

2 SAMUEL

IN SEARCH OF A KING PART II



Sermon 2 – 2 Samuel 6 “The King and his ark”

If you weren't there for Sunday's sermon, here is the video which was recorded for the Peregrin congregation: <https://youtu.be/IMlaVoDsc64>

Introduction

- i. CS Lewis said: “Christianity, if false, is of no importance; and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be, is moderately important.” Why do you think many Australians who say they believe in God, only live as if Christianity was moderately important?
 - ii. Perhaps more significantly, why is it that many who attend church are living as if their relationship with God was only moderately important?
1. **What's with Uzzah being struck down?** – read vv1-11
 - a. Why was the ark so significant for Israel and David. Why did he want it in the city?
 - b. Why was Uzzah struck dead? How did you feel about that? (See Deuteronomy 29:29)
 - c. What does this sudden death say to us about God?
 - d. How would you answer someone who said to you – “hey – that's simply not fair”?
 - e. What was David's response (see v9)? What would you have done?
 2. **What's so good about the ark?** – read vv12-23
 - a. What had changed David's mind about bringing up the ark to Jerusalem?
 - b. What are the clues from the text that David and his people weren't going to make the same mistake re the ark again?
 - c. Why is David dancing like this and wearing only a linen ephod? What are David's actions demonstrating about his view of God and of the ark?
 - d. What is Michal's problem?
 - e. We don't have the ark, but God is present with us even as 2 or 3 gather in his name. Why do we typically underplay the significance of meeting with God as we meet with each other?
 - f. Do you usually turn up to church or connect group or other meeting with Christians with a sense of joyful anticipation?
 3. **The victory of the Kingdom** – read vv17-25
 - a. Reverence and joy: two things Mark often prays for before church. Do we have the balance right?
 - b. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What does ‘fear of the Lord’ look like in someone's life? What difference does it make?
 - c. At the cross, we see reasons to both tremble and rejoice: tremble at God's justice and rejoice in his grace. Does this make sense to you?

What will be your personal take home for you from this passage or study?

Pray for one another that we will have a right fear of the Lord, but also an appropriate joy!

Pray that we will never live as if our Lord God was only moderately important!

Date: 12 August 2018
Services: 730, 930, Tewantin, Peregian (via video)
Series: The King and the Ark
Passage: 2 Samuel 6
Title: The King and the ark

INTRODUCTION

- I just love this quote from CS Lewis I used at the end of a funeral sermon on Friday – and I know I’ve shared it with you before...
- CS Lewis said: “Christianity, if **false**, is of **no importance**, ... and if **true**, of **infinite** importance. The only thing it **cannot be** // is **moderately** important.”
- And yet many people today live as if it is only **moderately** important... //
- All around us on the Sunshine Coast – around 60% if the research is anything to go by – will say they **believe** in God...
- But actually **engage** with him – allow him to make a **difference** in your life – a difference in who you **are** – actually **revere** and **reverence** him... actively seek to **serve** him and **honour** him and **please** him – take him **seriously** // – that’s **another thing**...!
- Even this week, I spoke to people who *say* they are Christians... and love God... etc... but church is just never on the agenda... and the morals seen in their lives show they have little or no understanding of the **distinctive** life to which Christians are **called**... /
- And then there are those in the church today - who **ARE** they every Sunday.... But God can only be **moderately** important – because they see God has a pushover... and twist his word to suit their agenda... they love the **community**... they love the **music**... they love the **ritual**...
- “Christianity, if **false**, is of **no importance**, ... and if **true**, of **infinite** importance. The only thing it **cannot be** // is **moderately** important.” //
- In our 2 Samuel 6 this morning – we’ll see the absolute **foolishness** of living as if God were only **moderately** important...
- ...and we’ll see the sheer **magnificent joy** which results when he is of **infinite** importance.... //
- But I don’t know about you – the passage raised some questions for me...
- What’s with this **ark anyway**...?
- Why would God strike a guy **dead** because he was trying to ensure the ark didn’t fall off the cart... how is that **reasonable**?
- And what’s with David’s extreme **dancing** because the **ark** was finally coming into the city of **David**...?
- And what’s with David’s wife **sulking** about David’s dancing... ...I mean my dancing is pretty embarrassing for Susan I’m sure... but is that what it was **about**?? //
- So this morning from 2 Samuel 6, I want us to see:
- Not the **good**, the **bad** and the **ugly**...
- But (in this order) the **bad**, the **good** and the **take home**... // So:
 1. What’s with Uzzah being struck **dead**?
 2. What’s so **good** about the ark?
 3. What’s the **take home**?

