

brentwood baptist

HUMAN: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE REAL

REAL RELIGION

2 SAMUEL 6:1-23

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

MAIN POINT

Part of the process of pursuing God is embracing His holiness and casting aside the things that draw you away from Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Can you share a moment when you've felt really close to God? What was happening in your life?

Did that feeling last? What happened when it went away?

Most of us can all think of a really special time when we've felt close to God, maybe during a service opportunity, or a time of prayer, reading the Word or singing in corporate worship. But, just as many of us can think of times when we've felt this way, we also know those feelings don't last. After a while, our spiritual fire can start to die down. And if we're not careful, our passionate pursuit of God becomes a meandering walk.

The Israelites had lost their passion for the Lord. They had stopped pursuing Him for a long, long time. And when David became king, they saw a man who pursued God with his whole heart, a man who was already close to God, but wanted to be closer still. This is what God wants for us, too. But part of that process is embracing the holiness of God and casting aside the things that draw us away from Him.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 2 SAMUEL 6:1-5.

Israel had lost their passion for the Lord, but with David as their king, the fire in their hearts seemed to be rekindled. The first order of business? Bring the ark back to the people.

Would David's approach to moving the ark have seemed adequate to you? Why or why not?

Compare 2 Samuel 6:1-5 to Exodus 25:12-14. How did God want the ark to be carried? How were David and his men carrying it?

What are some ways our good intentions get in the way of our pursuit of God?

READ 2 SAMUEL 6:6-11.

David and his men were passionate about the Lord, but in their zeal, they failed to obey His commands. David's motives were sincere, but his actions were still wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

Does the result of Uzzah's actions seem too harsh? What does this tell you about God's holiness coming into contact with human sinfulness?

What does holiness mean to you after reading a passage like this one?

Read Luke 8:40-48. How does the bleeding woman's story compare with Uzzah's?

Through Jesus, the untouchable God came close and lived among us. When the sick woman in Luke 8 touched Jesus, He responded in love and grace. Everything that once separated us from the holiness of God is now bridged through Christ. We boldly approach a throne of grace. We take hold of God without fear. God was just in judgment against Uzzah. God was just in satisfying the requirements of the law through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

READ 2 SAMUEL 6:12-23.

How did Uzzah's death affect David's second attempt to bring the ark back to the kingdom?

What was different about David and the people's worship as they bring the ark with them?

As David and the people brought the ark to Jerusalem, they were filled with an unspeakable joy. When the presence of the Lord returned to Jerusalem, David couldn't contain his joy and he wasn't concerned with what he looked like as he truly worshiped.

During a time of public or private worship, when was the last time you couldn't contain your joy?

Read verses 20-23. Why is Michal's bitterness, barrenness, and relation to Saul significant here? What does David's reply to her tell of his character?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What would it look like for you to have more of a healthy fear of the Lord?

What would our families, and our church look like if we were as passionate as David about pursuing God?

What do your lost friends notice about you as different than, or set apart from, themselves? What do you wish they would see?

In what ways do your day-to-day actions display a reverent love and passion for God? What can you do this week to pursue God in a greater way?

PRAYER

Pray that God will bless our efforts to focus on Him and pursue Him. Pray that we would be people who live in obedience to God's Word, and that God would reveal and remove any bitterness that keeps us from pursuing Him fully.

COMMENTARY

2 SAMUEL 6:1-23

6:1-2. David's twin victories against the Philistines guaranteed that Israel's enemy would be motivated to return and fight another day. David was especially aware that his decision to dispose of the Philistine gods (see 5:21) would invite reprisals, perhaps even a second Philistine attempt to take possession of the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:11; 5:1). An attack against Israel to acquire and destroy the ark would have been particularly attractive due to the fact that the ark was located only a few miles from their own territory. In an apparent effort to forestall any such undertaking by the Philistines, David brought together out of Israel (v. 1) a comparatively large force of thirty thousand chosen men, an elite force that was truly national (1 Chron. 13:5), not merely tribal, in nature, to bring up . . . the ark of God (v. 2) and remove it to a safer location. Since the days of Samuel's childhood, the ark was kept in a private residence in a small village in the northwestern regions of Judahite territory (1 Sam. 7:1-2). Accordingly, David assembled the troops at Baalah of Judah, otherwise known as Kiriath Jearim, the Israelite settlement in which the ark was situated (1 Sam. 6:21; 7:2).

