

2 Samuel 6 - Through the lens of connection, "What brings connection?"

I. Advanced Organizer - story about group singing

A. I remember the first time I experienced contemporary worship...

1. struck by simplicity, earnestness, intimacy, and yet also a strange courage to sing these things aloud
2. moved me; couldn't help but cry. I felt connected to God in a real way that was different than I'd really experienced before. For several months, every time I was in a room with this kind of singing I cried.

B. Continuing our series on connection. Organizing it around seeing this theme develop throughout the arc of the Bible.

1. Today want to focus on another part of the story developing through the Hebrew Bible, where we see the development of the kind of practices I described. **The development of people connecting with Yahweh through song and dance.**
2. If we're gonna look at this, mass most sense to look at **David**.
3. **David was a king, yes, but he was also an artist, a songwriter, a worshipper.** This is what made him unique as a ruler, because of this heart connection he had with God. Paul would call him "man after God's own heart". Seemed at his core, to have a powerful heart connection to God, and this seemed to stem from his musical worship.
 - a) no, didn't make him perfect
 - b) but we're gonna look at what he did well to see how we might learn from it; one particular incident in his life.
4. Background on David:
 - a) grew up during the reign of Saul, Israel's first monarch, king for 40 years
 - b) although he'd been appointed by God, for most of his reign **Saul didn't seek God's input as ran the country**. In fact, his choices to ignore God dishonored and angered God, so God told the prophet Samuel to anoint the person who would eventually replace Saul on the throne. He sent the prophet to an unlikely place to anoint an unlikely person: David, the youngest son of a humble Jew named Jesse, a mere shepherd boy.
 - c) And thus begins the adventure of David. In a few short years he undergoes a **dramatic transformation from a caretaker of sheep to musician in the king's court, to commander of the king's army, and then son in law to King Saul himself**. David gains the favor of both God and the people of Israel, and Saul, consumed with jealousy and hatred, sets out to have him killed. David flees for his life and despite the fact that the king is trying to kill him, David keeps the people's support, so **when Saul and his son are both killed in battle, the political leadership of the country is given to David**, just as Samuel had prophesied years before that it would be.
 - d) Ark of covenant -
 - (1) in addition to being a prop in an Indiana Jones movie, was a very important religious item, which would have been a few hundred years old by the time of David. It **originated from the time that Moses received the law at Mount Sinai, and it housed the tablets that Moses got from God with the 10 Commandments**. Basically, for the Israelites, the Ark of the Covenant symbolized in a tangible way the **power and presence of God in the world**. It was the central place where God's presence could be experienced on earth.
 - (2) But by the time David became king, **the ark had lost its place of prominence in the life of Israel**. Saul basically ignored it, not feeling the need to consult God in the

way that he ran God's nation. When David becomes king, he decides it's time that the ark is reclaimed and restored to a central place in the life and religious practice of his people. So he decides that he wants to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the City of David, where he lives.

II. 2 Samuel 6: 12b-23

12b So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. 13 When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. 14 Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, 15 while he and the entire house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets. 16 As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart. 17 They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. 18 After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. 19 Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

20 When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!"

21 David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. 22 I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor."

23 And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

III. Understanding more about this story

- A. Focusing on this story because narrator draws a powerful contrast between two central characters here: David and Machal. This is huge event, all Israel is part of this party, thousands upon thousands of people, but this account zeroes in on just two of them who participate in really different ways.
- B. I think how they participate differently has implications for how they are connected to one another, and to God, so we're gonna explore that.

IV. First let's look at what's going on with David.

- A. Dude is full-on partying. He is celebrating big time. But why? Is it just that he likes dancing? I think there's more going on than that.
- B. **David was raised a shepherd. And in his early years he experienced closeness with the God of Israel, and he gave language to that closeness through the songs he wrote.** I picture him out in the fields with the sheep, beginning to write songs of praise, simple melodies in which he poured out his heart to God. Then David saw the God of the Universe send Samuel to his home. He saw Samuel pass by each of his brothers until Samuel saw David and said "Yes. This one. This is the next king of Israel." He saw God deliver the giant Philistine Goliath into his hands with one stone from his boyish slingshot. He saw God bring him to roles of leadership, and protect him as he was pursued by Saul. **And when he was crowned King of Israel, he knew it was only because this God had deemed it so. In bringing the ark to Jerusalem, David wasn't trying to impress his kingdom by throwing a big important party. He was submitting his kingdom to the reign of God.**

- C. When David got dressed that morning, he was not thinking about which royal cloak fit him the best or would look the most impressive. **He was thinking about how could he, as leader of the nation, best serve and honor Israel's God. And making a rare and interesting choice, he decided that the most appropriate role for him to play that day was that of a priest.** Typically only those from the tribe of Levi served in this role. They were the ones to wear a linen ephod. They were the ones to make sacrifices. But David understands that if he is to lead God's people in a way that is truly honoring to God, it means spiritually as well as politically. And so he leads the people in worship, clothed in a priestly garment, making sacrifices on their behalf, singing, dancing, leaping, and dispensing blessing on all of Israel.
- D. **And David is pumped.** Of all the people at the humongous party who are whooping it up, his voice is the loudest. He is thrilled because he knows and understands that the presence of God, the God of the Universe, is with Him. He knows that as he welcomes the ark of the covenant into his town, he is welcoming the God of the Universe, who loves him, who has chosen him, who is with him and for him, and how can he NOT celebrate that? Listen to the words he wrote in one psalm, that could easily apply to this moment. You can almost hear him shouting them at the top of his lungs as he entered Jerusalem, leaping for joy:
- 7 Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.**
- 8 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.**
- 9 Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.**
- 10 Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.**
- E. **God, for his part, seems to respond to David's overtures of affection. In the next chapter, He makes a covenant with David,** an eternal promise, that he will, through David, establish a kingly line. As part of this covenant, God assures David that the reign of the line of David will be established forever. In this promise, we hear the echo of familiar words, and in hindsight, remember hundreds of years later one important way in which this promise was ultimately fulfilled. We remember the voice of the angel, speaking to a young virgin girl about the child she will bear, **"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."** **Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant with David.**
- F. David's heart for God, and his commitment to give of his self in worship brings profound connection for David to God and enables David to join and play a crucial role in God's amazing plan to reconnect with humanity.
- G. **Point One: Giving of the self in worship brings connection with God.**
- H. David experiences real freedom of self expression. Bringing what's internal to the surface and being raw with it before God.
- 1. Not about dignity, about honesty and passion**
- I. This is apparent throughout the Psalms
1. Psalms of Praise like here

