

We're looking at key moments in the life story of Israel's King David. Like David, our personal stories are interspersed with both favor and failure, triumph, and tragedy. But our prayer is that no matter what you are going through, no matter how far you feel you are from God, no matter how discouraged, angry, or afraid you feel, it's never too late to reroute.

Julie and I were very close to a wonderful family who attended our church in Wisconsin. They have four children who grew into wonderful young adults who follow Jesus. I had the blessing of officiating at a double wedding where two of the daughters were married in a combined ceremony. The wife led a ministry that took students, educators, and pastors on educational tours through Washington DC, New York, Boston, Jamestown, and Plymouth to help us learn about the Christian heritage of our country and how Christian values helped form the foundational beliefs of our country. This family worshipped and served in my church. They led the parade for some wonderful opportunities we had to equip our church to follow Jesus.

A few years after I had officiated one of the daughter's weddings, I got a phone call. On the other end was her mother. She was sobbing, and she was terrified. She was crying out to God. I immediately went over to their house and heard the story. Her daughter's little boy was a toddler. He had climbed up the stairs of their above ground pool, figured out a way to slide under the cover, and had fallen in and drown. Unimaginable tragedy had struck this family who followed Jesus. Grief poured out of these young parents. Anger welled up inside them. Why God? Why did you allow our little boy to be taken from us? Confusion was all over their faces. This didn't seem like something the God they knew would let happen. This didn't seem like something the God they served would let happen.

When was the last time God left you confused? When was the last time you were mad at God? Have you ever felt that you were holding on to your faith by your fingertips, while you wondered what in the world was going on?

It's for times like this that God gives us stories from David's life to help us pick up the pieces. We can read about David's bravery in his stand against Goliath. We can read about David's heart for God when we read the Psalms. We can read about David's political and military leadership when we read about his anointing as king and how David the warrior defeated God's enemies and united Israel. We can read about his spiritual leadership as David

sought to make a city on a hill we know as Jerusalem, the place where God dwells. Through all of this you wonder, "How could I, sitting here today, relate to David? What can I apply to myself from this man's life?"

Understand, in the last half of David's life; we see trouble, tragedy, sin, death, grief, and confusion. But we see how God provides redemption. Let's call them redemptive reroutes. In this fallen world in which we live, every one of us needs the hope of redemptive reroutes so that heartfelt worship will well up out of us.

2 Samuel 6 is one of those, "What in the world is going on," passages. We think we know where the passage is going, we think everyone will live happily ever after, and then we are hit with something that will confuse us, and shock us.

For a moment, let's go back 30 years before 2 Samuel 6. Back to 1 Samuel 4. Long before David had even entered the narrative, Eli, the famous priest who mentored the prophet Samuel, had two evil sons named Hophni and Phinehas. Eli's sons disrespected the Ark. They thought the Ark would wield God's power for anyone who had the Ark in their possession no matter whether they had a heart for God or not. With their evil hearts, they took the Ark into battle against their archenemies, the Philistines. The account is recorded in 1 Samuel 4. They put the Ark out in front of their lines as some secret and magic weapon. As you might think, God didn't bless their battle plan. Thirty thousand Israelite soldiers were killed that day, including Hophni and Phinehas. The Philistines defeated the Israelites and captured the Ark.

The Philistines had no idea what they had. They brought the Ark into their capital, the city of Ashdod, and they placed the Ark in their temple next to their pagan god, Dagon. In the following chapters, we read of God causing plagues and tumors on the Philistines. It didn't take the Philistines long to say, "Forget this, we've got to get rid of the Ark. It's killing us." So, they loaded the Ark on a new cart and sent it back to Israel. It stayed hidden in a private house of a good man named Abinadab and his two good sons, Uzzah and Ahio.

Years passed, and the nation of Israel entered into a season of blessing. God was with them, and it was a reason for rejoicing. God gave David the throne from Saul. God gave David victory over the Philistines in battle. God gave David Jerusalem to become the center of worship for their nation. There was great rejoicing throughout the nation of Israel. Why? Because God was

making it clear that he was with them. And since the Ark was the symbol of his presence and power with them, it was time to retrieve the Ark from Abinadab's home and take it to Jerusalem.

For us, this is a great reminder that God will never let us go. He is with us. He is for us, and he fights our battles for us. That is a reason for rejoicing.

### **The Lord's Desire To Be With Us Is A Reason For Rejoicing**

**David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. He and 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. 2 Samuel 6: 1-2**

Notice that thirty thousand were killed by the Philistines losing the Ark. And now David takes thirty thousand more, not into battle but to go retrieve the Ark. What was the Ark, and why did David want it? I'm sure David wanted the Ark in Jerusalem to unite his Kingdom politically. But we also know that David had a heart for God. He hungered for intimacy with God. David said, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple" (Psalm 27:4). The Ark represented the spiritual reality that God's presence, his love, and his power, is what's needed to govern one's life more than anything else. The presence of the Ark in Jerusalem would unite the worship of Israel.

