

**David, Dance & Dignity**  
By Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur  
For Berkeley Chinese Community Church  
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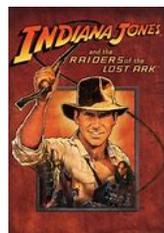
**2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19**

<sup>1</sup>David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup>David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. <sup>3</sup>They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart <sup>4</sup>with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. <sup>5</sup>David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

<sup>12</sup>...So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; <sup>13</sup>and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. <sup>14</sup>David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup>So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

<sup>16</sup>As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

<sup>17</sup>They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt-offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. <sup>18</sup>When David had finished offering the burnt-offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, <sup>19</sup>and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

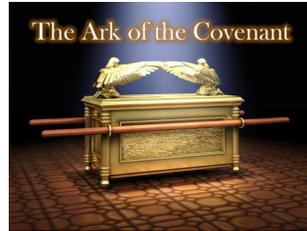


Do you remember Raiders of the Lost Ark, the 1981 movie with Indiana Jones? The Ark in that fictional movie is about the very Ark that King David is celebrating in today's passage.

I can't forget the dramatic scene at the end when it is found! And then when it is opened up, all the latent power of God flashes out and strikes dead the power-hungry Nazis!



Harrison Ford and Karen Allen survive only by attaching themselves to a post and looking away...and everyone cheers. All that, of course, is fiction. But it's not entirely out of keeping with what the Bible says about the ark.



The Ark of the Covenant was a highly decorated box that contained the two tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. The ark came to represent for Israel the power and presence of the Lord. There are some odd stories about the ark in 1 Samuel. The Israelites tried to use the ark's power in battle and then found themselves defeated instead....then the Philistines capture the ark and carry it off.

But wherever the Philistines put the ark, it caused panic and disease. So they sent it back. But by that time even Israel seemed wary of the ark...they leave it in storage for twenty years.

So when his kingdom was consolidated, David decided to bring the ark to his new capital city, Jerusalem. But it's still not something to be taken for granted. Along the way, the ark started to tip and one of the men carrying it, Uzzah, reached out and touched it to steady it, and was zapped dead - the presence of God is serious business. (That part of the story is in the missing verses of today's reading.)

Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, talks about the ark as a "vehicle of legitimation" for David...it's a way of linking a new dynasty with ancient authority. That's probably part of what's going on - David hopes the aura of the ark will make him look more valid and religious....not that David didn't genuinely honor the ark and truly love its God. The Ark of the Covenant embodies the unity of Israel and represents the power and presence of their God. That's a good thing, right? to give a pride of place in a new capital city!

So – some context for the passage – a little background that might help us understand today's story....



Michal – David's wife - she was the disapproving person in the window who found his dancing so shameful. Why is she not dancing with David? Why is behaving like a bitter, nagging wife? What is her story? Well - Michal was the daughter of King Saul. She loved David but her father wouldn't agree to their marriage unless David performed a seemingly impossible task...which David does and marries Michal, but later when Saul is afraid of David, he takes Michal away and marries her off to someone else. After David defeats Saul, he demands Michal back as part of the political bargaining.

Twice the Bible says Michal loved David; and never once does it say he loved her back. She appears to have been a political status symbol for David. This story ends by telling us that Michal never had a child. Some people suggest this was divine punishment of some kind. But others say that this had a natural explanation – that David never touched her – perhaps he didn't want Saul to have grandchildren. If that's the case, it's no wonder that Michal was bitter. .

Anyway, when the Ark at last came to Jerusalem, the people rejoiced and David danced before the Lord with abandon - *stripping down to his shorts* and dancing with abandon.



I can imagine those who were not joining in the celebration might think they were seeing the King dance in a most undignified way. But David was caught up in celebration and adoration of God. He was praising the Lord—body and soul.

The Ark was had arrived — after all the warfare! And David remembers that the presence of God is joyful. What got into David that day? I guess it was the love of God, the joy of faith, and a spirit of worship and praise.

Maybe a question we can ask ourselves is:

When was the last time we danced? When was the last time something got into us and we did something out of the ordinary?



For me – it's been a long time – I think it was someone's wedding reception when folks got pulled onto the dance floor for the chicken dance or a line dance. And yes, it was a time of celebration! No one was thinking about whether or not we looked dignified...we were happy – happy to be celebrating...happy for the newlyweds.

But there were some on the sidelines just watching – and we wondered why they weren't dancing? Maybe for all those Michal kind of reasons—What if somebody sees me? What if I make a fool of myself? What if it's undignified? What if there are those like Michal judging and condemning?



You know, “Dignity” has a number of definitions:

- the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect; or
- a composed or serious manner or style; or
- a sense of pride in oneself; self-respect;

It appears that “dignity” is all about how one appears or behaves...even conscious of yourself or how others perceive you.

But here’s the thing: if you’re dancing for God, what difference does it make – whether it’s dignified or not? In fact – do you remember? A while back – we were sure that God calls us to be a fool for Jesus –talk about undignified!



It seems to me that so much of our discussions on Sunday mornings is about losing the “I” and establishing God as the focus in our lives...in whatever it is that we are doing – in whatever it is that God is calling us to do.



Remember the Flip Wilson character Geraldine? One of her most memorable lines was, “The devil made me do it!”

Wouldn’t it be great if we would say, “The Lord made me do it!” And whatever it is that we are doing for God, we do it with abandon...we do it for God – body and soul...heart and soul!



How many remember the Hokey Pokey? Did you do the Hokey Pokey when you were a kid?

Recently with your kids or grandkids? Or if you were teacher – danced it with your class?

Let's do it now! Stand up if you are ok with that – or stay seated and move with us –

Let's limber up! <<shake hands and feet and roll head>>

Jojo – can you and Mark and Anita come lead us? and anyone else, come on up!



You put your right hand in; you put your right hand out  
You put your right hand in and you shake it all about  
You do the Hokey Pokey and you turn yourself about.  
That's what it's all about.

You put your left hand in...  
You put your right foot in  
You put your left foot in  
You put your head in...  
You put your hip in  
You put your whole self in....

OK – Fun!!! you may be seated....

Now your test – what was the last verse?

**<<You put your whole self in....that's what it's all about.>>**



It seems to me that THAT is what it's all about – whatever it is that we are doing for God – we put our whole selves into it. Maybe it's not dancing, but everybody can do something for the Lord with passion and energy and reckless abandon.

Maybe it's singing....or praying....or cutting vegetables for the luau...or giving donations...or setting up for a fellowship lunch...

Ask yourself, "What will I do for the Lord?"



Remind yourself “Don’t worry that what it isn’t good enough, or refined enough, or that someone might take offense?”

- Just praise the Lord and do it!
- Just dance without worrying about who’s watching
- Just sing without worrying if it’s the right kind of music for church
- Just give without counting the cost
- Just serve the way God calls you to without caring if anyone disapproves.

We have suffered many losses of loved ones since the beginning of this year. We are reminded often of our mortality. Our time on earth is finite - and then it will be too late to dance.

So between now and then, whenever it may be, will we dance and sing and shout for joy before the Lord, or will I be proper and dignified and honorable? Will we dance like David danced – focusing on God – and not on what others might think?

Let us pray –

O God, help us remember this week and every week –

When You come into my heart

I will sing like David sang.

When You come into my heart

I will dance like David danced

When You come into my heart

I will praise like David praised.

Amen!