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**“Ark Party”**

2 Samuel 6:12b-19; Ephesians 1:3-8a

This week I have had the opportunity to interact with a number of Junior High youths at a church event at the Welsh church/ “Pass It On.” In communicating with them, I was reminded of some of the things that I said to MY kids when they were growing up... and probably was said to me when I was MUCH younger. One that most of us can recall hearing, in one form or another, was when we didn’t eat all of our food, or in some way was wasteful with resources that would be most **appreciated** in other, underprivileged countries. ‘Just LOOK at all that you’re leaving on your plate. Don’t you know that there are starving children in Ethiopia that *wish* they had what you are throwing away?!’ Right?

I well remember a very close friend while our kids were growing up in B.R. who really struggled with making such statements. ‘Liz’ was a very joyful, compassionate, sensitive lady who always lamented that this didn’t help her at ALL to more appreciate what she had. All that it did was to make her more DEPRESSED about the deprived state of those suffering children!

And she brought up a good point. As we compare our own situations with that of others, we can react in different ways. It can make us **appreciate** our **own** status ... OR to **lament** the **other** party’s condition. We can be **grateful** for what we have... OR **jealous** of what others do. We can **rejoice** and/or **relate**... or **reject** and **be critical**. Quite simply, we can either JOIN TOGETHER ... or TURN AWAY. Both in good times and in bad...

In today’s story about David’s leading the processional of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, it is quite clear that this was definitely NOT ‘bad times’... most certainly not a ‘solemn assembly.’ Sounds to me much like our “second line” celebrations in New Orleans. **“Rejoicing... with the sound of the trumpet... Shouting... dancing.”** (2 Samuel 6:12,14, 15) And leading the pack, I’m SURE waving his fringed umbrella, was King David... though instead of fine purple kingly robes, he had ‘dressed down’ to his linen ‘undergarments.’ Ceremonial, perhaps... but ‘skivvies’ nonetheless! He had to be comfortable for all of that ‘happy dance’ he was doing!

But as we read, not EVERYBODY was so ‘happy’ to see this ‘dance party’ going on in the streets. Michal, ‘First Daughter’ in the ‘previous administration’ of King Saul, was NOT

impressed. Unlike that great throng of 'revelers,' Michal (pron?) was not **relating** to David in his **rejoicing**... but instead **rejecting** his behavior, quite **critical** of his shameless display. Hers was not some passing little 'frustration'... the description of her feelings was pretty intense: **"she despised him in her heart."** (2 Samuel 6:16) She was NOT 'riding' on that prevalent 'train' of thought with those other 'positive passengers'...

WHY was she SO negative? Well, I'd say that there were a number of factors to her '**despise**' of David. **Jealousy**, for one. Her father had served his people 'long and hard,' and here comes this young shepherd boy turned conquering hero, whom the people adore. He was getting the kind of adulation

That her DAD, the first King of this new nation of the Israelites, should be getting. How about a little **respect** for 'the one who brought you here'... ?

And speaking of 'respect,' just how much did David think he was having for her Dad's 'office' of King? Was that any way for the highest ranking official in the land to act? How did that reflect on his predecessor? Prancing around in his *underwear*? And not only was it disrespectful to his position as King, but how about 'in front of' that which represented the very presence of the Almighty King, YHWH. Why, that was downright **disgraceful!**

But perhaps what is most telling about her 'despising' of David for his shameless dancing before the most holy 'vessel' in God's Kingdom is what it says about how Michal's **relationship** with **God** differed so greatly with David's. His was an unadulterated JOY that he could NOT contain. Clearly David took quite seriously just how God's Covenant promises to His people represented God's very **presence** among His people. And how that presence was to be celebrated with dancing, and shouting, and playing of trumpets... no matter HOW 'unconventional' that celebration was. There was no such level of excitement and anticipation in Michal. All she could think about was how embarrassing it was to have such a 'PDA'... a 'public display of affection'... for the LORD! Rather than be **grateful** for God's **promises** and **presence**, Michal was **jealous** of David's unabashed, exuberant **gratitude**. In effect, she was saying to David, *"We do not do that here. We never have done it that way. Our fathers never danced before God like that.* Rather than JOIN TOGETHER with him ... in disgust she TURNED AWAY from him. And, in effect, from the God he danced before.

SO, what do their ancient experiences have to do with our modern ones? Well, first of all, let's consider just what it was that David was dancing in front of. The Ark of the Covenant. AKA, the 'Ark of TESTIMONY.' It was NOT a carnival float. But rather, that most holy tangible representation of God's **presence** among His people. That receptacle that contained God's Law to His chosen ones. And what might be the most holy representation of God's presence to US... containing His Law? The **WORD of God**. The Holy Bible. How are we to 'dance' before this repository of God's wisdom bestowed upon us? How do WE demonstrate our respect, our love, our JOY for God's TESTIMONY to us found in these pages? [hold up Bible]

I'm sure that many of you, having been in S. LA most of your lives, have attended a Catholic Mass. You've witnessed the opening processional, with the Bible carefully carried down the aisle and placed on the altar. That as anyone passes in front of that holy place where the Word and Cross stand together, they bow in respect. That when the Gospel is read, the priest kisses the open pages of the Book. While I am not saying we need to become 'Catholic,' capital 'C', perhaps our homage to the Holy Scriptures could be more 'catholic,' 'little 'C.' How do our lives 'bow' to the presence of God found in this Book? How do we 'process' in and out of worship with God's Word in our hands, as we 'process' His purpose for our lives in our hearts? How do we show our LOVE for His Wisdom... perhaps by a 'holy kiss?' One small way might be by responding with renewed **vigor** and **conviction** to that declaration we make after reading the Scriptures in Worship [**Hold up Bible again**]: "This IS the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**"

The manner in which we show our **love** and **thanks** to God only BEGINS with our attention to the **Scriptures**. For out of our 'under-standing' should come our 'under-taking.' Our life as guided by the **WORD of God** must lead us to fulfill the **WORK of God**.