The ark was made of wood, rectangular in shape, gold-plated inside and out. It had a gold border around the outside forming a rim. It was a chest with a see-through grated cover made of gold, called the mercy seat. At each end of the cover was a gold cherubim or angel. These angels faced each other with wings that stretched out over the golden cover. The angels had to be small because the ark had to be light since it was mobile.

Inside the ark were three objects. A golden jar containing manna from the wilderness, Aarons' ancient rod, and the stone tablets with the commandments etched on them. Right above the cover or mercy seat is where God promised he would meet with His people.

This piece of furniture was holy. So holy, God gave specific instructions on how to carry it. At the base of each of the four corners was a ring of gold. Gold plated poles were slipped through the rings, and the entire chest was to be carried so that no human hand ever touched the ark itself. Handling the Ark was to be done by the Levites and the poles were to be carried on their shoulders. Every aspect of worship was important, and that is where David got into trouble.

**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, sistrams and cymbals. vv. 3-5**

The scene is amazing. It was like a marching band in a parade, a parade of rejoicing – led by David. The Ark was coming to Jerusalem!

**When they came to the threshing floor of Nakhon, 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. 6-7**

What? Seriously? Irreverent act? Uzzah reaching out to steady the Ark so it wouldn't fall off the cart was an irreverent act? So God struck him down? Are you kidding? That doesn't sound like the God I worship.

Nothing kills a good party like God's wrath. The marching band goes silent. Thirty thousand soldiers are frozen in their tracks. If you are disturbed by this story, you are not alone. David was angry. He must have thought, "What kind of God would make me king, would defeat my enemies, would place Jerusalem into my hands, and then kill my friend all for an accident."

**Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. v. 8**

Perez Ussah literally means, "The place where God burst forth." And David did what we all do when we are confused by what God allows and doesn't allow. We bring God into our court of judgment. We stand before God and pronounce God guilty for not acting the way we want him to act.

David's anger soon turned to fear. He decided not to bring the Ark into his city.

**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. vv. 9-11**

Why did Uzzah have to die? This may seem hard for us. Because we may think a lot like David.

First, God said the Ark must be moved a certain way. It must be carried. And it must be carried by Levites with poles slid through the ringlets, on their shoulders. Instead, David tried to transport the ark in the same way as the Philistines. He put the ark on a cart. Well at least it was a new cart, right? That's what the

Philistines did back in 1 Samuel. What is the big message? It isn't about poles and ringlets. The message is about our life.

Why did Uzzah have to die? He broke the rules. They all knew if you touched the Ark, you died. Even if your intentions were good to keep it from falling off a cart. Some of us might be thinking right now. "This is a perfect example of why I don't believe in God. It's all a bunch of rules." Or, "You guys stand up there telling us to draw close to God, and this is why I could never draw close to God because, wham! I break a rule, and he zaps me." Many of us have a deep seeded fear that our relationship with God is based on keeping rules, and the reality is we break rules every day.

Uzzah's example identifies how huge the chasm is between our Holy God and us. Uzzah was arguably a good person. He did good things. He went to church. Maybe some of us are thinking, "I think that my good intentions are enough to work myself into God's good favor. So what if I touch the Ark, my intentions are noble." Or "I think that my way is the more pragmatic way, the more efficient way. Transporting on a new cart makes sense. I will ask God to bless my way."

Our Holy God told David, and he is telling us. "You can't manage me. I don't owe you anything. You have no idea the amount of mercy I extend to you every day."

Two things we see so far. God desires to be present with us, and for that, we rejoice. And God desires to be respected for His holiness, and that is a reason for reverence.

### **The Lord's Desire To Be Respected For His Holiness Is A Reason For Reverence**

Over the next three months, David learned God's desires. God was calling him back on God's terms. God was doing a redemptive rerouting of David. Even though David always had a heart truly sensitive to God, he now realized that his heart was prone to wonder. And our hearts are prone to wonder too. David's reroute likely felt to him like he was being disciplined. And our reroutes likely feel like we are being disciplined too.

The writer of Hebrews says in chapter 12, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves..." (Heb. 12: 5b – 6). A parent who truly loves his child will not just let them do whatever they want. He will discipline them in the ways of God so they might be rerouted back to the one who truly loves them and protects them. In His holiness, God is committed to rescuing us from ourselves; to rescue me from my own route; to rescue me from writing my own story. God is saying to David and to us, "I love you too much to let you do what you want. Try to see my discipline, that my rerouting is evidence of my grace to you."

What are we seeing so far? In confusing times, in "what the heck is going on times," God wants us to understand the balance between rejoicing over the goodness of God and showing reverence because of the holiness of God. And he wants us to understand from our story, when worship is to be sacrificial giving, and when worship is to be a joyous celebration.

