

A Sermon for DaySpring

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“A Different Kind of...”

II Samuel 6: 1-23

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Well... there's a new king in town. It's clear the author of Samuel wants us to see that. David is not like ole' Saul... he is young and enthusiastic and passionate. And everyone knows it... especially after the parade into Jerusalem.

This is not one of those calculated political moments where some Carl Rove says to David, **“You know, it'd be really great if you could dance before the ark when it gets to town... I think it would be a defining presidential moment... You can dance can't you? A photo-opp.”**

That's not what happened... David gets overcome by what is happening and not only is he dancing but he's dancing in his “linen ephod.” That's Old Testament... that's Hebrew for “underwear.” He's so excited that before his handlers can handle him, he's down to his boxers dancing through Jerusalem.

And it's sort of a Mardi Gras moment... right. There's a parade, and after the parade, he gives everyone some cake to take home with them. It's just a great celebration, but then he goes home... arms full of cakes for everyone at his house. He's still dancing a little... probably singing... **“Get up and boogie... O yeah... We got the Arkie... O yeah.”**

And his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, meets him at the door and she's more than mad... and dripping with sarcasm. **“Man, you really distinguished yourself as king today... Way to go, Dave... Nice... Dancing half-naked like any lap dancer would do.”**

It's not hard to read between the lines... **“It's not the way Daddy would do it. You looked ridiculous out there. This is not the way to be king.”**

And it's as if David and the author of Samuel are both saying, **“Well, yeah... but I'm a different kind of King... and have a different kind of kingdom.”**

“I wasn't dancing for anyone... certainly not all those young girls. I was dancing before the Lord... I was celebrating God.”

David's a different kind of king than Saul. Saul was obsessed with himself, and David is obsessed with God. He is so centered in his devotion to and obedience to and worship of Yahweh... that's his central passion, so much so that he danced half-naked before all Jerusalem.

The author has a little footnote on the story. **“Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death.”** Just a little note to us all that Saul's dynasty is done. David never wandered into her bedroom again after this little royal tiff. No romance and no heirs from Saul.

It's an important reading of the story... at the historical level. It's the last piece of the Davidic Kingdom Pie. No grandchildren of Saul to become flies in the anointment later. This isn't Saul's kingdom. It's David's, and David is a different kind of King.

Of course there are other important, probably more important, levels at which we need to read this story.

It's also a story of a different kind of person, or a different way of being. David and Michal are so different, aren't they? And they do life, I think, so differently from one another... and that's perfectly clear in this story.

David is present to what is going on out there in the parade. And we've already said, this isn't a calculated move. This is a joyful response. This is the Ark of the Covenant, for goodness sakes.

We're talking Moses here...

the Ten Commandments inside...

God's presence riding on the top.

And, we have no ability really to comprehend the significance of this...

Militarily... it was sort of the ultimate secret weapon. No army is going to fall with the Ark of the Covenant out in front. And as good of a general as David was, he knows how important this is.

Politically... he's just unified the North and the South... just been anointed king over everyone and this is a political "A+"... Mission Accomplished (there's a big banner).

He's trying to make Jerusalem, this city of David, the capital... And bringing this religious symbol of all symbols to Jerusalem had to happen.

This is huge militarily and politically...

But most of all, it's huge spiritually. God's presence was uniquely there. This was holy in a way that we can't get.

They moved it carefully, not daring to touch it... every six steps they'd make a sacrifice. It's like Divine Nitroglycerine. Everyone is holding their breath for days as they travel... And finally they make it.

The Ark of the Covenant has arrived and with it some special manifestation of Yahweh. God somehow, choosing to rest and ride a top of it.

This is a moment of moments and David is present to it. How could he not be? There are moments that come along... usually moments of great beauty or romance or crisis... when the calculating side of ourselves is transcended. That small mind.

WE ARE FINALLY PRESENT TO THE NOW AND WHEN WE ARE, IT'S ALWAYS, ALWAYS FULL OF JOY. It changes everything in an instant... And David seemed to have the capacity for being present.

He doesn't think... evaluate...

He disrobes and dances.

He was present.

I was at children's camp this week and reminded again that kids are so much better at this than we adults. It was so fun to watch... some of them away for the first time. Just so... there...

"Hey... do you want to get your swim suit on... I think I'll put mine on. And then, we can go to the pool... OKAY..."

"Hey, let's go hang out in the cabin." And there was such enthusiasm... just being there, together, in a cabin. That's presence... and that's David, at least on this day. It's a different kind of being.

David's dancing... Michal's watching.

David's present... Michal's preoccupied.

David is celebrating... Michal's critiquing.

They're different... aren't they. One's out in the street in the middle of things and the other's in the window... not there.

