

A Passionate Heart (David Pt.5)

2021-01-31 Sermon

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[slides 1-6 with sound on].

[slide 7, blank] One of the richest words in the English language is the word 'passion.' Here's how it's defined by the dictionary:

"Passion is a strong desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept. An intense emotion. Deeply stirring."

We've all used the word 'passionate' to describe anyone who's really intense about something; someone who is fully absorbed doing something.

You may know people who are passionate about scrap booking or quilting, hockey or football.

We can be passionate about another person; about our children, our friends.

But perhaps there's no other time when we see passion played out more clearly than when someone has found the person they want to marry.

That passion is often played out in a highly creative, romantic proposal of marriage.

My plan to propose to Deb was to go to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and propose by the Ming's Tomb exhibit.

However, just as I was getting up the nerve to ask for her hand in marriage, a tourist group entered the exhibit. So, I had to come up with a plan B.

I ended up proposing from a bench in the hallway outside the Planetarium.

But our deepest passion is intended to be for God, [**slide 8**] and that is the kind of passion that we're going to explore today in the life of David.

Please open your Bible to 2 Sam. 6. Let me set the scene for you.

[**slide 9, blank**] After Saul's death, David is eventually affirmed as the new King, an act that unifies all Israel.

In his first recorded undertaking as King, David leads his army to victory against the Jebusites,

capturing the city of Jerusalem which David makes the new capital of Israel. Jerusalem is also known as the City of David.

The Philistines get wind that David has been anointed king over Israel, so they come to make war against him.

But David beats them to the punch and wins a decisive victory over the Philistines.

That victory virtually guarantees retaliation by them.

And an easy target would be to capture the Ark of the Covenant located 11km NW of Jerusalem in the village of [Bah-al-aw'].

David knows this so he plans to move the ark to the new capital, Jerusalem.

Not only will this keep the ark out of enemy hands, but it will go a long way to legitimizing David's reign as king

and unite the nation around what is their most sacred symbol.

If Jerusalem is to be the heart of the newly united nation of Israel, then the heart of their faith, represented by the ark, is to be there as well.

[**slide 10**] What is this ark? It's a wooden box, overlaid with pure gold inside and out,

that God instructed Moses to make 400 years before David was born. You can read all about it in Ex. 25.10-22.

A trio of precious artifacts were placed into the ark: a gold jar of unspoiled manna, Aaron's walking stick that budded long after it was cut, and the two stone tablets on which were written the 10 commandments.

The lid, made of pure gold, was called the mercy seat.

Two golden cherubim, with outstretched wings, faced each other and looked down on the golden lid.

So the ark, and its contents, represents God's provision (the manna), God's power (the staff), God's precepts (the commandments),

and, most of all, God's presence with his people.

You cannot overstate the importance of the ark to ancient Israel.

[slide 11, blank] Yet, as we read in 1 Samuel and the first few chapters of 2 Samuel, the Israelites haven't cherished the ark for a long time.

It's been gathering dust for almost 30 years in the house of a priest named Abinadab.

It's been neglected and ignored. But David is determined to change that. He makes the return of the ark a priority at the beginning of his reign as king.

He plans a parade and invites 30,000 Hebrews to attend.

So David and his people gather in [Bah-al-aw'] at the house of Abinadab, the priest, where the ark has been kept all these years.

Abinadab's sons, Ooz-zaw' and Akh-yo', are put in charge of the transportation of the ark. They load it onto an ox-drawn cart and begin the procession.

And David, along with 30,000 people, are celebrating with all their might before the Lord –

they're singing and dancing with harps and lyres, tambourines and cymbals.

The celebration is in full swing for the first couple of kilometres until it suddenly stops dead in its tracks.

They hit a bump in the road. The oxen stumble, the cart shakes, and the ark shifts.

Ooz-zaw' extends his hand to steady the ark, and shazam! he drops dead.

Everyone is stunned. This obviously puts a damper on the celebrations.

David's first response, in 2 Sam. 6.8, is one of anger and then, v.9, of fear. And so, he abandons his idea of bringing the ark to Jerusalem and opts for plan B.

Not willing to take the ark to Jerusalem, he sends it, v.10, to the nearby home of

Obed-Edom the Gittite until he can figure out what to do next.

Perhaps he goes home and consults with some of his priests about what happened

and what should happen to successfully bring the ark of God to Jerusalem.