- A quick reminder of what we saw last week... ch 5:

David had finally been recognised as King over **all** Israel... and we saw that **David** as King pointed us to **Jesus** - God's **ultimate King** and that we are his **body** - he is our **Saviour** and **Shepherd**

- We saw that **Jerusalem** as the City of God - the city of David points us forward to that **great** city - the **New** Jerusalem - where all our hope lies - where all God's promises will **finally** be fulfilled
- And we saw that David's victory over the Philistines, points us forward to Jesus' victory over **evil** and the **evil one** at the **cross**... and that **that** victory will one day be seen in all its **glory** and known in all its **fullness** when **every knee** will **bow** and **tongue confess** that Jesus is **Lord**. //
- Now **David** has his **city**... but the **ark** of the Lord is not **present** in the city as it had been present with the nation of Israel through all their **wilderness wanderings**.
- You remember from last year what we saw about the ark don't you??
- we don't mean **Noah's ark of course** - we mean that **rectangular box** measuring 1200mm by 760mm by 760mm - an **extremely significant symbol** for **Israel**...
- ... covered completely with **gold**
- ... was to be carried on **poles** inserted in **rings** at the **four corners**.
- Within the box were two stone tablets on which were **carved** the **ten commandments**
- And consequently it was the symbol of **God's presence** with his **people**...
- do you remember what happened in 1 Samuel?
- the ark was captured by the Philistines... they thought it had magic powers...
- But it turned out to be a **disaster** for the Philistines - the statute of their god **Dagon** kept falling over in their temple and the Philistines **themselves** came out in all these **tumours - terrible things!!**
- So the Philistines wanted to get **rid** of the ark and send it back to Israel.
- So they sent it back to Israel... but 70 Israelites took the cover off the ark and looked **inside** // and they died **right there and then**...!
- And we saw last year from that incident, that God is not to be fooled with! //
- ...and soberingly, we're reminded of the same this morning... so let's ask together:

1. WHAT'S WITH UZZAH BEING STRUCK DEAD?

- Bringing the ark up to Jerusalem was a big deal... look with me at v1 - *David again brought together all the able young men of Israel - thirty thousand.*
- When it says '**again**'.. the last time they had been gathered in such great numbers was back in last week's chapter when they'd come to proclaim David King.
- You don't get 30,000 people together every day!
- v2 - *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. 3 They set the ark of God on a new cart... STOP*
- They set it on a new **cart**?? **Alarm bells right there**...!
- Do you know why?
- It was meant to be carried **hung** by **poles**... not set on a cart... mmmm... so the astute will already be wondering - oh - **that's not good - how will this turn out?**

- Vv5, 6 – have a look - *David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals. 6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.*
- Great joy – celebrations – jubilation – the presence of God – or the symbol of his presence – coming into the city of God...
- But the joy that day came to a sudden **stop**.
- The **music** stopped
- The **dancing** stopped
- The **cheering** stopped
- **Suddenly**, everything went **quiet**.
- v7 *God struck Uzzah down, and he died there beside the ark of God.*
- A friend I used to work with had been looking forward to her wedding day for ages....
- I wasn't there, but I understand it was a lovely day... great ceremony... and at the reception there was loads of dancing...
- Suddenly the music and the dancing stopped. Linda's father had dropped dead on the dance floor. //
- Nothing stops a party like someone dropping **dead**. /
- **Why** did this happen to this **man**?
- Because he **touched** the **ark**... /
- You're not **supposed** to touch the **ark**
- But hang on Mark, you might say – he was only trying to stop it from falling off the **cart**!
- ...that's **not fair**... that's **unreasonable**...! would God have preferred for the ark to fall off the cart and be smashed!!!?
- **I don't know** // /
- God had clearly warned his people that the ark must not be touched (Numbers 4:15, 20) //
- We can continue to object if we like: but the application of the text is clear – you dare not trifle with a God who is both **real** and **holy**.
- God is not our **neat, warm, fuzzy friend** in the **sky**.
- We **forget** the nature of our God who **loves** us and is **gracious** towards us. But we should never take him **lightly**!
- But!!! / But – hang on // this is just so unfair...!!
- But friends // our questions are not **answered**; our **objections** are not **satisfied**.
- and of course // God is not **answerable** to **us**.
- He is not obliged to **win** our **approval**. /
- Do you believe this? // Are you **OK** with **that**? //
- When the 70 men died because they looked into the ark... the men of Beth-Shemesh had asked (1 Sam 6:20) – *'who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?'*
- Here, in this instance David virtually asks the same question v9 – *David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?"*
- The question expresses the **opposite** of **presumption**. David has learned that the Lord God is not under **our control**. He is the **holy God**. He is not **tame**. He really is **terrifying**.