Any Michals in your life? Any of Michal in you? I'd be willing to bet there is... Because something happens to us after we stop going to camp... and being thrilled about swimming with our friends and eating fire balls and snow cones. Something happens.

The “thinking mind,” the small mind, seems to take over—it’s everything and being present, really present to life and every moment, just seems impossible. And most people I know are absolutely stuck in and with the thinking small mind. Meaning... they all... we’re all... like Michal... we’re all in the window...

Disconnected from the real...

Not experiencing the Now... planning, anticipating, remembering...

Judging and critiquing and condemning...

“Way to go David... that’s just real good. I’m embarrassed to be called your First Lady.”

See the thinking mind at work? Michal is what others perceive she is. Do you know what it’s like to be Michal? Your identity totally defined by what is external...

How you did...

What people think of you...

What people think of your spouse, your dancing husband... kids...

That’s Michal... and most of us.

She’s in the window and not in the moment. Everything for Michal is a means to an end. Life is never just life for the sake of life. It’s always a calculation to get somewhere or to become someone or arrive some place.

I confess... I have a lot of Michal in me... and some David... and often there’s a tug of war.

No telling what all makes for a Michal. Some of us just come out of the womb that way... trying to figure out how we can please everyone.

And then life happens... and poor Michal... her father sold her as property to David for 200 Philistine foreskins. That doesn’t help. Then she somehow wound up back with her true love but when David became king he sent for her, even though he already had two other wives. (Nice biblical family values, huh).

There was a story that is a part of Michal’s bitter condemnation from the window, and we have stories too... And yes, some of our stories make celebrating hard. But I’ve become absolutely convinced of this one thing... bitterness and gratitude are choices... period.

I don’t mean to be insensitive or uncompassionate... Michal, I think, had good reason to hate David. And lots of folks have good reason to wind up in the window ... but... there is still a choice to make. Bitterness is a choice.

The present moment... the present moment... always contains everything you need. But you can’t be in the past or waiting for the future and know it.

God is in the NOW... and being present to that as David was on that day... is a different kind of being... actually it’s the only kind. To live from the window, evaluating and judging, isn’t to live at all.

David’s a different kind of king in a different kind of kingdom... and he’s a different kind of person living a different way. But there’s a level maybe even more important to get to. This story points us to a different kind of faith... the one Jesus wants to take us to.

Here’s David dancing on a journey before the Lord. **“With all his might”**, the story says, **“He’s dancing.”** It’s a way of experiencing and responding to God that is centered in celebration.

Then there’s Michal’s way... Condemning... **“David... what kind of example have you set here? All the young people will show up to church next week wearing their Linen Ephods... it’s going to be liturgical anarchy. Everyone will dance.”** It’s about control.

How did we get from David dancing with all his might before the Lord, to **“we don’t smoke, drink, dance, or chew?”**

If you told this story to 1000 non-Christians and asked, **“Do the Christians you know seem more like David or Michal,”** what would the answer be?

If you asked them, **“Is the portrayal of Christianity more like David dancing or Michal criticizing,”** what would they say??? The non-Christians?

You know what they’d say.

And would they be surprised at all to hear that Jesus loved to be at parties? Would they be surprised that the religious leaders of his day condemned him for enjoying himself too much? You know they would be.

How’d we get from Jesus enjoying life to... **“You better watch out?”** From Jesus having a good time and living fully to... **puckered people... to finger-waging faith?**

This is a different kind of faith, displayed here. And it is a different kind of faith that Jesus invites us to and if we lose that we lose everything. We can’t turn Christianity into Michal’s faith... rule following faith.

“Are you saying there are no rules to our faith?” No, of course not... but I am saying that, that’s not the point. Jesus didn’t say, **“I have come that you might know the rules and follow them perfectly.”** Jesus said, **“I’ve come that you might have life and life abundant.”**

“I came to show you how to live.” And if you lose that you lose everything.

I’m going to say something that’s going to sound heretical... Some of you aren’t going to like it... but I’m right on this... I promise.

If you cannot picture Jesus enjoying himself at a party, you will for certain misunderstand Jesus suffering on the cross. If you can’t picture Jesus living, you will misunderstand his dying.

The Christian faith is not about someone getting bloodied up enough so that God has to let you into heaven. **IT’S ABOUT LIFE.** Being on a journey with God and dancing at the thought of it... forgetting yourself because of the wonder and goodness of it all. Being present because every moment is such a gift.

Jesus brought us a different kind of faith... This is not Michal in the window religion. That’s not what Jesus brought.

It’s life and it’s abundant and it is NOW.

Do you want that? Do you? It’s already yours. Say yes... now... And now... and now... and in every now as long as this journey of celebration lasts. Now... now... say yes... say Amen.