David was especially concerned to prevent the ark from falling into enemy hands because of its significance for Israel's religion. The ark was the object most closely associated with Israel's God, a truth expressed by the writer's notation that the name of Yahweh of Armies, He who is seated on the cherubim, is called upon it. The ark contained the written agreement between Israel and the Lord (Exod. 25:16; 40:20; Deut. 10:5; 1 Kings 8:9), was a place of divine revelation (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89), and was in fact the Lord's throne (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Kings 19:15; Pss. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16). An object of such overwhelming significance would certainly make a valuable prize for the Philistines and was worthy of the massive protective force called up by David.

6:3-5. David had the men set the ark of God on a new cart (v. 3), the employment of a new cart being a sign of respect for the holy object. As respectful and well-intended as

David's effort was, however, it violated Torah guidelines regarding the transport of the ark (Num. 4:15; 7:9). In fact, David's actions in this matter were more like those of the spiritually ignorant Philistines (1 Sam. 6:7,10). Celebrating was accompanied by songs and by harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums, and cymbals (v. 5). Leading the procession was Ahio, one of the sons of Abinadab (v. 4), with his brother Uzzah guiding the cart from behind. The passage implicitly assumes that Ahio and Uzzah were Levites from the clan of Kohath (Num. 4:4-20).

6:6-7. As the oxcart was being pulled down the hill, an unforeseen tragedy occurred: the oxen stumbled. Instinctively, the levitical priest Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God to stabilize and protect it. However, in so doing he committed a capital offense established in the Torah (Num. 4:15). Since he was not an Aaronic priest, he was prohibited from touching this holiest object. Uzzah's conscientious effort to protect the ark actually defiled it; accordingly, the Lord's anger burned against Uzzah (v. 7). Uzzah's act violated a divinely established taboo and was therefore irreverent; appropriately, God, not some impersonal force, struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God. For the third time in the books of Samuel (1 Sam. 5:3-12; 6:19-20), the Lord had demonstrated that He was capable of defending the ark. As on the second occasion, the threat was not from a Philistine but from Israelites who disobeyed Torah guidelines regarding proper treatment of the Lord's throne.

6:8-12. David, who had acted with noble intentions in the matter of moving the ark, was angry. The stated reason for David's emotional storm was "because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah (v. 8), a clause that could either mean that David was mad at God for killing Uzzah (unlikely, since God was merely enforcing the Torah) or that he was upset that Uzzah had acted in such a way as to cause God to bring fatal judgment to bear (more likely). An Israelite tragedy was exactly what he attempted to avoid.

Having witnessed a dramatic demonstration of the Lord's zeal to protect His holiness, David became afraid of the Lord that day (v. 9). His deepened respect for the Lord's power and for His willingness to use it against anyone who would violate the Torah caused David to ask, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me? David's intention had been to move the ark to be with him in the City of David (v. 10). There in the former Jebusite fortress the ark would have been protected from any Philistine reprisals. Once in Jerusalem, it would have played a useful role in increasing the prestige of the newly established national capital by locating the divine throne in the same city as David's. However, the recent turn of events had changed David's plans, perhaps because he feared that some further transgression would cause the Lord's judgment to destroy the new capital.

Accordingly, David ordered that the ark be taken to the house of a Levite, Obed-Edom the Gittite (v. 11). He was associated with a location of uncertain identity that had an olive or wine press. Perhaps Obed-Edom's residence was the closest levitical residence to the disaster; at that site, they hoped, further catastrophes could be avoided. The plan worked well; during the three months it was there, blessings, not curses, attended Obed-Edom and everything around him (v. 12). The blessing on Obed-Edom's household seemingly took the form of fertility (1 Chron. 26:8).

