

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19
Psalm 24

Ephesians 1:3-14
Mark 6:14-29

As God's people, we are God's chosen people. And yet we act more like God's frozen people. As God's frozen people we don't take too kindly to any kind of exuberance in our worship. We do not express much joy. Our reading this morning is the account of moving the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. You may remember that Ark, if not from the Bible, then from the 1981 movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Our story is about bringing the Ark to Jerusalem and the exuberance David exhibited dancing on the parade route. Our reading from our Old Testament lesson declares that worship should be full of exuberance, not restraint. It reminds us that we are not the frozen people of God, but the chosen people of God.

I think it is safe to say that worship in most mainline churches is rather restrained, not exuberant. A friend of mine shared this story with me some years ago. I cannot validate whether it is a true story. He had been to an event a presbytery had sponsored about music in worship led by the team Donald Marsh and Richard Avery, often times referred to as Avery and Marsh. Avery was the pastor and Marsh was the musician at a church in New York. They wrote a variety of contemporary songs, which include "We Are the Church" and a joyful calypso version of the Doxology, which we have used. Anyway, at this particular event there was a black pastor visiting from Africa. Avery and Marsh were encouraging the people to move with the music, show a little exuberance. Someone asked this African pastor, "Being from Africa, you must enjoy doing a little dancing," to which the pastor responded with a stern face, "We haven't danced since the missionaries came."

Whether or not this story is true, it illustrates the fact that for most mainline Christians in our nation, we don't take too kindly to any kind of exuberant movement during worship. We'd rather be God's frozen people, rather than God's chosen people. We are hesitant to dance. Our joy of being in God's presence should be so overwhelming that we start to boogie? The psalmist tells us to praise God in God's temple with dancing

Evidently David was dancing. Our story this morning is about moving the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The nation of Israel is in its infancy. The Ark of the Covenant was the box that contained the two tablets of stone that had the Ten Commandments inscribed on them. For decades this ark had been tucked away in an obscure village. But now David, the second king of Israel and newly crowned king, decides to take the ark out of exile and establish it in a place of prominence. It was a strategic act, with enormous consequences not only for Israel, but also for David. This will help legitimize David's kingship. However, it is more than a strategic political act. By moving the ark to Jerusalem, David proclaims that whoever he is as king is subordinate to the kingship of God. *God is king. God is king.*

This act of bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem is an act of worship to provide a center for worship. Notice how they worshiped: "David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals." Dancing before the Lord. Unfortunately, not everyone catches dance fever. And there was a Presbyterian there, shaking her finger at David. It was David's wife Michal. She chastised David when he arrived home, saying, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before

the eyes of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself! David was so overcome with joy that he stripped down to his underwear and started leaping and twirling before God. Every party needs a pooper and that's why they invited Michal.

Through the ages the church has said "We do not do that here. We never have done it that way. Our fathers never danced before God." In one congregation, the Sunday school program had long been in decline; so one class invited a gifted teacher to lead their class for six weeks. This teacher had the gift of weaving humor into her teaching of Scripture. The first week, the class began to loosen up and engage the lesson with one another. The second week, they were laughing out loud and really began to feel that the gospel is, indeed, good news. By the third week, the class had to bring in more chairs to accommodate newcomers, and everyone was fully engaged and animated with the lesson. During this third week, midway through the lesson, a member of the Sunday school class next door came in and said, "It's OK if you all don't want to take this seriously, but could you please keep it down for those of us who do!" I am not suggesting that we dance, but let us not prohibit a joyful expression, lest we find ourselves in the company of Michal.

David responded, "It was before the Lord, who chose me...as prince over all Israel." David danced for he was God's chosen. Israel was God's chosen people. There should be an exuberance in our worship for we are God's chosen. God has extended God's grace and mercy to us. Grace is getting what we do not deserve, God's love. Mercy is not getting what we deserve, God's punishment. Being a child of God is not

based on anything we can do. It is based solely on what God has done, and God has chosen us.

Miguel and Antonio were placed in foster care in 2001 because of abuse and neglect. They lived in several foster and group homes, and the two fought constantly – so much so that social workers considered separating them. A recruiter at an adoption agency began to diligently search for another family to be the permanent and loving home the boys deserved. Eventually Miguel and Antonio were matched with Carlos, who very much wanted to be a father. As they began to build a relationship, they noticed a positive change in Miguel and Antonio's behavior toward each other. Carlos taught them what it meant to be siblings and to be part of a family. The defining moment when Miguel and Antonio knew they had found their forever family was when Antonio became sick and had to be admitted to the hospital. Carlos rushed to be there with him and his brother to care for them. They now knew that Carlos would be there for them – through the good times and the bad. The trio officially became a family in April of 2012. Being in a stable family with their adoptive dad, Miguel and Antonio have become closer than ever and respect each other more. And now they have a father who will support and help them achieve their dreams. We too have been adopted by God, and our lives should also reflect the joy.

Today we are celebrating the Lord's Supper. For many years, decades even, many churches did not celebrate the Lord's Supper too often because it was done as though we were at a funeral. Christ has died, so we need to be somber. NO! Christ's death is not the end of the story. Rather it is Christ's resurrection Christ's power over the forces of death and darkness. Communion is a celebration of the resurrection, of

God's power over death and all the powers of darkness. Wine should be used in communion. When you think of grape juice, what do you think of, breakfast? But wine means party! Worship is to be a celebration of God's goodness. Ready to boogie?

All power and glory, wisdom and wonder
be to the Lord our God,
who strengthens us through the word
and blesses us with peace. Amen.