

The Worship God Desires

Text: 2 Samuel 6

Introduction: If you study church history, you'll see that one of the most persistent debates among Christians has been about worship. How should God be worshiped? What is acceptable, and what is not?

During the Protestant Reformation, there was disagreement between Martin Luther and John Calvin regarding worship. Luther believed that anything not forbidden in Scripture could be allowed in worship. This became known as the normative principle. While Calvin insisted that only what God commands in Scripture should be part of our worship. This became known as the regulative principle.

The Puritans carried Calvin's regulative principle even further. They rejected things like prayer books, clerical robes, and even certain ceremonies. To many, those might have seemed like small matters of preference. But for the Puritans, it wasn't about preference. It was about obedience to God. God alone has the right to determine how He is worshiped.

Historian Bill Leonard notes that worship practices for the first Baptists centered around prayers and preaching (Leonard, 58). In a letter dating from around 1609, Hughe and Anne Bromheade described the worship practices of Reverend John Smyth's earliest congregation of Baptists: (Not to be confused with the Virginia colony's John Smith.)

The order of the worship and government of our church is: First, we begin with a prayer, after read some one or two chapters of the Bible give the sense thereof, and confer upon the same; that done we lay aside our books, and after a solemn prayer made by the first speaker, he propoundeth some text out of the Scripture, and prophesieth out of the same, by the space of one hour, or three quarters of an hour. After him standeth up a second speaker and prophesieth out of the said text the like time and space, sometime more sometime less.

Leonard goes on to note that the "morning exercise" began at eight and continued to noon. An afternoon session lasted from two to five or six "of the clock." The latter session concluded with a business meeting, with decisions determined by a majority of those present.

Thankfully for you, while our text this morning DOES have something to say about the worship God desires, the main idea of my sermon is not that we must return to the practices of our Baptist forebears in the early 17th century.

All these debates across church history about prayers, robes, hymns, or preaching remind us that God cares deeply about how He is worshiped. But what does He tell His people directly through His Word? That's exactly what we see in 2 Samuel 6.

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to 2 Samuel 6. It's on page 241 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave. We also have a few 1-2 Samuel Scripture journals that you can use for sermon note taking and personal study.

(Read 2 Samuel 6...Pray)

Goshen family, **God is worthy of true and authentic worship.**

That should be clear to us as we read 2 Samuel 6 where first we see that...

I. It matters to God that He is worshiped (2 Samuel 6:1-4).

We saw last week that 2 Samuel 5 is about God elevating, establishing, and empowering David as king of all Israel.

A. Now we see that 2 Samuel 6 is about David bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem where he is establishing the seat of his government as Israel's king.

- 1. We're reminded that the ark of God has been in Abinadab's house for decades going all the way back to the opening verses of 1 Samuel 7.**
- 2. Which means that King Saul had been content to continue storing the ark of God in Abinadab's house. That is when he wasn't trying to use it as a good luck charm on the battlefield as we see in 1 Samuel 14.**

