

All of us are going somewhere. We have plans to reach a certain stage in our career, a pathway for who we hope our children will become, or dreams of what the future holds. But what happens when you find yourself in a situation in which you need to reroute? Maybe you made a good decision that didn't turn out how you hoped. Perhaps you made a foolish decision, and you need to pick up the pieces. We're going to study key moments in the life story of Israel's King David. Like David, our personal stories are interspersed with by both favor and failure, but it's never too late to reroute.

We are going to read about David's attempts to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. It was important moment for David.

After mourning the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David defeated both internal and external enemies and established his kingdom in Jerusalem. As the finishing touch to his kingdom, David wanted the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was a holy object, containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's staff, and a jar of manna. More importantly, the Ark was the place of the presence of God among His people. The Ark was the place God promised to meet with His people (Ex. 25:22).

To understand how David's experience with the Ark unfolds, we need to understand the experience or the Ark in the Samuel narratives. At the beginning of 1 Samuel, the people of God got off track. We read the priests - who were tasked to lead the nation in the way of God - were evil and unjust. And God said that a change in leadership was coming. The effects of a nation that has lost sight of God is seen in what happens with the Ark.

In 1 Samuel 4, the nation goes to battle against the Philistines, who defeated Israel. In hopes of turning things around, the leaders think, let's bring the priests - the sons of Eli - with us to battle tomorrow - and bring the Ark. There is no way we'll lose. Israel was defeated again, but this time it was worse - the priests were killed, and the Ark of God was taken. A messenger escaped the battlefield and returned to Eli. He gave Eli the tragic news: Israel was defeated in battle. Not only that, your sons were killed. And not only that, but the Ark of God was taken. When Eli heard this, he fell over and died. Eli's daughter-in-law was pregnant, and when she hears what happened, she went into labor and gave birth to a boy. She named the boy, Ichabod, saying that the glory of God had gone from Israel.

The Philistines had the Ark, and they took it to their city, Ashdod. They put in the temple next to their god, Dagon. The next morning, the priests came to the temple and found the statue of Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark of God. They think perhaps something happened, maybe the earth shifted, but it won't happen again. So, they put him back up.

The next morning, not only was the statue of Dagon face down before the Ark of God, but his hands were cut off, and his head was cut off.

The people of Ashdod want it gone, so they sent it to Gath. When the Ark arrived in Gath. Affliction hit the town and drove the people to panic. They sent it to Ekron. When the people of Ekron stopped its arrival before it entered the town. The Philistines gathered together and determined to send it back to Israel. They could not deal with it anymore.

So, the Philistines loaded up the Ark on a nice cart with new cattle, along with apology gifts, and sent it to the Israelite town of Beth Shemesh. When the people saw the Ark arrive on the road, they rejoiced at the sight. But a few of them had doubts - yes, it was the Ark, but they thought the Philistines took all the stuff from inside the it. Even though God instructed them not to touch the Ark nor look inside the Ark, they had a quick look. Seventy people died that day because they looked inside the Ark. The Bethshemites ask this profound question, "Who can stand in the presence of this holy God?"

They found a guy named Abinadab and shipped the Ark off to his house. The Ark stayed at Abinadab's house for 20 years, until verse three of 2 Samuel 6.

**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. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. 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. vv.3-7**

David built his kingdom in Jerusalem. As the finishing touch, he wanted the Ark. So, he took 30,000 soldiers, a band, and a new cart to Abinadab's house. They loaded up the Ark on the cart, struck up the band, and started down the road. But the oxen pulling the cart stumbled, and the cart started to tip over. Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark and fell dead. That may seem extreme - Uzzah was just trying to keep things steady.

**Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?" He was not willing to take the**

**ark of the Lord to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. 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. 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. vv.8-12**

David felt the same. In fact, we're told that David was angry at God - and afraid of God. He says, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?" (v.9) His words echo the cry of the Bethshemeshites: "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?" (1 Samuel 6.20). David doesn't know what to do with the holy presence of God.

### **What David had to be taught.**

God had become an object to David. He had lost the sacred for the ordinary. God is a "Presence," not an object. David turned God into an object that he needed to complete his kingdom. Sometimes we speak You when we mean it.

### **David does a Reroute**

David didn't know what to do with the Ark, so he had it sent to the house of a man named Obed-Edom. There it sat for three months. And then an interesting thing happened. David was told that God's favor had been poured out on the household of Obed-Edom. In other words, God was filled with favor and grace toward the people. David saw a new way to relate to God.

**When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets. vv.13-15**

David said, "Let's try this again." They go to Obed-Edom's house. This time they carry the Ark on poles. God designed the Ark to be transported on the poles attached (Exod. 25:12-14), carried by the priests. They leave the house, and take a first step - everything is ok. They take a second step - everybody is still alive. They take a third, fourth, and fifth step. They take a sixth step, stop, put the Ark down and worship. They get a sense of the holiness of God among them, and their relationship to Him.

David has learned to relate to God as Presence. In this moment, David puts aside his kingship for the role of priest. He puts on an ephod, which was the attire of the priest who met with God. He changed his outward

because something inward changed for him. God is not one for David to subdue, but God is Presence for David to move toward.

Move towards God. God gives grace freely and lavishly. There is no end to God's grace. Jesus died for you to bring you to the ultimate reroute. He died to bring you to the place of a new life with God. Anyone who says yes to Him has this new life. It is a new life marked by grace that God gives freely and lavishly.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC South. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

© 2019 Central Peninsula Church South, Redwood City, CA  
Catalog No.1435-1SC