

Rejoice

2 Samuel 6: 1-5, 12-19 Psalm 24 Pastor Lentz
Radcliff Presbyterian Church

In these two passages we have an image of rejoicing that is very powerful, and speaks to us in ways we might not have heard before. I am not sure how come this time when I read it that it jumped out to me, but it did. I hope that it will even be useful in some other ways as well.

Usually, when reading this passage I have focused upon David's dancing. It seemed over the top. I couldn't really relate to it. Dancing in the street in front of everyone just seemed too dramatic, and calling attention to himself. Even when it was clear that David's behavior was right I couldn't really consider that type of thing because it was so outside of my comfort zone. That is until I looked at the passage further. It changed my mind.

I will attempt to do my version of David's dance in being open with words because I think that I get it now. Something happened and now David's behavior makes perfect sense. Before I hadn't thought about the amount of intensity of experience. I am going to tell times and places that have felt sacred to me in hope of inviting you to think in this way as well even more.

The amount of reverence offered to the arc of the covenant, would alone have turned everything around. That is exactly what I hadn't connected with this passage, until now. When you allow something, or a place to be sacred, just being there or near to it changes things for you. I want to remember out loud with you some particular times that have had that sacredness for me, that just brought a spontaneous positive response of awe to God's goodness, and a feeling of closeness to God. I suspect it will remind you of times you too have felt these things. While they have at the time seemed to be spontaneous, they

were really in response to my treating as sacred the text, or time of prayer, or in some ways being deeply respectful to God. I have had many times where just feeling the cover of the Bible I use for wanting to be closer to God, creates that sense of awe, so that when I read the Bible it just overflows with meaning. It isn't an accident it is because of my making the text sacred by only using it when I want to feel close to God. I use other Bibles for study and sermon preparation.

When we attribute or recognize some object, or place as sacred and treat it that way being there then can impact us powerfully. It is what stuck out to me about David's behavior. He was treating the Arc of the Covenant as deeply important and sacred, as were all the people around him. It would have been a powerful and inspiring event. Being near to that many people who also were treating the Arc as that important would have magnified everything as well.

Often when passing a Chapel in a Hospital, or even in an airport, I duck into the place for some more intentional prayer time. Being in a place where people have gone to pour out their prayers to God on behalf of loved ones is a very sacred place, and so I love to spend time praying for those of you who I am thankful for knowing. If you are reading this, that means you whether I have met you or not. It means that I have probably prayed for you in all of the odd locations that I have been in and sensed God's presence either because the room has been designated that way or because of the awesomeness of the location. Doing that also impacts me for hours and sometimes for days, because of the secretiveness of what I have done as well as the sacredness that I attribute to the act. It brings to mind praying in all sorts of small and large Chapels, or Churches.

I love getting to see Churches and Synagogues. It often feels so sacred getting to be there. I remember being in a Synagogue for a Bar Mitzvah, and marveling at both the feeling and sense of awe that the room had even before the service began. Afterward the experience continued to touch me for months, because of how powerful it was. There was a similar experience I had in Paris when I attended a service at Notre

Dame. It felt so amazing. Knowing that people had prayed at that site for a very long time made it deeply emotional. Being there 10 feet from where Napoleon crowed himself emperor and sensing the seriousness of the people around me worshipping God was almost surreal. I can still hear the echoes of the soloist singing so beautifully in French during the service. The sound of her voice echoing off the stones of the building just felt sacred. You could feel her sincerity in her voice.

Sometimes just being in the Church's sanctuary and praying there silently alone is very sacred. In Budapest Hungary I was in a Synagogue, and one of the oldest churches. The sacredness of all those places was overwhelming. You could feel the prayers that had been uttered in them. You could sense the reverence and the beauty of a place where people for ages have been worshipping God. Hearing a choir sing ancient songs in a Cathedral built in the 1400's with the echoes of the voices mixed with a pipe organ was heavenly. Just thinking of that time changes almost everything for me. I can again be there feeling prayers erupting from me of thanks, for you and for the sacredness of worship as well as for the sacredness of that Church.

So too was the sacredness of places where the human spirit is cherished. One of those places was a small room in Luxemburg. The room had the pictures of all the people they could discover from Luxemburg who had been murdered in the Holocaust. The pictures covered every inch of space in the room. The floor, walls, and ceiling were all covered with pictures. You couldn't walk into the room but only look through a half door, and see it, and that was enough. The respectful way the pictures had been displayed was touching. In a similar way the dedication to the soldiers who died in WWI and WWII in Belgium is so powerful that it touches you deeply. The attitude of people there for the people who fought to save their country is so powerful that it is humbling. It reminded me of how sacred life is and that people who have lost so much and seen so much death have a profound appreciation for life.

There have been times when I was in nature and the sense of God's presence was so powerful that it brought tears to my eyes. I remember being in Natural Bridge State Park, while walking alone on one of the trails. The beauty of the plants, trees, space and the calm of the air and the path going slightly upward made it seem special. I can still recall that the beauty was so powerful for me seeing a tree that was at least 300 years old, growing strong and tall, that I felt God's presence so completely that it brought tears to my eyes. The beauty was overwhelming. I was rejoicing in the glory of the Lord.

We all have lots of times that have been sacred to us. The birth of children, and grandchildren, as well as baptisms, and other special events. Yet, what about those times when you felt as if God was speaking directly to you, and nudging you to do something or think differently. When God encourages me that way and I am smart enough to follow it I am always so grateful, and appreciative to God. Sometimes it has been to help someone. Sometimes it has been to look something up, and other times it has been to go to a certain place.

When we allow ourselves to think of the sacredness of events, places or things, and we feel those feelings we can feel them easier at other times. This is one of the reasons that God said that David was a person similar to his own heart. You have been doing it and can do even more of it because you can. The more that you do the closer to God that you allow yourself to become.

It is my hope that you will intentionally chose and treat special events, places and things as sacred so that much more of your life is more intentionally filled with you feeling close to God. Amen.