- a. We read about the building of the ark of God during our Scripture reading this morning in Exodus 25.
 - b. It was a golden box of acacia wood that represented the presence of God.
 - c. It housed the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments and was previously kept in the Holy of Holies in the temple at Shiloh.
3. But now David has dreams of building a temple for God at Jerusalem, and he determines to go ahead and bring the ark of God there to Jerusalem.
 4. And I do think this is commendable. It shows that David, unlike his predecessor, IS concerned with spiritual things.
 5. He understood that the ark of God represented the presence of God. He understood that God's people needed God's presence.
 6. So, he made a plan to bring the ark of God from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem.
 7. They got a cart. It was a NEW cart, the text says. And they carried the ark of God on the cart.
 - a. If we're familiar with the ark of God, this detail might stand out to us.
 - b. Because as we look back at Exodus 25 where the ark of God was constructed, we see that God's people were instructed to make poles by which to carry the ark.
 - c. Now, instead of using the poles to carry the ark, they put it on a cart and roll it along.
- B. But so far, so good. At least that's what we think.**
1. It was a good thing that David was bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem. Saul's neglect of the ark showed a neglect of God. It was an expression of Saul's failure to fear, serve, obey, and follow the Lord.
 2. David knew where the ark was. He knew the story of how it ended up there. And he understood its importance for God's people. So, he made it one of his first acts as king to bring the ark to Jerusalem.
3. This was great! It was evidence of God's work among His people through His king! It was an occasion for celebration and worship!
 4. That's exactly what we see in verse 5. (Read vs. 5)
 - a. I didn't know what a castanet was, so I had to look it up. I was hoping it was like a cowbell because we always need more cowbell.
 - b. And it is a percussion instrument, but it's more like a clacker.
 5. David and all God's people were celebrating and worshiping before the Lord with songs and all kinds of instruments.
 6. And we know that God inhabits the praises of His people. He loves to receive worship from His people.
 7. It matters to God that He is worshiped.
 8. Friends, that's why God made you. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So, it's good and right for us to have times like this morning and every Sunday morning when we come together to worship the Lord. He is worthy of our worship!
- But not only does it matter to God THAT He is worshiped. As we keep reading in 2 Samuel 6, we see very quickly that...
- ## II. It matters to God how He is worshiped (2 Samuel 6:5-11).
- ### A. Everything was going great, until it wasn't (vs. 5-7).
1. Everyone was worshiping the Lord! The ark of God was on its way to Jerusalem! What a pivotal moment for the people of God!
 2. But then comes verse 6. (Read vs. 6-7)
 3. Woah! That'll suck the air right out of a good time.
 4. One commentator wrote, "It doesn't matter what worship tradition you come from, when someone drops down dead, the worship service is over" (Greear, 183).
 5. Another commentator wrote, "The joyful shouts became a trembling silence. The procession changed from an excited, happy parade to a stunned and frightened crowd."

6. You may remember from all the way back in 1 Samuel 6 that God struck down 70 of the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked upon the ark.
7. Now Uzzah lay dead beside the ark because he dared reach out and touch the ark to keep it from tumbling over and falling to the ground.
8. Why? We're not really told, are we? The only answer the text gives is "because of his error." What was his error? What did he do wrong? What made God so angry? Is God a hothead? Does He just strike people dead for the most minor of offences?

B. You'll notice that David's initial response to God is the same as ours (vs. 8-9).

1. Look at verse 8. (Read vs. 8-9)
2. David was angered by the Lord striking Uzzah down dead.
3. One of the things we know about David is that he was not afraid to show the Lord the full range of his emotions. We see that reality very clearly in the Psalms. When David was full of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, it overflowed out of him. And when he was frustrated or angry with God, he was more than willing to express his frustration and anger.
4. But not only was David angry. He was also afraid. The text says, "And David was afraid of the Lord that day." He asked, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?"
5. It's pretty clear that David did not understand what had gone wrong. He didn't know WHY God had struck Uzzah dead. And he was understandably afraid that God might bring more judgment on him or the people of Israel if they continued bringing the ark to Jerusalem.

C. So, what WAS Uzzah's crime? WHY did God strike him dead?

1. One of the things we know about God from the Bible is that He is not capricious. He is not a hothead. He doesn't just fly off the handle for no reason.

2. So, that can't be what is going on here in 2 Samuel 6. But what is it? Why did God strike Uzzah dead?
3. Remember I said that God had given specific instructions in Exodus 25 about how to transport the ark. They were supposed to use poles made of acacia wood to carry the ark. There's nothing in Exodus 25 about making a cart on which to carry the ark. They were supposed to use the poles.
4. The point was that they were never to touch the ark itself with their hands. Remember, the ark represented the presence of God. God is holy. God is completely separate from sin. But human beings are sinful. So, a sinful human being was never to touch the ark directly.
5. Interestingly enough, carrying the ark on a cart was exactly how the Philistines had carried the ark when they first captured it back in 1 Samuel 4. It was not a good thing that God's people were acting like a bunch of Philistines in the way they were carrying the ark.
6. JD Greear says, "This story alone should tell us how God feels about the attitude that says, 'I worship God in my own way. It doesn't matter how one worships God or what you do, as long as it's sincere'" (Greear, 184). That is made abundantly clear here in 2 Samuel 6.
7. God doesn't just care THAT He is worshiped. He cares HOW He is worshiped.
8. I love what JD Greear writes here. He says, "Uzzah's touch represents a failure to understand his own sinfulness. Uzzah saw the ark headed toward the dirt, and he reached out because he assumed his hand was less dirty than the ground. Most of us would have done the same. But think of this: the earth has never committed the blasphemy of rejecting God's authority. The earth has always obeyed the commands of God. Dirt could never pollute the ark. But the touch of a sinful man could" (Greear, 184).
9. See, here's the problem, Goshen. We don't understand God's actions toward Uzzah because we don't understand the seriousness of sin. Nor do we understand the holiness of God. Because if we did understand the holiness of God and the sinfulness of

our own hearts, we would understand God's judgment on Uzzah here in 2 Samuel 6.

