altar, even as we offer our praise to Christ and seeking to serve him as we are called to serve. You see, worship is not just one hour on Sunday mornings, but that one hour on Sunday mornings should model and shape how we live the rest of our lives on the other six days.

It is often said that the worship service is the most predictable hour in a person's week. But are our week-to-week lives so predictable? I can assure you that my week-to-week life is not so predictable, and I imagine the same is true for many of you. So what does that mean about our worship? I believe it means we think about and approach worship in a different way. Worship is not just something we do, but it is who we are as people of God. It is not just singing songs or praying prayers or listening to a sermon; worship infuses every aspect of our lives and helps shape our identity. Worship is not living according to the expectations of others, but surrendering ourselves in complete authenticity before God. We are to engage in such worship as a body of believers that come together for a service once a week and we are to engage in such worship as individuals out in the world from day-to-day. And at all times, we should completely lay ourselves out there and we should fully surrender ourselves before God as David did. The gifts and blessings that come from God have made everything else in our lives possible; at the very least, we are called to dance before God in worship as David danced.

So how do we get to a point where we are able to engage in such worship? This, I believe, is a question of the ages. There is no right answer here; and for every person, the answer to this question is different. But part of our job as a church is to struggle with this question together, so that in all things we are building each other up in the body of Christ. I invite you in the next few minutes to think about how you worship God and how you might more fully worship God in your life and in this place. The altar is open, and I would invite you to come forward and offer your answers to God in prayer and in praise as an act of worship. Let us now join together in this great dance!