When all of the 'smoke had cleared' from the dancing, shouting, and rejoicing before the Ark of Testimony... once the 'WORD' had been proclaimed... in good 'reformed' tradition ☺ David **responded**. "***Inside the tent that David had pitched for it... David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being.***"(2 Samuel 6:17) There in the 'sanctuary' David first presented to God his 'tithes and offerings.' His own personal expression of gratitude to God. And THEN he took that 'expression of gratitude' out in the streets. That "***when David finished***

(his) *offering... he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed food among all the people.*" (2 Samuel 6:18-19)

Quite literally, David 'put his money where their mouth was!' David, the most powerful and richest man in the land, knew that he had an **obligation** to the people he served. An obligation to the GOD he served! He knew the truth as it would be expressed centuries later by the Apostle Paul: "**Faith without works is dead faith.**" (James 2:26) In this one demonstration of his faith in *Jehovah Jireh* ("the Lord who provides"), the former shepherd David foreshadows that much greater 'Shepherd', Jesus Christ. The One who, centuries later, would feed great multitudes of followers, having compassion on those who 'hunger and thirst.' Suffice it to say that like David... and our Lord Christ... we are called to be more than 'hearers of the Word'... but 'doers.' DOING the '**WORK** of God'...for the PEOPLE of God!

But what I want to leave you with is that which intertwines both our proclamation of the Word of God and our participation in the WORK of God. And that is our **WORSHIP of God**. As you may have heard me refer to it before, our coming together for worship of Almighty God can be seen as the HUB of the 'wheel' of our LIFE in Christ... like a 'wagon wheel.' You know, as in the 'Gospel according to Darius Rucker.' ☺ That as we gather together for praise, prayer, proclamation, and response to God's mighty call on our lives, we are 'illuminated,' and 'empowered' to fulfill all those 'spokes' that emanate from that 'core' of worship: those 'spokes' of **study**, of **service**, of **prayer**, of **fellowship**... all that which helps us 'wheel' through the sometimes 'rocky' pathway of life.

And you know what the 'grease' is to that sometimes 'squeaky wheel' we bring into worship? **JOY!** The same JOY that David felt to be in the presence of God in the streets of Jerusalem is what WE are to feel in here to carry us out into the streets of Welsh/LC. David didn't scandalously dance before 'God and everybody' to impress humans. Not just to get under Michal's skin. (That was just a perk... ☺) **It was an expression of joy that God was real and present in his life.** The same 'joy of the Lord' that God wants US to experience, and express, in our lives.

There are those 'experiences' of our lives... particularly the ones that bring us pain, suffering, hardship... that can, however, make it hard for us to express 'Joy.' But we should

always remember not to confuse 'happiness' and 'joy.' Happiness is more temporal, more dependent on the fluctuation of good and bad circumstances. JOY, however, is not based on the external, but on the internal. Joy comes from the inside. Where Jesus lives... in your **heart**.

And it is to that root source from where our Joy is to come that I will close with that passage from Ephesians. (Were some of you wondering if I was simply going to *ignore* this passage? ☺) Its words remind us of why we can have a JOY that remains even in the darkest times:

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,***  
*who has **blessed us** in Christ **with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places,*  
*just as **he chose us** in Christ before the foundation of the world **to be holy and blameless***  
***before him in love.** He destined us for **adoption** as **his children** through Jesus Christ,*  
*according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of **his glorious grace***  
*that **he freely bestowed on us** in the **Beloved.**" (Ephesians 1:3-6)*

***"Before the foundation of the world"***... before time began... YOU were chosen. ***"In the heavenly places"***... our future... you have been ***"blessed with every spiritual blessing."*** By God's ***"glorious grace,"*** freely given in His **Beloved Son**, we are his ***"adopted children,"*** whom He also **dearly loves**. In the **Word**, in our **Work**, or in our **Worship**, may we *continually, joyfully* proclaim, ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** And THAT, my friends, is definitely worth DANCING about!

CHARGE: My brother Jerry Egbert sent me article re: this psg by **Miguel De La Torre**, a Cuban immigrant as an infant, was raised in a **Catholic** Church in NY, 'born again' in a **Baptist** church in FL, and is a prof at **Methodist** seminary in CO. He wrote:

*"What would happen if your congregation, during a Sunday morning service, were to break out in dance? If instead of following the OoW, those in the congregation were SO moved by the preaching that they started to dance for joy?" [I'd tell you 'what would happen'... the Pastor would PASS OUT! OR, wonder if I'd wandered into a *Pentecostal* church!]*

**Worship** is not merely about how **traditional**, OR how '**state-of-the-art**' it may be... but rather, how **genuine** and '**state-of-the-HEART**' it is. Like David, do we express a JOY that God is real and present in our life? In **Dr. DLT's** words, *"When was the last time you danced before the Lord?"* May you go forth TODAY 'singing and dancing'...