6:13-15. But there was one significant difference between the two attempts to transport the sacred throne; this time Levites carried it by hand (v. 13; see Num. 4:15), not transporting it on a cart. Costly fellowship offerings consisting of a bull and a fattened calf were offered to the Lord after the Levites had taken six steps. This ritual pause after six steps suggests a symbolic significance, perhaps a sort of Sabbath rest, suggesting a consecration of the entire journey.

For the occasion of this almost ten-mile journey, David had prepared both his capital city and himself. First, he had erected a special tent in Jerusalem that would house the ark (v. 17). According to 1 Chronicles 16:39-40, this was done without removing the tent in Gibeon, which was still used to house the remainder of the sacred tabernacle furnishings. Second, he prepared and wore special ritual garments: a linen ephod (v. 14), a piece of clothing otherwise reserved in Israelite society for priests and Levites (see Exod. 28:6; 1 Sam. 2:18; 22:18), and, according to 1 Chronicles 15:27, a robe of fine linen.

6:16-19. Missing from the procession bringing the ark to Jerusalem was Michal daughter of Saul (v. 16), who viewed the festivities from a palace window. It is unclear why Michal was absent from the event, since other women were permitted to be present (v. 19), but the tone of the passage suggests that it was due to her jaded attitude toward the Lord and His anointed; previously she had been connected with the use of a teraphim, an object considered an abomination to the Lord (1 Sam. 15:23; 19:13). Michal could have resented David for forcing her to leave Paltiel as well (3:14-16). During the triumphal moments when the ark passed through the streets of the royal fortress, David's unbounded enthusiasm for his God expressed itself in "leaping and dancing before the Lord" (v. 16). His enthusiasm was not appreciated by Michal. In her attitudes and actions she was truly a daughter of Saul (vv. 20, 23) and not a wife of David. Meanwhile, the celebrative group set the ark in its place of honor (v. 17; Ps 76:2). Then David, once again acting sacerdotally, "sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowships before the Lord."

6:20-23. Following the conclusion of his public duties, David would not neglect his own household on this day of blessing (v. 20). But even before he could pronounce a word of blessing, Michal, daughter of Saul, began to berate him. She first accused him of "disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants, thus exposing his nakedness." Second, she equated him with a vulgar fellow. Implicitly, she suggested that immoral sexual urges, not zeal for the Lord, had motivated his enthusiastic activities in the festivities of the day.

David rejected Michal's slanderous accusations; it was before the Lord (v. 21), not the young women, that David was celebrating. Furthermore, his actions were appropriate for one who had been appointed by the Lord as ruler over the Lord's people Israel. David's celebratory acts earlier in the day expressed the king's unbridled joy in having been selected by the Lord for such significant service. Besides, assuming he was dressed as a properly outfitted Yahwistic priest, David's energetic dancing could not have exposed his nakedness and so violated the Torah's requirements (Exod. 20:26) since he was wearing a linen undergarment. In rejecting David, Michal was also rejecting the Lord because it was He who chose David in preference to Michal's father or anyone from

his house to lead Israel. More probably, Michal's rejection of David actually was symptomatic of an underlying problem in her relationship with God.

Though David's pious actions might have resulted in some embarrassing moments, David was willing to become even more undignified (v. 22), if necessary, to honor the Lord. He would even allow himself to be humiliated in his own eyes for the Lord's sake. People of true faith, such as these slave girls who attended the Yahwistic celebration, would interpret David's actions for what they were, expressions of unrestrained, authentic faith; thus the king would be held in honor by people of faith. Like the people of profound faith throughout the ages, David was willing to risk being misunderstood and humiliated as he pursued a deeper relationship with God (1 Cor. 3:18; 4:10). As a result of this incident — Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death (v. 23). Michal's lack of faith would mean that the house of Saul would be forever separate from Israel's eternal royal dynasty.