

Celebration without Shame

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19

I remember a night shift I worked a while ago. The heads of the hospital made it clear that anyone caught sleeping on the job would be fired on the spot. I didn't want to lose my job, but I was so tired I could barely keep my eyes open. The lab was very quiet – if I had been busy I'm sure I would not have had a problem staying awake. But everything was quiet, and I was tired. I had the radio on and a song I liked started to play. I cranked up the music and started dancing around the lab – I think it was a Gloria Estefan song! Little did I know that members of the phlebotomy team decided to come in a little early – trying to explain that one was impossible!

When we look at the text read for us from 2 Samuel, we find King David dancing madly before the Lord. He was pulling out all the stops, and showed no shame for his joy at the return

of the Ark of the Covenant – God’s symbol to God’s people. The Ark represented God’s very presence. If you follow the history, the Ark of the Covenant was lost in battle to the Philistines, who took the Ark as a power source, thinking they could wield the power of God for their own purposes. Once David took over the city of Jerusalem, he established it as the holy center for the world. This could only be accomplished with the return of the lost Ark.

The Ark of the Covenant has an interesting history. It was the first item God asked Moses to make. It was not very big – approximately 4 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet. There were only a few items kept within the Ark, most notably the 10 Commandments. The Ark was a physical reminder of God’s presence and of God’s expectations of Israel to be a separate people – God’s chosen people.

So the return of the Ark to what would become the holy city of Jerusalem was a landmark occasion. It was important – it was special – it was a time to celebrate. David, King of Israel, showed no shame in dancing with all his might before the Lord at the return of the Ark of the Covenant. David understood that the Ark was not just a symbol to be feared and revered, although this was certainly the case, but was also a symbol of God’s presence and promise to God’s people. David was doing his happy dance! It didn’t matter who was looking on, even Saul’s daughter who was literally disgusted at David’s actions. David was giving a sacrifice of praise to God – that’s all that mattered.

As Christians, we have a lot to celebrate. We have a hope in an unfailing God who gives us strength in times of trial, hope and comfort in times of sorrow, and a positive outlook in spite

of the difficulties that come our way. We also have the celebration of eternal life – this is not our final resting place.

When this life is over for us, we have the promise of a heavenly home where we will continuously celebrate God’s love for us as God’s faithful servants. To the world, we may look foolish.

How can we possibly be joyful when our economy is a mess, or our health is failing, or our stress levels are becoming maxed out every day? What kind of foolishness is this when we should be miserable like the rest of the world?

David looked foolish when he showed no shame by dancing madly before the Lord. There are other characters in Israel’s history that also may have looked foolish to outsiders. Can you imagine how Noah must have looked when he spent 120 years building an ark in the desert? I don’t think we can fully understand the scene of watching an old guy building a

huge boat when all around there was nothing but sand. Bill Cosby put out a recording of what a neighbor may have been thinking when they came around every day to see Noah still working on his ridiculous project. The only comeback Cosby gave Noah to say was, “How long can you tread water?”

What about Sarah? She probably looked foolish preparing to welcome a baby into her life at the young age of ninety. She had been suffering the load of shame for years because she had not been able to bare a son for Abraham. She too thought about the foolishness of the situation when God’s messengers promised her a son within a year of their visit. She literally laughed at God’s promise – it was just beyond her comprehension.

I’m sure the Israelites looked foolish marching around the walls of Jericho, carrying the Ark of the Covenant and blowing

trumpets for 6 days, then marching around the walls 7 times on the 7th day. Can you imagine the guards standing on the Jericho wall watching the spectacle below? Perhaps they shouted jeers to the Israelites, trying to intimidate them for being small and insignificant against the mighty city of Jericho.

David probably looked foolish when he bravely went out to attack Goliath with nothing but a slingshot and five stones.

Goliath even shouted jeers at David seeing as Goliath was the intimidating giant – the clear winner in this battle. But God had other plans. Many times God’s people were the clear underdogs, yet with God they proved victorious.

The Wise Men probably looked foolish while following a bright star as their only guide to the Messiah. I doubt anyone in their country would understand their need to make the long journey to Bethlehem and present gifts to the newborn king.

Nowadays we would pull out our trusty GPS before we would adventure into strange and possibly unfriendly territory. They saw the star and answered God's calling to them, in spite of looking foolish.

Peter most definitely looked foolish stepping out of the boat in the middle of a lake, in the middle of the night, in a raging storm because Jesus called him out of the boat. I'm guessing there was some discussion in the boat to the tune of, "Peter, are you mad?" One thing Peter became is one who would not listen to the jeers and criticisms of others for the sake of the gospel.

And Jesus probably looked foolish hanging on the cross while shouts of hatred were spewed at him from every angle. I'm sure he was embarrassed as he was stripped and exposed while being executed for no crime. He questioned God in the

midst of his suffering while enduring the senseless act bestowed upon him.

There is something to be said for a willingness to possibly seem foolish by the world's standards as we cling to our belief in God as our creator, guide, and Lord. Many around us raise questions about our beliefs – How do we know there is a God? Where is our proof that God exists? What makes our beliefs even rational? Some will say our continued belief in a God of salvation, love, and hope is a child's fantasy. Yet we believe. We celebrate our faith and hope in a loving and merciful God who walks with us through the paths of life, even the difficult ones. At times we may feel like the underdog, with the world shouting jeers at us for our incessant joy and irritating hope. We may feel like insignificant Israel coming up against the walls of Jericho, but when we shout and give praise to God as a people of God, the walls will come tumbling down. Lives are changed.

Hearts are strangely warmed as in the case of John Wesley when he suddenly felt the call to follow God which led to the birth of the United Methodist Church. Eyes are opened to a clear path to ministry. And perhaps someone for the first time will truly feel the presence of God in their midst. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Always remember to dance madly before the Lord! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! We are the people of God! Amen!