

Sermon Note: Gathering for Worship

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

Worship is the heartbeat of our faith community. It's a time when we gather to celebrate, reflect, and connect with God and each other. In the story of King David, we find a powerful example of what it means to gather for worship. As the Ark of the Covenant is brought to Jerusalem, David leads the people in joyous celebration, dancing before the Lord with all his might. This scene captures the essence of worship as a communal and heartfelt response to God's ongoing work in the world.

As we begin this seven-week series exploring elements of our traditional worship service through the story of King David, we start with the theme of gathering. This week, we consider what it means to come together as a community of faith to worship God. How can we, like David, bring our full selves into worship, celebrating God's presence in our midst?

Illustration Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bz85A_zNiJU

In the final scene of the 1995 film *Mr. Holland's Opus*, Mr. Holland's former students surprise him with a concert. They gather to honor him, reflecting the impact of his life's work and the sense of community and celebration that has grown around his dedication to music and teaching.

Video Discussion Questions

1. How does the gathering of Mr. Holland's former students reflect the sense of community and celebration seen in 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19?
2. What emotions are evoked when Mr. Holland realizes the impact he's had on his students and their lives?
3. How can we relate the joy and surprise of this scene to our own experiences of gathering for worship?
4. In what ways can our worship gatherings celebrate and honor God's presence and work in our lives, similar to how Mr. Holland's students honored him?
5. How does this scene inspire you to bring your full self into worship, just as David danced before the Lord with all his might?

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19 (NRSVue)

¹David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. .David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. ³They carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart ⁴with the ark of God, and Ahio went in front of the ark. ⁵David 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.

^{12b}So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing, ¹³and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatted

calf. ¹⁴David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. ¹⁵So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

¹⁶As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart.

¹⁷They brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. ¹⁸When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts ¹⁹and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Reflect on a recent worship service you attended. What aspects of the service helped you feel closer to God?
2. Why did David gather thirty thousand men?
3. In verse 5, what did David and all the house of Israel do before the Lord?
4. Imagine you are planning a worship service that embodies the joy and reverence seen in David's actions. What elements would you include to ensure it is both heartfelt and inclusive?
5. Verse 16 says, "As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart." Have you ever experienced someone's disdain when you were worshipping God? How did it make you feel? What did you do after that happened?
6. A UMC Discipleship theologian writes the following: "In this series, we invite you to consider that for David worship was life. Worship wasn't something David did, we might say, it wasn't a specific time in the day or week. Rather worship was who he was. David lived and breathed worship. Yes, sometimes he got it wrong, sometimes he followed impulses that led him astray. And sometimes he got confused as who was the object of this worship and got in the way of the God he loved. But through it all, David lived as though his life was an offering to God." How might you, like David, incorporate joyful and wholehearted worship into your daily life? Can you think of practical ways to express your faith through actions and celebrations?

Add'l (Optional) Discussion Questions

1. What were the emotions David displayed as the Ark of the Covenant entered the City of David?
2. How does the passage illustrate the significance of gathering for worship?
3. How can the way David worshiped inspire us to approach our own worship services?
4. When was the last time you were in a worship service? What do you remember about it?
5. Think about the importance of routines in worship. How can they be both beneficial and potentially limiting?
6. What are some ways you can help make first-time guests feel more welcomed and included in our worship gatherings?

Weekly Action

This week, make a conscious effort to bring your full self into worship. Whether it's through singing, praying, or simply being present, let your heart be fully engaged in the experience. Take a moment each day to reflect on the ways you experience God's presence in your life and how you can celebrate those moments. Consider writing these reflections down, and share them with a friend or within your small group. Encourage one another to embrace the joy of gathering for worship with a full and open heart.

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for the joy and reverence David showed in worshipping you. Help us embody that same spirit of wholehearted worship in our daily lives. Guide us to remove things that distract us from you. Lead us to live and breathe and worship you. Amen.