

The Ark Brought To Jerusalem

2Samuel 5:16- 6:23 (Key verse 6:12b)

"...So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing."

Are we here today out of reverence before God, whether joining online or physically or are we at this worship service out of routine? Our relationships with other believers, friends, family and colleagues at work are we living them out, through reverence before God. This also includes any of our religious activities. We learned last week how God established David as king of Israel, in today's passage David as king of Israel returned the ark of God back to the city in Jerusalem. However, it was not a smooth return, David failed the first time because he failed to act in reverence before God. Though David had full proof good intentions he still failed which also resulted in a loss of life. Through the return of the ark of God we want to learn the importance of acting in reverence before the almighty holy God. First part of the message is David's illustration of how to act in reverence before God and the second part the return of the ark and how God helps David act reverentially. May the Lord help us receive one word so we may repent, be able to act and live in reverence before God in our lives. I pray that we are encouraged through this passage to act in reverence before God in our lives. Amen.

In our last book of 1 Samuel we learned how through the pressure from the Philistines, King Saul passed on. Last week we learned also of how David was anointed king of Israel. Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king they **went in full force** to search for him [17]. They had one goal in mind, to kill David, they knew David very well even nearly worked together to attack Israel at some point. When David heard about it, he went to inquire of the Lord in the stronghold. How do you go in hiding to pray when your enemies are coming with might to attack you? Should you not defend yourself? Should you not do what matters most? David went in prayer and this shows his deep reliance on God, God was absolutely real to David, not some person far away in the sky so David in this difficult time went into prayer. Look at verse 19, so David inquired of the Lord, **"Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hands?"** David wanted to know from God whether he should go and attack, secondly whether the Lord will deliver the Philistines into his hands. David might have known from his experiences that he could conquer the Philistines, however same time what mattered was God's leading and presence in the path he would take. It was not about what he thought or felt about it, but God's leading and presence. Just as it is God who established him as King, David understood that he was simply the Lord's servant and needed God's direction. All his actions had to be in reverence before God.

After the Lord directed David to go and attack, David obeyed, look at verse 20, "So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, **"As waters break out, the Lord has broken out against my enemies before me"**. David experienced the power of God working beside and through him. This was an actual lived experience David had with God.

In verse 22, we read that once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim in order to attack David. They now came with a different strategy. What did David do? Look at verse 23, **"David inquired of the Lord**, and he answered, "Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the poplar trees." David inquired of the Lord once more, he did not even allow God's previous response to be the answer in this similar situation. This time around the Lord's answer was not simply go, the Lord provided guidance or strategy on how David should attack the Philistines. The Lord further says in verse 24, **"As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army."** This means after David is by the poplar trees he was supposed to wait for the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees. It is usually not easy to wait especially when your life is at risk, however David waited, how could he wait? He could wait because it was the Lord who will go out in front of him to strike the Philistines. David had to wait for the Lord to act first. Here we can see clearly God's intention in leading David. God himself wanted to go in front of David and strike the Philistines while David follows and participates in the battle. Just like the first time, David experienced God break out against the Philistines. In this way David could have a lived experience with God. Look at verse 25, when David did as the Lord commanded, he struck down the Philistines all the way to Gibeon of Gezer. **When David listened and obeyed God's leading**, when his actions were in reverence to God's word, he could experience the power and presence of God. So in all his life circumstances David had all the more reasons to inquire of the Lord. For David this was the most effective, best and practical way to deal with his situations. Though David was an experienced warrior, he knew that God was more real, wiser and stronger than his own human strength and abilities. David had an active relationship with God. God was David's personal saviour who went before him in battle.

When we have an active relationship with God we will come to him for direction in our lives circumstances. God was not like a dead statue to David, a statue he leaves at home after a morning prayer and finds it again when he returns home. As daily events changed in David's life, David inquired of the Lord. God was ever present in his life and as He is ever present in our lives today. In life threatening circumstances where we can do something about it, it is not easy to go into our secret place or place of silence and pray. We feel like we need to actively do something, praying in those circumstances may feel like we are wasting time. That was not the case with David, enquiring of the Lord was the best and real way to deal with his situation. So he humbly surrendered to God in prayer, he could experience God newly in his life. In this way David could not doubt God's presence and love in his life. I pray that we too may have such a living relationship with God, a relationship that is real and alive. Looking at David, it is as if our live circumstances are an opportunity for us to humble ourselves before God in prayer and listen to him. I believe the God of David is our God today, when we pray he listens so we too should listen and obey for our God is living.