And we now see that demonstrated in our story.

**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. 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. 12-15**

Obed's household must have understood this balance. There was no death, no tumors, just blessings. In the Old Testament, sacrifices meant not just honoring God with a song, but honoring God out of one's wealth. Animals were the currency of the day. David was honoring God not just with singing but with his life. No irreverent or flippant worship, no doing it their own way. They did it God's way with rejoicing, reverence, celebration, and generous sacrifice. David was a man who has been rerouted and surrendered to the holiness and grace of God. A man who was free in his worship. The rerouted obedient guy was free. No longer in bondage because of his sin, his anger, his guilt, or his disobedience. Have you noticed how much those who turn away from God talk about their freedom? About how they are free to set their own path? But you know that their lives are anything but free. It's bondage. The free guy is leading another parade in joyful dance.

No masks, no rebellion, no resistance, no going one's own way, no blame, no rationalizing, nothing to hide, just obedience. In confusing and troubling times, let the Lord's discipline of grace and his holiness reroute you into the freedom of obedience.

For my grief-stricken friends in Wisconsin, they saw a broken world where it appears that God didn't intervene and avert this tragic outcome. God didn't favor them. And they were angry, confused and that is so understandable.

And not only did they see a broken world, they saw their own brokenness. They were racked with guilt. They asked, "How could we have been so careless not to fully secure the cover? How could we have taken our eyes off our son for even one minute?"

I want you to know that this couple didn't find relief from their anger, their guilt, and their confusion by running (rerouting) away from God in their pain. And that was their tendency, and it would likely be ours too. Do you know where they found relief?

They found relief by running to God, where they could say as the song says, "Even if you don't Lord, our hope is in you." And one day they were leading the parade again, singing, "It is well with my soul."

## **The Lord's Grace And Holiness Is A Reason for Obedience**

And when you are free, people who are not free will have trouble with you being free. Enter his wife, Michal,

**As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart. v. 16**

Why would Michal, David's wife, feel this hatred for her husband. Hard to know for sure, but did you notice her father was Saul, who didn't finish well. Michal must have thought she knew exactly how a king should act because her dad was a king. Saul would have never subjected himself to dressing and acting like a plain priest. Saul wasn't free. And his daughter Michal wasn't free.

So, once the Ark was brought into the Tent, and he made the final sacrifices. It was a day to remember forever and ever. One final touch was David giving bread and cakes to every Israelite there to take home and bless their family. And then David, who was filled with the holy spirit eager to celebrate what God had done, and what he had learned, returned to his home to bless his household.

**When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!" v. 20**

Sarcasm, jab, jab. She mocked David. She was embarrassed. She wished he would have walked beside the Ark like Uzzah who looked religious, rather than dance before the Ark free and alive. These two didn't have good chemistry. David had entered a cold barren palace, and he returned the sarcasm.

**David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in**

**honor." And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death. vv. 21-22**

David knew where he stood with the Lord, and he knew he was free. David knew what kind of God he served, and he was confident.

## **What kind of God do you want to serve? Be honest.**

Do you want to serve a God who will blindly endorse your kingdom you are trying to build on earth? Do you want to serve a God who will sign off His approval to your law that you write for your life? Do you want to serve a God who will willingly compromise for you to get ten minutes of happiness? A happiness that will fade away in ten more minutes? Do you want to serve a God who will leave you in the messes of your own making? Do you want to serve a God who won't say no to you and won't love you enough to discipline you and reroute you back?

This story of the Ark is made vivid and real for us when we are rerouted to a hill right outside the city wall of Jerusalem - a hill called Golgotha. The place where Jesus was crucified to death on a cross. Let your mind and heart go to that place now.

It was the holiness of God and the un-holiness of man that marched Jesus to the cross. On the cross, the absolute holiness of God and the absolute Grace of Jesus meet.

Jesus died on that cross willingly as the only holy sacrifice that ever lived. As we saw with Uzzah this morning, God demands holiness, and sin must be punished.

"God, we worship you this morning. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. Who was and is, and is to come." To you, God, be all honor, and glory and blessing, forever and ever."

We see that God's grace was revealed on the cross. It was God's Grace that demanded a holy sacrifice be made to pay the penalty for our un-holiness. And as we saw in the story today, David caught a glimpse of God's grace that would be embodied in David's descendent, the King of Kings, on that cross.

And it's God's grace that reroutes us to be free and obey in the light of our forgiveness. It's God's grace that reroutes us into closeness with God, like David experienced.

God, may you reroute all of us by your grace, to receive forgiveness and to live in light of that forgiveness. Rescue us from our own way. Give us a new heart for God. Reroute us in these confusing times to be set free to worship and obey. This is our hope because only you are great. Amen.

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

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