

Let's Dance!

Based on 2 Samuel 6:1-5

~for further description of the celebrations, continue reading 6:12-19

"When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon my heart I will dance like David danced."

~Fred Hammond

Oh, boy, did David dance. It would seem, in wild abandon, with clothing or lack there of, which raised a few eyebrows. David danced the 'victory dance' that comes with success of a plan and a vision that had been years in the making. And David danced, because he had brought YHWH home to his people. Some cheered. Others watched in fascination. A few sat quietly in the wings, and began to plot and scheme.

The parade was a giant success. So much so, that the writer of 2 Samuel took the time to tell his readers all the different musical instruments played:

David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals. (v5).

Further on, the writer went on to describe in detail, all the food shared, and how everyone was given a raisin cake to take home. Now

ladies, I have had raisin cake before, and it's not all that great. So obviously, the writer was trying to impress upon us: "This was the best party the people had seen in years. A day off work, hot dogs and popcorn for the kids on the street corners, a long parade of marching bands, colourful floats, candy being tossed, flags and banners waving, swag bags to take home, and then, the moment they had all been waiting for: the Ark of the Covenant. God Himself in a box, according to ancient thinking." They would be talking about this day for years.

Which is exactly what King David wanted to have happen. Because the parade was a celebration, yes. But it was also, a very political moment. To David's enemies, at home and abroad, it said, "Don't mess with me. I conquered you once, and I will do it again if I have to." To the people on the streets, and in the neighbouring villages and countryside it said, "I am your King. I have brought your God back to you. Follow me, and all will be well!"

Nothing comes without its politics and its bureaucracy, and it flaws. I know that in theory this should not always be the way. But in reality, we are forever a people plotting and scheming and maneuvering for better, or for

a more advantageous position. It is part of what makes us human, and gracefully accepting this fact (or flaw?) is the first step in remaining humble and not allowing that part of our character to lead our ambitions.

When it comes to matters of faith and of church, we are doubly sensitive to these stumbling blocks, striving always in a complicated world, to be lead by Jesus' example. For as much as we would like to say that our current world climate, or our apparent declining moral ethics, or our present day technological society are to be blamed, this complicated and political world of ours is not new. Amos, an unwilling prophet, who I suspect wanted nothing more than to be left alone to return to his sheep, struggled with the eternal question: when to speak and when to be silent. His message of obedience to YHWH, by all, was not well received by the king of his day, its meaning twisted and contorted by some who schemed to be rid of such a nuisance. David not only had to defeat the great enemies from the south and the north and the east in an effort to take back the land of Israel for his people, but had to cajole and convince the tribes within those lands, that a unified country had power and presence in a volatile

world. As 2 Samuel 6 will attest, even as the parade was underway, the plotting for revenge against David for his actions had already begun, in the palace and across the land. Politics in matters of faith are not new!

You may be rather discouraged by this point: about how a church might continue these days, in a world that seems just as convoluted and political as the one in the time of Amos, and in the time of David. But before you walk away, consider this. Imagine for a moment, the grand parade through the streets of Jerusalem. Imagine the smell of the food, the noise of the crowd, the cries of children saying, "I can't see. Lift me higher, Daddy!"

Now take away the marching bands.

Now take away the popcorn vender.

Now take away the Colour Guard.

Now take away the crowd.

Now take away the flags and banners.

What do you have left? The Ark of the Covenant. You still have God. You still have God in a box.

Now look around you.

Take away the morning news.

Take away the worries about doctor's appointments later this week.

Take away the fretting about family issues lurking on your heart.

Take away the sighs of resignation because you didn't like one of the hymns this morning.

What do you have left? God. God is here. You still have God in the box. This box we call the church building. This box we call the Bible. This box we call your soul. And because we have God, we can dance!

Beyond the politics, of the church, or of the world, we still have God. And as long as God is at the heart of our praise, and our work and our efforts, then His will is done. There will always be a complicated world out there, with issues that serve only to distract us and discourage us, and attempt to dissuade us from serving Him. But as long as we can peel back the layers and find God at the center, then we can dance. And as long as we have a church that has God at the center, then we continue to dance the dance of life: with joy, with prayer, with songs, with childish grins on our faces, with graceful hospitality, with solemn reverence and respect.

My friends, our God is in the building (pointing to the church walls). My God is in this building (pointing to my heart). So let's dance!