Since David had a relationship with God, he knew God's heart. It was God's desire that the ark of God be returned into the city of Jerusalem. Moreover God desires for his people to have active relationship with him. That is the role of king David, to bring people to the presence of God. Returning the ark back into Jerusalem was an obvious thing for David. It was a good thing which he knew would please God. However somehow David failed to return the Ark the first time and also Uzaah died due to God's judgement, it was only at the second time he tried that he could return it. Why could not David return the Ark the first time? What does God's judgement of death upon Uzaah reveal about God? As we shall see that actually, both David and Uzzah had good intentions in returning the ark, yet Uzzah died and David failed to return the ark the first time even though he had a good relationship with God. What was the Lord trying to teach Israel in the return of the ark? The rest of my message is to try respond to these questions.

In verse 1-3, we read that David brought together thirty thousand able young men of Israel, all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the Lord Almighty, **who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark**. David wanted to make sure he has good manpower to return this great ark of God back to Jerusalem. Look at verse 3-4, "They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it." This Ark originated from when God commanded Moses to build an ark of acacia wood [Exodus 25:10]. The word ark means a box or chest, it was completely covered with gold. It was 114,3 cm long, 68,6 cm wide and 68,6 cm high. In it were the tablets of the law that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod. The top cover of the ark was covered by what was called the Mercy Seat and this was where the Lord dwelled. There was one cherubim of gold on both ends of the mercy seat. The Lord once told Moses in Exodus 25:22, "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites." This means that the Ark of God was a religious symbol where people could meet God. It symbolized the presence of God. And so David wanted to have a central place where Israel could be in the presence of God. The returning of the Ark was therefore really a great day, a historic moment for all of Israel. It had stayed with Abinadab for 20 years and now through king David plans were in place to return it. David and Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, etc, will all sorts of instruments [5]. It was simply pure joy for all Israel. What could go wrong in this monumental period.

Let us look at verse 6-7, "When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. **7The 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.**" All of a sudden the situation changed, how did this happen? Because the oxen stumbled, the ark of God was on its way to the threshing floor and Uzzah reached out to take hold of the ark of God. Uzaah was simply trying to help, he had all the good intentions in his act, however still he did not act reverential to God, he touched the ark of God. The word of God [Numbers 4:15], had clearly stipulated that no one should touch the ark of God, **for they will surely die**. God's ark of the covenant is holy however somehow Uzzah thought the threshing floor was less holy than him. Whereas the truth is that we are made of the dust of this earth. The ark had been at his father's house for 20 years so he had gotten too accustomed to the ark and treated the ark more casually. However, **God is almighty, God is holy** and Uzaah's irreverent act costed him his life. He fell under God's wrath of judgement.

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David became angry for he could not understand how can a good intention of bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem become a curse [8]. Look at verse 9, "David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, **"How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?"** So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David. He lost the courage and so Instead David took the ark of the Lord to the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite [10]. At this point, the plan to return the ark to the city of David was a complete failure. It did not matter how much planning was made, how joyful people were and how sure they believed they were pleasing God. Because of the action of no reference before God, David's plan failed. Not only did his plan fail, God was displeased and showered a curse upon Israel.

Through this act of God, David remembered his mistake, David says in 1 Ch 15:13b, "...We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." Poles were supposed to be used to carry the ark upon the shoulders of the Levities [1 Ch 15:15]. **But they instead used a cart to carry the ark.** Their actions were irreverent before God. As we learned from the last part of chapter 5, when David was been attacked by the Philistines, his life was at risk and he was not clear of what to do and so he prayed for direction. However, why did David not inquire of the Lord this time around when bringing the ark to Jerusalem? I believe it is because the plan and the idea seemed great, all seemed obvious and right before their eyes. Even though their plan and idea was centred on pleasing God. Bottom line was that they were doing their own thing. Similarly when Uzzah touched the ark, he had all the good intentions. Their great mistake was their wonderful plans were not in reverence before God. Their plans were not in submission to the prescribed ways of God. As Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a person's heart, But the advice of the LORD will stand." As a new established king of Israel, David will do well to always place all matters before God, whether the idea or plan seem full proof, so that his actions are with reverence before God. For only in this way will his kingdom be exalted for all other nations to see that Israel has a living God.