10. And this is why Jesus had to die. God is holy. We are sinful. We have rebelled against God. Our sin made us enemies of God. And the only way for us to be brought into a right relationship with God was for the perfect Son of God to take our sin on Himself and die in our place so that His righteousness could be credited to our account.
11. I wonder this morning: what if God were to strike us down for coming to worship on Sundays with the same nonchalance as Uzzah? Who among us would still be alive? Not one.
12. See, the question really isn't "Why did God strike Uzzah?" The question is really "Why doesn't God strike me?" Only because of His mercy. Only because of His grace to me in Christ.

D. Because of his fear, David sent the ark to the home of Obed-edom the Gittite (vs. 10-11).

1. This is troubling because it seems that we're right back where we started. The ark is being put away.
2. And it's not just anywhere that it's being put away. It's going to the home of a Gittite. That is a Philistine.
3. How anticlimactic. It was just back in verse 5 that everyone was celebrating with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. The ark of God was on its way to Jerusalem.
4. But now everyone is headed back home. There's no singing and rejoicing. And the ark of God is placed in the home of a Philistine.
5. But just as our holy God is a God of judgment. He's also a God of mercy and grace. We see it at the end of verse 11: "And the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household." We understand better the significance of that statement as we keep reading in verse 12.

But don't miss the point here. Yes, it matters to God THAT He is worshiped. But it also matters to God HOW He is worshiped. We must worship Him according to what He has revealed in His Word. We can't just go our own way and do as we see fit. We must do as God has commanded us. That's why I say that God is worthy of TRUE worship. It matters to God how He is worshiped.

Finally, we see that...

III. It matters to God the heart of the worshiper (2 Samuel 6:12-23).

- A. We read in verse 12 that David received a report of how the Lord had blessed Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.
 1. The truth is that God had not blessed Obed-edom merely for Obed-edom's sake. It was also for David's sake. And the people of Israel's sake.
 2. God's blessing of Obed-edom was a clear sign to David and all Israel that God is not just a God of judgment. But He is also a God of mercy and grace and blessing. Yes, God had struck Uzzah dead because he touched the ark with unclean hands. But He blessed Obed-edom merely because the ark was present in his home.
 3. David apparently understood from this that it was in fact important for him to finish the work of bringing the ark to Jerusalem because that's exactly what he did in response. The text says, "So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing" (vs. 12b).
 4. One thing you'll notice about verse 13 is that they "bore the ark of the Lord" (vs. 13a). This is how God intended for the ark to be transported. They apparently used the poles of acacia wood to carry the ark rather than placing it back on a cart. They had learned their lesson. Perhaps David had gone back to the Scriptures to determine what had gone wrong and saw there that the ark was supposed to be carried in this manner.

5. We can learn from this that we should always be evaluating our practices of worship according to God's Word. Travis and I recently sat down to go through all of the songs that we sing as a congregation to discuss their theological accuracy and whether we should continue singing them. We want to make sure that we sing songs that are both singable and biblically rich. While we lean more toward Luther's normative principle than Calvin's regulative principle, everything we do in our worship service on Sunday mornings is very intentional. We sing, we read Scripture, we pray, we give of our offerings to the Lord, we hear from God's Word, and we celebrate the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are the elements of Christian worship that God has given us in His Word. It's important that we order our worship according to God's Word. He cares not only THAT we worship but also HOW we worship.
6. Notice also from the text that after six steps, David sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal to the Lord (vs. 13b). It seems that there is now a greater recognition of man's sinfulness before God. So, a sacrifice was offered to God as an act of worship and atonement for sin.
7. You can just imagine the fear and trepidation David and the people must have felt as they once again began moving the ark toward Jerusalem. They had seen what had happened when they treated the ark too casually. They were determined not to have a repeat of that.
8. We too should come before the Lord with a certain degree of reverence. We ought not approach Him too casually. He is the God of the universe. There's a certain degree of fear that is appropriate for us to have. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). But the Bible also tells us that we can now boldly approach the throne of grace and receive help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16). This is because of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross to pay for our sin. The dividing wall of hostility between us and God has been broken down. Our sin was placed on Jesus. Our sin is now as far away as the east is from the west. Jesus took

the punishment for us. So that we could be reconciled to God our Creator.

