



Worship – Part 23
Acts of Worship – Part 11
Expressions of Worship
GCSP – 10/13/2007

Shortly after Connie and I moved to Colorado to join Connie's sister and our brother-in-law at South Pointe Community Church, I was asked to stand in for my brother-in-law at a wedding rehearsal. Our brother-in-law was the pastor of the church and he was going to officiate the wedding but was out of town for the rehearsal – and since I was in essence the associate pastor, I was asked to stand in his place and conduct the rehearsal.

At the time I had never officiated a wedding before but I had been involved in many rehearsals and had observed how the various pastors handled things. All of these instances I had been involved in were very casual and relaxed so on this particular occasion I dressed in a pair of nice jeans and a polo-style shirt that had a small Mickey Mouse emblem on it. I wasn't dressed to the nines but I wasn't wearing a ratty pair of jeans and a worn out t-shirt either.

I'm not sure how the information got back to my pastor/brother-in-law, whether he asked what I was wearing or someone else thought it was inappropriate, but he was totally taken aback by the fact I wore a Mickey Mouse shirt while standing in his stead. I guess in his mind it was not dignified enough for the occasion. My brother-in-law is pretty particular about the clothes he wears when overseeing functions such as this or when appearing in public in some official capacity. And while it is a wise thing to dress appropriately depending upon the crowd you are interacting with, I guess our determination about which crowds to be dressed up for differed quite a bit – especially in this instance.

In today's society, the lines are getting blurred as to what is considered proper attire for public gatherings. Dressing nicely for weddings and funerals seems to be very subjective lately, let alone dressing nicely for a regular church service – and this is not a sermon about what you choose to wear to church. I only bring it up to help you get into the right frame of mind for what we will be discussing tonight. Because we live in a culture that does not hardly hold to any semblance of proper attire for certain occasions, we may not grasp the significance of the passage we will study tonight.

So try to go back 30-40 years when people dressed well whenever they would be seen in public; when ladies wore dresses at the grocery store, and men wore suit and ties to work and to go out to dinner. Go back to a time where there were certain unwritten rules about proper attire and proper etiquette, and the vast majority of people followed these rules.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **2 Samuel 6**.

We are going to look tonight at an incident where King David becomes undignified in the eyes of his wife Michal. This display of being "undignified" was an act of spontaneous worship to the Lord, but Michal looked at it as the king making a fool of himself.

Tonight, I want us to look at the attitudes of both King David and his wife Michal, and see if we can learn something about our own personal expressions of worship.

2 Samuel 6:12-23

Let's pray.

Before we dive into this passage, it is important for us to understand the background of the Ark of the Covenant, or the Ark of the Testimony as is it sometimes referred to in Scripture. This will be a very brief and simple explanation or we would be here the rest of the night teaching on what Scripture has to say about the Ark.

Basically, the Ark is a portable chest of acacia wood containing three various items and serving as the meeting place of Yahweh with Israel.

The items that were placed in the Ark are: the tablets of stone that God inscribed with His Law and gave to Moses on Mount Sinai; a bowl of manna that God provided during the exodus from Egypt; and Aaron's staff – the same staff that God used to perform the many miracles and plagues in Egypt before Pharaoh let the children of Israel go. We are not going to take the time to study the significance of any of these articles tonight, but we have Scriptural evidence that the Ark contained these three items.

The Ark represented the embodiment and presence of Yahweh, or God. It was in essence a portable throne for the invisible presence of the Lord – for on top of the Ark was what is known as the Mercy Seat. The Ark was also used by Israel as a sort of war palladium; meaning a symbol that was carried with them into battle to ensure victory. God did not prescribe this use of the Ark, so there was no real significance to this. Israel won their battles when they were right with God and were following His commands not just because they carried the Ark into battle with them. The Ark was not some magic talisman, or lucky rabbit's foot, or any other good luck charm.

The Ark was the national treasure of the nation of Israel. The Ark was the most sacred and holy artifact the people ever laid eyes on. There is nothing in America that can compare with what the Ark meant to Israel. The Declaration of Independence, the White House, the Washington Monument, Lincoln's Tomb, the Liberty Bell, and any other important document, building, or artifact of America's history, miserably pales in comparison to what the Ark of the Covenant meant to the nation of Israel.