2. Psalms of lament, same guy who wrote this:
O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever?
How long will you look the other way?
2 How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
3 Turn and answer me, O Lord my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
3. Both must stand in tension: celebration and lament. Anger, grief and gratitude; we are complicated people with need to celebrate along side need to lament
 - a) I felt this really strongly this week.
 - (1) Jason's birthday this week
 - (2) more tragic shooting, racial violence, shootings across the country and close to home

V. Point Two: Corporate worship brings connection with others - corporate solidarity

- A. **There was a reason David threw a big party with a lot of fanfare.** He got that it was important for the entire people to celebrate this before God together. Not just a private, personal thing.
- B. The songs he wrote, while intensely personal often to be sure, were written for group singing. That's why we have a collection of Psalms - it is an ancient prayer book and song book.
- C. Corporate identity forged when we sing together; why this has been part of our tradition for millennia
- D. Reminds us we are part of something bigger
- E. God's presence manifest in community
- F. Scientists have recently discovered a number of physiological benefits that come from group singing.
 1. Psychologist Nick Stewart in the UK demonstrated that "people who participate in a choir enjoy a greater feeling of togetherness and being part of a collective endeavour than others involved in different social activities"
 2. Regulate heart rate; hearts beat in unison
 3. Reduce stress levels and depression; some studies indicate people who are diagnosed with depression no longer fit diagnoses after a year singing in a choir. Group singing releases oxytocin
- G. Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir - powerful togetherness in singing together
- H. This is part of what it means to be part of this corporate identity called the church. - *The Christian church sings. It is not a choral society. Its singing is not a concert. But from inner, material necessity it sings. Singing is the highest form of human expression....What we can and must say quite confidently is that the church which does not sing is not the church. And where...it does not really sing but sighs and mumbles spasmodically, shamefacedly and with an ill grace, it can be at best only a troubled community which is not sure of its cause and of whose ministry and witness there can be no great expectation....The praise of God which finds its concrete culmination in the singing of the community is one of the indispensable forms of the ministry of the church.* - Karl Barth

VI. Point three: The choice not to personally engage but to critique and judge from the sidelines brings disconnection.

- A. **Michal is the contrast to David and the others celebrating.** While they are all raucously participating, she remains aloof, watching and judging.

- B. She's critical of what she sees. My own temptation, too. I have ideas about what is good and what isn't. I have preferences. Sometimes strong feelings about practices that are harmful verses helpful.
- C. **Need to resist the temptation to watch from my pedestal.** Participating with the goal of moving us forward, rather than choosing the isolation of judgement. Critique itself is not the problem. Separation and isolation is.
- D. **Constructive critique is important in centered set community.**
 - 1. We're all trying to help each other navigate towards the center. No one can get there on their own. I welcome feedback that helps us get closer to Jesus.
 - 2. But **Michal isn't trying to go towards God.** She's not trying to unite with the people. She's trying to raise herself above them. She's livid with David because he won't do the same.
- E. Michal becomes isolated from her community, her husband, and ultimately, the good work of God in her midst.
 - 1. This passage ends with an ominous sentence. "**And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.**" The implication here is that as a result of Michal's response to David's worship, she became a childless woman. Now the narrator doesn't tell us how this happened. It could be that it was something biological, it could have been something spiritual. It could have been that this encounter with David was so negative that David chose to never be intimate with her again. The end effect is the same. Because of her behavior here, Michal has no children to the day of her death. And for Michal, this consequence that she suffers is much bigger than her never having the opportunity to be a mother, as tragic as that is. The biggest consequence for Michal is that her attitude, her contempt for God, excludes her from being a part of the redemptive work that God is doing in her world. God's promise to David is not fulfilled through Michal. She's taken herself out of the game. She's not trying to go towards God. And so she misses out.

VII. Tips for getting started

- A. **Find safe places to bring your whole self before God and others.**
 - 1. Not all places are safe; that's real.
 - 2. We recognize that here and prize safety, but if for whatever reason this isn't a safe space to bring your self in worship, find one that is.
- B. **Look for ways to participate honestly, even if it costs you some dignity**
 - 1. Sometimes it doesn't make sense to sing a celebratory song when you are low. Other times, the act of singing it can bring hope and remind you of God's goodness, even if you're in touch with it, etc.
 - 2. Not foolishness for the sake of foolishness; foolishness for the sake of connection
- C. **Confess your judgements to Jesus. Allow him to help you move from place of isolation to connection with him and others.**

VIII.