- B. As we keep reading in verses 14-15, we can see the authenticity of the worship that was being offered to God by David and the people as they carried the ark to Jerusalem. (Read vs. 14-15)
 1. The text says that David danced before the Lord with all his might. Think about that. This is the king of Israel. Dancing before the Lord. What people might think of him seems to be the farthest thing from his mind. He's totally consumed with worshipping the Lord.
 2. The text also says that he was wearing a linen ephod. We don't know for sure if this is all David was wearing. That could perhaps be the implication of Michal's accusation in the verses that follow.
 3. John Woodhouse writes that David's linen ephod seems to suggest that his royal status was subordinated here to his role as God's servant and the servant of God's people (Woodhouse, 189).
 4. The point is that as they were bringing the ark to Jerusalem, David and the people worshiped the Lord with great excitement and joy and authenticity. Their hearts were in the right place.
- C. Sadly, however, David's wife Michal was not too pleased with the whole scene.
 1. Look at verse 16. (Read vs. 16)
 2. Michal is David's wife. But you'll notice that is not how she is identified in verse 16. Rather, she is identified as the "daughter of Saul." We'll see that phrase again in verses 20 and 23. Clearly, something isn't right here. The text says that she "despised him in her heart."
 3. Of course, David is initially oblivious to Michal's response. They brought the ark into Jerusalem and put it in the tent David had pitched for it (vs. 17a). David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord (vs. 17b). David then offered a blessing over the people in the name of the Lord (vs. 18). And he gave the people gifts of food (vs. 19).

4. What a wonderful occasion! Everyone departed and went to their homes happy and full. David must have been feeling good. Everything seemed right.
5. Until he returned home to bless his household, and Michal met him at the door. Look at what she said, “How the king of Israel honored himself today before the eyes of his servants’ female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!” (vs. 20).
 - a. There’s no reason to believe that David was naked or that his attire was inappropriately revealing. In fact, it’s quite clear from the text that he was not naked. He was wearing a linen ephod (vs. 14).
 - b. The problem from Michal’s perspective was that this was no way for a king to act. In her mind, David’s actions were unbecoming of a king.
6. Isn’t it amazing how two people looking at the same event can have two totally different interpretations of it? In this case, Michal’s uncharitable interpretation had everything to do with her heart toward David and to the Lord. Her heart was cold toward the Lord, and she couldn’t possibly understand why David would be so overwhelmed with the goodness and greatness of the Lord that he would worship the Lord in such an undignified manner.
 - a. Before we judge Michal too harshly, we probably ought to examine our own hearts to determine whether we might find Michal’s reaction in our hearts.
 - b. How often do we consider our image over our devotion to God? How often do we enter our worship gathering on Sunday mornings with a heart that is actually cold toward God?
 - c. Does our worship look more like the joyful, authentic praise that David offered to the Lord or the cold, disinterested posture of Michal? I don’t mean that you have to start dancing in the aisles, though maybe that would be appropriate if we fully understood the grace we have received in Jesus.

d. Ask yourself whether it seems to you to be the right response for a person who was lost sin. Far from God. But has been saved by Jesus. To stand there on Sunday morning during corporate worship. Barely singing. Stiff as a board. Looking like you’ve been sucking on a lemon. Does that seem right to you? I can’t say that it seems right to me.

7. Look at David’s response to Michal. (Read vs. 21-22)
8. David had received so much from the Lord. He had reason to worship the Lord. David understood that the Lord was worthy of his worship. And he was determined to give the Lord the worship that was due His name no matter what Michal or anyone else thought of him.

Conclusion: Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that we have received from God far more than David had.

David inherited an earthly kingdom. We have inherited an eternal kingdom. David welcomed the presence of God into Jerusalem. We have welcomed the very presence of God into our hearts. David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. God has offered on our behalf a once-for-all sacrifice. His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, we have something to celebrate! We have something to rejoice in! And our hearts ought to overflow in true and authentic worship to our God who is worthy of it all.

That’s where this thing is headed. The choir of heaven sings, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

We have something worth celebrating, church! Don't sing because I said you should. Sing because of what Jesus has done for you. Don't dance before the Lord because David did. Dance before the Lord because you are overwhelmed by the grace of God to you in Christ.

We worship the Lord because **He is worthy of true and authentic worship.**