In **1 Samuel 3-6**, we have an interesting account about the Ark. We won't take the time to read the whole account, but I want to point out a few things, so turn with me in your Bibles to **1 Samuel 3**.

1 Samuel 3:1-3

At this time in Israel's history they did not have a human king like all of the other nations. God ruled over the people through His prophets, priests, and judges. When the people needed help or direction in battle they would ask the prophets, the priests, and the judges to inquire of God for them. The Ark of God resided in the Temple, which was also known as the Tabernacle at this time.

The current priest in Israel at this time was Eli. Eli had his moments but he was primarily not a very good priest and he apparently not a good father at all, for his two sons were wicked and vile in their dealings with Israel. They took advantage of the people and abused the position and authority that was theirs as priests of God.

God had set apart Samuel to be His prophet and priest and as a young boy at this time He visits Samuel in the night to prepare him for what He was about to do.

3:11-14

The Word of the Lord is not good for Eli and his sons. Eli asks Samuel to tell him everything the Lord had spoken and Samuel reluctantly reveals everything to Eli. Eli was not all bad for he accepts this message from the Lord.

Time passes and Samuel grows physically and spiritually.

Later, Israel is called to do battle with the Philistines, so they head out and about 4,000 Israelites are killed in the battle. As they regroup that night they come up with a plan.

4:3-5

This is the first instance of Israel using the Ark as a palladium or talisman. They were not told to do this by the Lord, nor did they consult with God's prophets or priests before making this decision, they just did it. And the results were disastrous.

4:10-11

Not only were 30,000 Israelites killed this time but Eli's two sons were also killed, and the Ark of God was captured and taken into the camp of the Philistines. Samuel's prophecy is beginning to come to pass.

4:14-18

Eli joins his sons in death as God purges the evil Eli allowed in Israel.

4:19-22

Verse 22 sums up the mindset of Israel concerning the Ark of the Covenant; "**The glory has departed from Israel, for the Ark of God was taken.**" In Israel's mind if there was no Ark there was no God; if the Ark was gone, so too God was gone. The feeling of utter hopelessness must have so pervasive and so oppressive that they were literally crushed by the news. I don't know if they thought God was defeated or that God had abandoned them, but either option was too much to bear.

In **chapters 5-6** we find that even though God was punishing Israel for their wickedness, He was not happy with the Philistines either. Everywhere the Philistines took the Ark, death, disease, and destruction followed. For seven months the Philistines moved the Ark from town to town and suffered countless deaths and devastation, so they finally consulted their priests as to what to do with the Ark of God. The Philistine priests ordered them to prepare an offering of gold, to put the Ark on a cart to be pulled by cows back to Israel.

When the Ark arrived in Israel, the people of the town rejoiced and the Levites carefully removed the Ark from the cart. But the people had still not learned to reverence and

honor and obey the Lord as they should. Some looked into the Ark and most likely handled the Ark, which was only to be done by the priests in certain ways and on certain occasions. God's wrath was inflicted upon the men of this town in Israel and 50,070 were struck down by the Lord for their irreverence.

The Ark was transferred to another town and it stayed there for twenty years. And other than King Saul asking for the Ark to be brought to him one time during his rule, the Ark is not mentioned again until **2 Samuel 6**.

In the opening verses of **chapter 6**, King David wants to bring the Ark to the capital city of Jerusalem. So David gathers 30,000 men and sets out to transfer the Ark.

6:3-11

In the excitement of the moment, David made two very serious mistakes. First, he did not inquire of the Lord or of the Lord's prophet as to whether or not they should be moving the Ark; and secondly he did not follow the prescribed method of moving the Ark that God had spelled out in His Law through Moses. The Law of God stated that the Ark was to be carried on the shoulders of men on poles. The Ark was designed with loops specifically for these poles. Instead, David moved the Ark just like the pagan priests of the Philistines did: on a cart pulled by an animal.

6:12-13

After three months of anger and fear, the Lord revealed that it was time to move the Ark to Jerusalem in the proper prescribed manner. So after three months of fear and uncertainty, David is overjoyed that the Lord is once again blessing Israel. And now we can better understand the issue at hand: David and Michal's expression of worship and lack of worship.

