

Today's Scripture reminds us that God's people saw the Ark as the very throne of God. It traveled with the Hebrew children from the wilderness to the Promised land. During the reign of Samuel, the Ark has resided in the Temple at Shiloh. Today's reading is the processional of Ark to Jerusalem under the reign of King David. The Ark and by their understanding, the Lord, will reside there seated up this throne. There is one odd piece omitted where a man is zapped to death for his handling of the ark while he was trying to not let it touch the ground. Does that sound familiar? We have similar practices when it comes to our cultural holy relics like flag ceremonies. Never let the flag touch the ground, for instance. As I watched the Confederate flag being removed on Friday, I could not help but think of how they treated the Ark of God ceremoniously. Sometimes people allow relics to have power. They become idols, false representations for the Holy One, God almighty. What we do notice in this passage is David's raucous dancing and celebration, leading a veritable dance party in worship and praise. Listen for the word of the Lord.

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

6:1 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

6:2 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.

6:3 They 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

6:4 with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark.

6:5 David 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.

6:12b So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing;

6:13 and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.

6:14 David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod.

6:15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

6:16 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.

6:17 They 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.

6:18 When 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,

6:19 and 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.

We turn to the letter to the Ephesians, a treasure trove of our theology and beliefs.

When we read these letters, we must remember we are reading someone else's mail. In light of all the conflicts between groups in our own day, it is helpful to note that this letter is written to the early church who was struggling with the two factions of Jewish and Gentile Christians living and serving together in Christ. Living together with differences is the reason for this letter. This ancient letter is a refreshing reminder that in the face of all divisions today, we are held together by the larger, cosmic, purposes of God. And we are called to find our purpose in God's larger purpose.

Ephesians 1:3-14

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

1:4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

1:5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,

1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

1:8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight

1:9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ,

1:10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

1:11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,

1:12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

1:13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;

1:14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Proclamation of the Word

Wow! That is a mouth full! So let us focus in on one key piece.

Maybe you have had this experience. When I was growing up I wanted to be a part of other families. Maybe that is normal or maybe not. I know that being a child without a father, I was always kind of awed by families with two parents. There were the Allisons. My friend Lee's dad was our insurance agent, the Clerk of Session, and a nice man. Our mothers were good church friends. I got to be part of the Allison family sometimes spending Sunday afternoons at their "river house"- Lake Wylie was known by the locals as "the Rivah" not a lake. Mr. Allison taught me to waterski. Mrs. Allison had the best summer suppers. Lee and I spent hours playing in the water. I liked being part of that family.

Then there were the Plemmons. My friend Lisa's mom was a stay at home mom. Their house always smelled yummy. Something was always in the oven cooking. They always had the best snacks in the pantry- junk food my mom never bought. Her dad was so funny. We all called him Papa Plemmons. I loved being a part of the Plemmons family.

You get the point. Sometimes we get to be adopted into families, even if part-time. Some of you have been adopted or have chosen to adopt. Adoption is always a choice made out of love and care. In the same way, you and I are all adopted by God through Baptism

Listen again to Ephesians 1:4b-6

...God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. The Lord destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Adoption is not a new idea. Moses was rescued from the basket placed there by his sister. He was raised by Pharaoh's daughter. He was adopted. Jesus was adopted by Joseph who took the responsibility of father on when he married a pregnant Mary who conceived by the Holy Ghost. The non-Jews, the Gentiles, most of us in this room, have been adopted into the covenant of God's grace through Baptism into Jesus Christ.

Did you know you were chosen, adopted in Christ?

Journalist Doug Mendenhall tells his story of adoption. He writes,

Jumping into adoptionⁱ

With three little boys born by blood, my wife and I decided to adopt. We chuckled at being required to enroll in parenting classes and have our home inspected, but we did it. We jumped through the hoops and placed our names on the list as potential parents with a private, Christian-based agency. Then we waited. We did not try to help God along by identifying the kid we wanted. The only stipulation we made -- that although we are white we would prefer a biracial child -- was because we knew that nonwhite babies were tougher to place in our state of Alabama.