Look at verse 11, "The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household." When David heard about this, and that it was because of the ark of the Lord that Obed was blessed, David became encouraged and his joy returned look at verse 12, "Now King David was told, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." **So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.** This time around it was not simply about taking the ark from Obed-Edom to Jerusalem whichever way, David made sure to act with reverence before God. The ark was transported in the prescribed way, carried in poles by the Levites. This method of carrying the ark may appear primitive whereas using a cart seem modern an advanced. However still, it is God's purpose and plan that Levites carry the ark upon their shoulders. Similarly in our times church leaders and ministers of the word, and Christians in general are many times may be tempted to modernize the gospel of Jesus Christ. By either avoiding to talk about certain things in the Bible, trying to appeal to more members by talking less about repentance and God's demand for holiness. All these pressures and concerns may come from a pure and good intentions to help our young people know God. Such ideas or plans will fail badly. Worse part, Instead of being a blessing, they will become a curse for our new generation of young people. It would be better that they be in a bar than actually be in such a church. We should be careful never to fall into that trap, thinking that the end justifies the means.

When we come to whorship God, are we simply treating it as a casual thing, having come together in the name of the Lord but simply praising and singing for our own enjoyment without reverence before God. Most especially now under this covid, having online whorship service can be treated very casual, are we worshipping with reverence before God whether online or physically here at church. I confess that am guilty of many times treating worship service casually forgetting that I am in the presence of God. Also during message preparation easily getting distructed and forgetting that I am actually dealing with the holy word of the almighty God. We should inquire of the Lord, listen and obey God's prescribed way. We should have reverence before God and the best way is to study his word, meditate on it with much prayer so that it is God's plans that are established in our hearts. We can see from what happened to Uzaah that doing a wonderful thing in the name of the Lord but acting without reverence brings death. As we saw with David afterwards, we will lose God's courage to serve him. God wanted to bless Israel and not be a curse. David realized this through what God did to Obed-Edom household, because Obed-Edom acted reverential to God, his household was blessed.

The ark of God symbolises the presence of God, dealing with the ark requires reverence before God. Good ideas and plans especially those seem centred on God, should surrender before our holy God. Should be tested through the word of God and should pass the test. Are those ideas in line with God's prescribed ways otherwise even the ark that is meant to be a

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blessing will become a curse. Even Jesus new the prescribed way he will save the world from sin, it was the cross. However nearing the day all kinds of temptations came his way, he prayed so hard that some way it may not be the cross. Asking the lord for another way instead of the cross for he could sense the pain and suffering it would bring. However, in the end he accepted God's way, and said not my will but your will be done. Today the cross of Jesus is our great blessing. Because of the cross of Jesus we live under the grace and mercy of God. No one can ever please God or even have the courage to serve this Holy and Mighty God. But because of the cross of Jesus, because Jesus submitted to God's way to save you and me from the power of sin, we are blessed. We have all the reasons to rejoice like David, we have full access to the holiness of God so we may sense his presence and have courage to serve him sacrificially.

The ark was now on its way to Jerusalem, and when those carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, David sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf [13]. Also when they pitched the ark in its place at the city, David scarified burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord [17]. This was David's way of conducting sin offering and repentance due to his irreverence. There was so much joy, David danced before the Lord with all his might. Because he repented and surrendered to act reverentially before God by bringing the ark the prescribed way, he could truly rejoice without any reservation. To the point that even his wife despised David in her heart, because she saw him leaping and dancing before the Lord [15,16].

Look at verse 18, "After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, **he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty.**" This was a wonderful day indeed, the ark of God was a true blessing for Israel. Verse 19 shows us that, David was so hospitable and with a shepherd heart served each person at a time, he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes. What a blessing with so much unity because of acting reverential to God.

In conclusion, returning the ark into the city was a wonderful thing for Israel. As king of Israel, this was good for Israel. However, we need to act with reverence before God. Because God's holiest thing can become a curse. We learned that it is not just about returning the ark, but it is also important how it is done. While in Canada most of my Muslim friends battled to understand why the way for the cross through Jesus death was God's prescribed way for our salvation. For them God can just forgive us all, no need for Jesus to die and suffer on the cross. However this was God's way to save you and me, and because Jesus obeyed, surrendered all his will to act reverential to God we live under grace today. And it is this grace of God that gives us strength and courage to serve God sacrificially. I pray that we may live and act with reverence before our king Jesus so that we too may experience his presence in our lives and serve him with joy. May living with reverence before God give us courage to surrender our will and serve Him. Amen.