6:14-15

David and the people are not just celebrating. This isn't just a big party. It says "**David was dancing before the Lord.**" This was an act of worship. This was an expression of love and adoration and appreciation to the Lord. David wasn't getting swept away in the revelry of a parade he was turning loose of all of inhibitions and dancing before the Lord "**with all his might.**" He didn't care what the people in the crowd thought of him. He didn't stop before he started dancing and consider what others may think of him. He didn't say to himself, "I'm the king so I had better stay reserved and dignified in the midst of the people I rule over." David worshipped God with complete abandon. He worshipped God as if it was only he and God on the streets. He worshipped God as if he was in the presence of his Lord and King.

And beloved, this is probably the most vivid illustration of what worship is supposed to be for you and I today. Yes, there are times when you are to be quiet and still, and there are times you should be on your knees, and there are times you should be on your face, but there are also times when you should be dancing before the Lord, and there are times when you should be standing with arms and hands outstretched toward heaven, and there are times when you should be "undignified" in the sight of others in the expression of your worship.

Now here is the key – we must make sure our expressions of worship are “**before the Lord**” and not before men. And that does not mean you do not raise your hands and dance and shout in public, it means you do not do these things for the benefit of the public. Expressing your worship “**before the Lord**” means your actions are done in response to what the Lord has done for you as you are led by the Holy Spirit, not because the person next to you is doing so and not so you will be seen by others.

But if you consistently and constantly hold back, you will always justify in your own mind that the reason you don’t express your worship in more “undignified” ways is because you don’t want to just follow the crowd.

That’s how I was. There were times when I felt the moving of the Holy Spirit and everything within me was crying out to express my worship in a more visible and vocal way, but the false teaching and religious upbringing that was carved and cemented into my mind would repress and restrain me. It was as if my arms and hands and legs and feet were chained and strapped, or my entire body was in a cast so I couldn’t even sway. I could here the raised voices of my youth pastors and preachers condemning dancing and disparaging anything that even smelled or tasted like the modern charismatic movement. So I caved in and resisted the urge, and eventually the moment passed, not knowing then it wasn’t the moment passing me by but the Holy Spirit.

David worshipped the Lord with all his might and he didn’t worry about those around him, or any bad teaching he may have heard, or even how he was dressed. And quickly we must note David was wearing a “**linen ephod.**”

An ephod was a priestly garment worn by the priests when they served in the Temple or Tabernacle. A linen ephod was a tight fitting undergarment. And before you start thinking that David was dancing outdoors in public in his boxers and v-neck t-shirt, it was not that kind of undergarment. It was still a modest and priestly garment it just wasn’t usually worn without the outer ephod in a public setting like this, although it was not forbidden.

6:16

David’s wife Michal is not pleased with the actions of her husband – and we’ll get back to Michal in a moment.

6:17-19

David now shows us that shouting and dancing and carrying on are not the only expressions of true and genuine worship. David also expressed his worship in a reverential and prescribed way. This again shows us the importance of following the Holy Spirit’s leadings and urgings in our worship and not simply following the crowd or expressing your worship how you think is expected of you by man.

6:20

Michal shows her true colors. She calls King David a fool for acting in an undignified way. The king doesn’t dance and prance around with the lowly subjects in the kingdom. The king must keep up appearances and follow the proper procedures and wear the proper clothing. How embarrassing! You have made a complete spectacle of yourself.

6:21-22

David basically tells his wife, "You ain't seen nothing yet."

"Woman, I was expressing my worship to the Lord! – The Lord who has taken this poor shepherd boy and placed him as king over the nation of Israel; the Lord who has brought His Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem; the Lord who has preserved my life time and time again when your father was attempting to kill me; the Lord who reigns in heaven above; the Lord who loves me with an everlasting love! I will gladly and willingly make myself into more of a fool in the eyes of men to follow my heart and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in expressing my worship to Him!"

David tells Michal that he will always do what is right in his worship rather than what is dignified and expected of him by man. And David was blessed beyond measure.

6:23

Michal was cursed for following the ways of man and resisting the ways of God.

Beloved, I am not trying to force you to worship God in public with the wild abandon that David displays for us and I am not telling you that you will be cursed if you don't. But I am telling you that should not and cannot restrain your expressions of worship just because it seems undignified or you are afraid you will look silly in front of others.

Read the Bible. We have example after example of God's people publicly and expressively giving God the worship He is due, using their voices, using their arms and hands, using their legs and feet, and using their entire bodies and entire beings. We can never express our worship fully while constrained in these physical bodies, but we can definitely do a better job than most Christians typically do.

Let's pray.