Other than that, all we knew was that somewhere out there in Selma or Tuscaloosa or Punkin Center, a child would be born eventually and become part of our family. Sight unseen we began to love our fourth child, months or maybe years before his or her birth.

When a 2-day-old boy was placed in our arms, he was already our full-fledged, beloved son. We had chosen him because we knew that he needed to be chosen, needed to be loved. We knew nothing about him. We knew nothing about who he would become.

That was 16 years ago. That baby is now an artist, a dancer, a topnotch gymnast. I can draw only stick figures. I am too embarrassed to even try dancing. I somersault only if I trip over one of my left feet. We love him more than ever, but it has little to do with him

*fitting our mold better than any other child could have. **We love him because we chose him; we chose him because we love him. There is neither chicken nor egg to it.***

God loves us because God chose us. God chose us because God loved us. That is something to dance about!

Maybe that is hard to believe for some of us. We can get caught up in our own shortcomings, unworthiness, lack of faithfulness or holiness. Or maybe we have not experienced that kind of agape love to believe that is how God loves us.

Or the flip side, we think too highly of ourselves that we do not need God or care. We have lost the fear, the respect for God who made us, chose us, calls us. We have bought into the idea of self-reliance and the self-made man denying our own need for God.

But this is the amazing news of the gospel, God first loved and chose us to be His people.

What is your purpose? our purpose? To live our lives in praise of God.

Many of us learned the catechism, "What is the chief end of humanity? To glorify God and enjoy God forever."

David knew how to glorify God. That is why David danced even though that was usually left to the women in worship! Dr. James Dunn writes in a college Baccalaureate at Samford University.

“Dance is an honest image of active expression of happiness that is yours. You know, like Snoopy, with feet flying. You know how King David felt when he ‘danced before the Lord with all his might.’ (II Samuel 6:14) Hoorah! Hallelujah! Yes! But keep your clothes on.”ⁱⁱ

It is too bad that the choir is taking a break in July. They could have thrown on linen ephods and led us as we danced with tambourines. Now some say David danced naked, but we are not sure. What we do know, most importantly, is that he traded his kingly clothes for a linen ephod- a sign of humility and worship. Maybe that is what Michal was annoyed with.

We were made to glorify God. Not just individually, but as a church. How is Fort Hill church glorifying God?

1. Knowing God is the source of our blessings, we share what we have with those in need. Some need food, heat and air as we serve through Clemson Community Care. Others need a safe place to live as we support Habitat for Humanity. Others need a place to gather in Jesus' name while students here at college through our University Ministry. And children no matter the age, need a place like Camp Buc in which to grow in faith and experience God in community and nature. We serve locally and globally through mission teams. Our middle school youth just returned from their mission trip to Charlotte this week. Giving to others outside our church family is one way we glorify God. In fact, we give away \$150,000 of our annual budget in ministry to others.
2. We celebrate the generous efforts and gifts of our *Bridging Generations* work to renew and improve our facilities so others may know the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Your long range planning team continues to work diligently and have for almost 2 years. Our Capital Campaign team was united in purpose and vision serving joyfully. And you have offered your money lovingly to honor God and to serve one another in this church, even those who are not here yet.

I am so thankful to be a part of this congregation who serves intentionally and lovingly praising God with its ministries. What about each of us on a personal level, how are you and I glorifying God?

So reflect with me for a moment. You may want to write these down to answer later. I will pause to give you time. Ask yourself:

Am I living as child of God called to glorify and enjoy God?

Do I worship God with my substance, my love, my money, my daily habits?

Chosen and loved people glorify God in their treatment of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Chosen and loved people glorify God in their weekly and devotional worship.

Chosen and loved people honor God by the ways I interact with co-workers, neighbors, and especially with those with whom they disagree.

As those who have been saved through the free grace of God shown to us in Christ, the Beloved Son, we live out that grace in our own lives. David may have danced half-naked, but we can be clothed in Christ. Listen to Colossians 3:12-17. These are the dance steps we can practice to glorify God.

² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord^[i] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ^[g] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.^[h] ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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ⁱ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/doug-mendenhall/rising-above-the-lowwater_b_4519489.html

ⁱⁱ –Dr. James Dunn, Samford University Baccalaureate, May 1995