

TALKING POINTS Sacred uSE 07 11 21

Mark 6:14-29

Our scripture this morning is entitled “Sacred Use”.

We’ve just read two passages of scripture where the two main persons of the scripture danced.

The first is David. Wonderful David.

David danced because his people are in the presence of the Lord.

The Ark has been returned to his people.

The Ark is that concrete symbol of God’s self-revelation to Moses.

The Ark tells a story. It points to the larger story of God's delivering the people from slavery and providing His divine guidance into the promised land.

It's presence in worship and in the temple, reminds the people of this salvation history and of the nearness of God's Presence with them always.

The relationship with God's people and the Ark, this representation of God, has become complicated in just a matter of a few short verses.

All the people are gathered, including about 30,000 young men of Israel, are celebrating.

2 Samuel 6:5 says that David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with many instruments and great dancing and jubilation.

In the previous chapter God's people had been told very specifically, how to hold the ark as it was being transported.

Only certain people were supposed to touch anything regarding the Ark, and those approved to touch it were given specific rules by God as to how it was to be touched.

This was something that had been set aside specifically for the people of God by God Himself.

It had been declared set apart, special, sacred, by God.

And when our story opens we find two men, Ussah and his brother were guiding the new cart that the ark of God was on.

Even in the rejoicing of the moment God's instructions were being followed

When the procession is moving at some point the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah it says in verse 6 "...Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God..."

Now when I first read this I was horrified, because it seems so normal an act.

Something important appears to be falling, and you reach out to prevent it from falling.

Whatever was in Uzzah's heart, God called "irreverent" in verse 7 it says "The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God."

That's the thing with special objects. We human beings have the temptation to make them the point of the worship.

That's a part of the meaning of the word "irreverent act". There's really not a good word for word translation of what God's words here into English.

Uzzah had allowed his focus to shift to the ark as an object to be worshiped and not an object that intends to point to the God who should be worshipped.

The danger, of course, is that the special objects or rituals will become idols in themselves, rather than signs pointing to "God-with-us".

And David, not quite understanding this, we are told in verse becomes angry with God "because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah."

David, in his anger and his fear, and in his confusion and lack of knowledge of what was going on, questions and asks God "How can I be the one to be responsible for this ark? And David becomes unwilling to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David.

The ark then remains in another location for three months, presumably enough time for King David to gather himself together and to seek God's understanding and to become truly obedient to the will of God.

2 Samuel 6:12 tells us that "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God."

This household was willing to follow all the instructions that the Lord had given about the ark, and they were being blessed because of it by God.

When we allow the presence of the Lord to dwell with us, we are blessed.

The ark, that concrete sign of God's presence, is restored to its intended place.

This time David rejoices so and dances before the Lord with utter abandon.

That's the first dancing persons we see this morning.

And then we come to the focal scripture. Our gospel of Mark

In Mark we are told of another person's dancing.

This time not so sacred a moment.

The people at this dinner that Herod is hosting are not thinking about the presence, or the holiness of God.

They are not in worship.

The dancing we see in Mark is anything but holy.

It's a provocative dance by the daughter of Herodias, wife of Herod.

And there is nothing holy about this particular family.

Mark offers verses that expresses Herod's views of the Jesus' movement.

Unlike others who thought that Jesus was a "prophet", Herod thought that Jesus might be a resurrected John (6:16).

And then Mark very graphically describes to us Herod's ownership in the beheading of John.

Herod was involved in much immorality in his personal life within his own family.

And John called him out on it publically.

John criticized the immoral marriage of Herod and Herodias, who was his brother Philip's wife.

It was Herodias who nursed a grudge against John (verse 19) and wanted to kill John.

Finding that she was unable to, because Herod feared John and protected him because Herod had sense enough to know that John was a righteous and holy man.

The wife of Herod sees her opportunity to rid herself of the holy man John the Baptizer when her daughter is asked to dance provocatively before Herod and his guests.

Two very different moments of dancing.

David, with renewed heart and the people with renewed focus on God, dancing in rejoicing before the Lord at the return of the Ark to the place God had prescribed for the people.

And a young woman dancing provocatively before Herod and the outcome the eventual death of John the Baptizer.

One dancing sacred, the other profane.

Dancing is not bad. It is the object and how they danced that is the point.

Amos tells us that there is a 'plumb line' to our behavior with God and neighbor.

A plumb line is a weight suspended from a string used as a vertical reference line to ensure a structure is centered.

Amos tells us that God uses that as the analogy because it has a lot to do with righteousness, that is "living in right relationship" with God and neighbor.

Amos tells us we are to keep our selves centered in God in such a way that our hearts remain centered on God.

Dancing is just the object to show the lesson here about where the person's hearts were.

Dancing of course is not bad. We all enjoy dancing. I love to dance. Again, dancing is just the object lesson here about where these dancers of scriptures hearts were and how that was modeled in the outcome of their dancing.

What our texts says is what we do on the outside shows what's on the inside of our hearts in our relationship to God and to others.

God gives us gifts, talents and abilities and He desires that we bring our whole selves into a centeredness in God.

No matter where we are in our lives or where our lives bring us to, God wants us to remain centered in Him.

Amos began a shepherd and a keeper of sycamore-fig trees, but God pulled him aside and made him a prophet to his people Israel.

David began a shepherd and God elevated him to a King.

Centeredness in God is the 'plumb line'.

The marked line God says that will keep us along a path were we are in right relationship with God and neighbors.

Everything we do should point to the God that lives within us.

We should nurture the gifts, talents and abilities and He desires that we bring our whole selves into a centeredness in God.

Herodias' daughter and desires showed up in how the daughter danced.

Herod's ease at falling into temptation showed up in his reaction to the stepdaughter's dancing.

David's desires to please God showed in his praise dancing.

What was in Uzzah's heart showed up in his service to the Lord in his reaching for the ark as it was falling.

The ark represented the presence of God. It was not an object to be worshipped, but an object to remind the people of the one they were worshipping.

Like the ark when people look at us they should be reminded of the God we serve.

Our love for God should show up in all that we say and do.

We are the living tabernacles of the Holy Spirit.

What is inside will show on the outside.

AMEN.

Challenge

*what have we done for him?
is the question?
God wants to
shine of air
whole selves
in air
wrap
to him*

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CHALLENGE

BENEDICTION

Children of God, celebrate the life you have been given. Live your life with all your might, as a dance to God's glory. Serve Him with your whole heart and your whole being. Live to the praise of God's glory!!

Receive the benediction as found in 2 Peter 1:2-3

"May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence."

Go in peace knowing you are God's beloved child.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Amen.