14 -20 July 2024 Extravagant worship

2 Samuel 6: 1-5, 12b -19

**The Ark Brought to Jerusalem**

**6**David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. **2**He and all his men went to Baalah[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+6%3A+1-19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8160a)] in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+6%3A+1-19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8160b)] the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. **3**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 **4**with the ark of God on it,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+6%3A+1-19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8162c)] and Ahio was walking in front of it. **5**David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+6%3A+1-19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8163d)] harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. **13**When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. **14**Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, **15**while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

**16**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.

**17**They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord. **18**After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty. **19**Then 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.

**Bible notes**

The Ark of the Covenant was the holiest object that Israel possessed. It contained the tablets of the law, written by God and given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:1). It travelled with the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings and, when Samuel was a boy, it was kept at the old temple in Shiloh (1 Samuel 3:3). The Israelite elders took it into battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:4), believing that victory would be certain with the Lord among them; but the Philistines defeated them and captured the Ark (1 Samuel 4:11). Yet they found the Ark a dangerous guest: it made them sick and knocked their idols over (1 Samuel 5:3,6). They returned it to Israel and it was kept for many years in an ordinary house (1 Samuel 7:1).

After all David’s struggles, the Ark became the crowning glory of his new city, built to be the home of the whole people. The Ark embodied the presence of the Lord of hosts who fought alongside Israel with the fire-angel cherubim (Ezekiel 10). David was bringing the Ark to its new home, where it would remain until the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 586 BCE. God was the cornerstone of David’s new city, the divine presence manifested by this precious object. No wonder they danced and sang and played their instruments! Their extravagant worship spoke of their joy at the hope of peace after so many years of struggles with their enemies.

Yet God’s presence brought threat as well as joy. There are two disturbing threads woven into this narrative. The Ark remained a dangerous object, filled with the power of God. The verses omitted (vv.6-11) describe the death of Uzzah, who touched the Ark without observing the necessary purification rites. Living in God’s holy presence brings risk alongside reward. And we hear the echo of Michal’s sadness. The daughter of Saul was married to David (1 Samuel 18:27), but this ended while David was in hiding and she was given to another husband. When David returned, he reclaimed Michal, who returned, followed by her weeping husband (2 Samuel 3:13-16). This woman, used as a pawn in dynastic marriage, finds her voice here; her story is not forgotten.

The celebrations were filled with joy, extravagant expressions of Israel’s delight. David marked the moment with dance and song and shouting as the Ark came home. His rich sacrifices to God were balanced by gifts to all the people, so that no one went hungry – the prophets criticised those who offered sacrifice without attending to the needs of the poor. David honours God through offerings and generosity; this is, perhaps, the crowning moment of his monarchy.

**Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

The Ark of the Covenant was an object of intense holiness. It held the tablets of the law, written, so it was believed, by God’s very own finger and given to Moses on Sinai. It radiated a numinous power, creating a ‘thin place’ where God’s presence was palpable. Where do we find places of such holiness today? Many people recognise ‘thin places’ on mountaintops or islands, where stillness and beauty surround us. What about worship? What resources are available to enable the worship of your faith community to be a place where people can experience and celebrate the beauty of holiness and the wonder of love.

Questions for reflection

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A group of people jumping in the air  Description automatically generated |  |

**Questions**

* What enables you to worship fully? What might hold you back?
* Where do you feel closest to God?
* Whose drumbeats do you follow in your life? God’s – or someone or something else’s?

##  Prayer

*Adapt to your local context.*

We praise you, Almighty God,
with hands and hearts raised in thankfulness.
We worship you with praise and thanksgiving,
for voices to sing with joy and instruments to proclaim your glory.
We are grateful for the many ways in which we can worship you –
with our whole bodies
or in the quiet contemplation of overflowing hearts.
Thank you, O Lord, for your house,
a place of prayer, and joy, and worship without limits.
**Amen.**

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

God of all, send us out into the world you have made.
Help us to be the people you want us to be;
help us to live in ways that show your love for us and for all people.
Keep us dancing, keep us singing and keep us walking in your ways.
Keep us open, keep us generous and keep us ready to give our all for you,
as you have given everything for us.
**Amen.**