Three months pass. Then David receives word, v.12, that the house of Obed-Edom is blessed by God because of the ark.

Surely this is a good sign. So he heads off to reclaim the ark and resume the parade.

This time no one dies and David worships the Lord with dancing.

The question I want us to answer today, based on this story, is, “What do Ooz-zaw’ and David teach us about developing a heart of passion for God?”

[slide 12] Ooz-zaw’ teaches us this: **Don’t grow lax in God’s presence.**

Don’t become negligent or careless before God. Don’t treat God lightly or disrespectfully.

God gave specific instructions as to the care and transport of the ark in Lev. 16 and 1 Chron. 15.

Only the priests can draw near it and then only after they have offered sacrifices for themselves and their families.

The ark is to be lifted by ah-káy-sha poles which ran through rings on the corners to carry the ark, and carried on the shoulders of the priests.

Ooz-zaw’ should have known this. He was a priest. The ark had been kept in the house of his father Abinadab.

He had grown up with it. He was familiar with it – too familiar perhaps.

Max Lucado says, “perhaps for him the holy had become humdrum, the sacred second-rate.

So he exchanges God’s commands for convenience, using a wagon instead of poles and oxen instead of priests. And we see no sacrifice, only expediency.”

When are you most like Ooz-zaw'?

When do your actions reveal a cavalier attitude toward God? When do you give little consideration to the holiness of God?

Eugene Petersen says that Ooz-zaw' has long ago lost sight of who is really in charge.

But God makes it crystal clear that he will not be managed or manipulated, and he expects us to obey him out of our love for him.

We can so easily lose sight of appropriate reverence and awe when we come into God's presence.

Slowly, imperceptibly over time, we can grow lax in God's presence. We can begin to treat God lightly.

The image of a dead Ooz-zaw' is a sobering reminder to those of us who attend church as often as we wish, current pandemic aside.

Don't grow lax, don't grow negligent in God's presence.

Don't confuse our Almighty God with a genie who pops out at the rub of a lamp or a butler who appears at the ring of a bell.

Like Ooz-zaw' we can fail to recognize the power of God's holy presence.

An encounter with the Lord Almighty is not to be taken lightly or casually. We don't manage or manipulate God.

God comes to us, but he comes on his own terms; when his word is obeyed, when confession is made, and when our hearts are made clean.

That's what Ooz-zaw' teaches us about developing a passionate heart for God. If we want to develop a passionate heart for God, don't grow lax in his presence.

Well, what about David? What does David teach us about developing a passionate heart for God?

[slide 13] David teaches us this: **Do celebrate in God's presence.**

After sending the ark to Obed-Edom's house, David returns to Jerusalem angry and afraid, vs.8-9.

David takes 3 months to think things over. I imagine he does his homework on the ark and how it's to be handled according to God's instructions.

At the end of those 3 months, David receives a report that the Lord has blessed the home of Obed-Edom because of the ark.

So he decides it's time to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

This time he does things differently. Priests replace oxen. Poles replace carts. Sacrifice replaces expediency.

And when David realizes that God is not angry, v.14, he dances before the Lord with all his might,

while the parade proceeds with shouts of joy and the sound of trumpets down the road to Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew text, when it says David dances before the Lord with all his might he isn't just standing and clapping his hands.

He is worshipping the Lord Almighty with a heart full of passion [slide 14, run video].

So, he's stripped down and parading in front of God and all the people in nothing but his underwear.

Can you imagine our Prime Minister cartwheeling down Wellington Ave., in front of Parliament Hill, in nothing but his boxer shorts?

Doesn't David's dance bother God? Why isn't God outraged by this? For the same reason we're not outraged when our kids or grandkids dance.

When you come home from work or an appointment, did any of your kids ever say, “Daddy’s home or Mommy’s home!” and then just jump for joy?

Did that bother you? Were you outraged by that? Were you concerned what the neighbours might think?

Did you tell them to straighten up and act more mature? I hope not!

Did God tell David to behave himself? No. He let him dance.

This is the only time in scripture we read about David dancing.

He didn’t dance when he defeated Goliath. He didn’t dance when he was inaugurated as king.

But when God came to town, as symbolized by the presence of the Ark, he couldn’t sit still.

How long has it been since you really celebrated God’s presence in your life?

One of the early church fathers, Irenaeus, said that the glory of God is a human fully alive.

David is fully alive. He loves God and he expresses that by dancing before the Lord *with all his might*.