- Take God lightly... take what he **requires** lightly – treat his holiness as if it were nothing – and you end up in trouble! //
- So David abandons plans to bring the **ark** into the **city**. Doesn't want to go near it, and doesn't want it near!
- But that's not the last word about the ark in this chapter...
- And that brings us to:

2. WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT THE ARK?

- Have a look with me at v12 - *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.*
- Obed-Edom had experience great blessing because the ark of God had been with him three months...
- So – David thought he'd try **again** to bring the ark up to Jerusalem... looks like everything's settled down... why should the **Philistines** enjoy all the blessing of the ark
- But what do you notice in v13? – how is the ark being moved **this** time??
- Not on a **cart** – they are **carrying** it... and as some sort of **insurance** policy – what **else** are they doing? Sacrificing a bull and a young calf **every six steps**... must have been a slow trip!
- David meanwhile – notice what he's wearing – a linen ephod... v14 – I don't have a photo for you (!) – in fact is a little confusion as to what this garment was... it seems to have been worn by the priests of the time... but more than likely – over **other** garments.
- The text seems to describe David as wearing **only** the linen garment...!? – and perhaps Michal's disgust in v16 seems to suggest that it **wasn't a good look** – in her eyes – he was **humiliating** himself...
- But perhaps – we see not so much David **humiliating** himself – but **humbling** himself!
- – he's dancing with all his might...! *Leaping and dancing before the Lord!*
- So what's so **good** about the ark? – that David again wants it in the **city** – and that its coming sparks such an **amazing celebration**...?
- It's the **presence of God** in the **midst** of **God's people**...!
- A reminder of God's **promises**... and **faithfulness**... his **rescue** from Egypt – and of his **revealed will** for his people...
- We see David's humility – not just in his unusual **dance** and **costume** – but in bringing the ark into the city – he's saying – **I'm** not in charge – **God** is in **charge**....
- Not **my** will – but **your** will be done...!
- Not **my** kingdom – your **kingdom**!! ///
- God, in the **midst** of his **people**...
- Ruling, reigning, loving, protecting... inspiring... empowering.
- No wonder David danced!!
- Remind you of anything?
- Brothers and sisters – God is as present with **us** by his Holy Spirit – as he was present with **Israel** by His Holy **Ark**!!
- I'm not sure we realise the **joy** of being in God's presence... ///
- ...here we are meeting with him this morning – as we meet with one another...

- God in the midst of his people...
- God who loves us so much he has given us son for us... so that we might be forgiven and redeemed!!
- God present - ruling, reigning, revealing, loving, protecting... inspiring... empowering.
- Did you anticipate coming to church this morning with joy?
- Have you participated so far this morning with joy?
- Will you go out this morning with joy having met with God?? //
- Perhaps there should be more dancing! ///
- **But finally we need to ask don't we: /**

3. WHAT'S THE TAKE HOME?

- And some Sundays it's easier to **see** than **others** isn't it!!
- This is all **so** along ago...
- We can't **easily** relate... and besides - our objections to Uzzah's sudden death remain **unanswered!! //**
- But what we've seen **two amazing impacts** of the **presence** of God in this **account**...
- The first, is that the **presence** of God ought rightly to cause **trembling**
- Uzzah was **struck down**... and we go - **woah!!** What's happening there...? this **God** is **frightening**...
- **Yes. //**
- And he does not need to explain **himself** to **us**.
- We read in a number of places in the OT - *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*
- Jesus himself said - *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* Matthew 10:28. That is - be afraid of Him!!
- *God cannot be mocked...* Paul says in Galatians 6:7
- Take him **lightly** - or consider Christianity only **moderately** important - and at some point you'll come face to face with the fact that that wasn't a good idea!! //
- So we see the **holiness** of God... and **something** of what that means... //
- But also in this passage... You cannot miss the accent on **joy**: they bring the ark into the city of David 'with gladness' (v12b). And David is there, **dancing** and **cavorting** with all his **gusto** while the people are **shouting** and the ram's **horn** is **blasting away**. Here is a holy **delirium** over the **presence of God!**
- Do you see the **balance** in the truth of God's word here in this **account**?
- We are to both **tremble** before God's **holiness** and **cheer** with God's joy!
- **Fearfulness** and **gladness** are held **together!**
- In God's presence you should both **shudder** and **dance!** //
- Whether we can comprehend this or not, 2 Samuel 6 teaches us that a **fearful** sense of God's **holiness** does not **suppress** joy but **stimulates** it! //
- You know what I often pray for before a service?
- That I (or whoever leads) might do so with a **right** balance between **reverence** and **joy!**
- That's what we see here...

- I said in the notes this week - in today's church, there are many people concerned with **externals** and **procedures** and **mechanics** and **meetings** and **decency** and **order** but who know **nothing** of joy **before** the **Lord**!
- These are often the same people who show **great** enthusiasm at the football or the gay pride march, but have nothing but '**professional detachment**' over **Jesus Christ**!
- **Exuberant praise** and **tears of repentance** are **strangers** to **them**. //
- **Trembling** and **joy**. Before our **holy** God... and our **loving** God...
- Before his **severity** – and his **mercy**
- Before his **judgement** – and his **grace**... //
- Lord grant us that **reverence** and **joy** in your **presence** – not just when we **gather** – but at all **times**!