God’s greatest gift to us is himself. His presence with us gives us reason to celebrate; to dance for joy!

This is what David knows. And this is what God wants us to know.

God loves you too much to ever leave you alone. “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” says the Lord in Heb. 13.5.

He hasn’t left you alone in your isolation, your anger, your fears, your worries, your sickness, or even in your death.

Why not celebrate that truth and dance! David does.

So what keeps us from dancing before the Lord; from celebrating the gift of his presence with us?

C. S. Lewis admitted that one of his early stumbling blocks in coming to faith was all the demands in Scripture to praise God.

He wondered if God craves our worship like a vain woman craves compliments.

Gradually, however, Lewis began to understand that worship is not just a command, but a natural response.

He saw that all of our enjoyment in life spontaneously flows into praise.

“Our praise,” says Lewis in his book, *Reflections on the Psalms*, “completes our enjoyment.

Worship is our natural response to the wonder of God. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.”

In his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard says that “it is typical of worship that we put every possible aspect of our being into it –

all of our sensuous, conceptual, active, and creative capacities.”

How can you and I be stoic and still if we know God is with us, ready to help us, to heal us,

and to transform us, in ever-increasing measure, into the likeness of his Son, Jesus?

Eugene Peterson describes David’s passionate display of joy this way:

“In God, David has access to life that exceeds his capacity to measure or control.

He is on the edge of mystery, of glory, and so he dances.

If David had merely been carrying out his religious duties, or conducting a political ceremony,

he would have walked in solemn procession before the ark, leading it into Jerusalem with dignity.

But this is no duty. He is worshiping, responding to the presence of God with his people.”

Richard Foster, in *The Celebration of Discipline*, states that “God calls for worship that involves our whole being.

We have often forgotten that worship should include the body as well as the mind and spirit.”

One of the main Hebrew verbs for worship in the books of Samuel is *shaw-khaw* which means, “to bow down or to prostrate oneself.”

That’s prostrate with an ‘r’ not prostate. You do not want to mispronounce that word!

Bowing down prostrate before the Lord is one of a variety of physical postures used in the Bible in connection with worship.

Also included are standing, kneeling, clapping, lifting the hands, lifting or bowing the head, and dancing.

Our physical expressions can reflect the mood of worship.

For example, when we’re humbled before God, in an attitude of confession, kneeling or prostrating ourselves may be an appropriate posture.

Celebration calls for some other kind of movement, like dancing.

Now here’s where folks are quick to point out that each of us has a variety of temperaments and backgrounds, and this is true. We must certainly be respectful of that.

If you're like me, you never really learned to dance or to be comfortable with much physical expression in worship other than hand clapping.

Tim Hawkins helped me understand how different we can be in how we express ourselves as we worship **[slide 15, run video]**.

I admit that taking risks with physical expression in worship can be a little scary and may even feel embarrassing.

Have you ever been in a meeting standing up with everyone else, and as you get caught up in worship,

you close your eyes, raise your hands, and sing for all your worth?

The song finishes but another starts right away, and you're still standing with your eyes closed and arms raised.

That song finishes. You open your eyes and see that you're the only person still standing! How embarrassing.

Worship can be a risky business. David is willing to take that risk.

"I will celebrate before the Lord," he says in 2 Sam. 6.21f. "I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes."

When are you most like David?

When are you so filled with gratitude toward God that you feel like you're going to burst unless you find some way to express your gratitude?

When, even if only for a brief moment, are you willing to let go of your image control and passionately worship the Lord our God?

We've learned two things from this story today as it relates to developing a passionate heart for God?

1st, Ooz-zaw' reminds us to not grow lax in God's presence.

God comes to us, but he comes on his own terms. We don't manage or manipulate him in any way, shape or form.

He is a personal God who loves us and helps us, who heals us, and makes us whole. He looks for reverence, for loving obedience,

for a people with hearts that are passionate toward him. And when he sees that, he comes!

2nd, David reminds us that we can let loose in praise and celebrate the gift of God's presence with us.

And yes, as Max Lucado says, "a reverent heart and a dancing heart can belong to the same person." Just look at David. May we have that same heart too.

We're not going to get worship completely right until Jesus, our King, returns. But between now and then, we can practice.

Let's do so as we sing, The Splendor of the King 64 / 664 P – How Great Thou Art [CS only] 49 / 488 P