

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

Extravagant worship

The Ark of the Covenant, containing the tablets of the law and a sign of God's presence, is brought in triumph to David's city, Jerusalem. David and his people greet its arrival with uninhibited dancing and singing, and the distribution of food to all in Israel.



ACT

Hold a dance party! With friends/family or just by yourself. Play your favourite music and dance as energetically as you can. It's a good way of practising letting go of your inhibitions.

REFLECT

Does your family have special ways for celebrating and honouring people? What are the special ways your family honours God?

LOOK Find some photos or videos of big celebrations you have been to, and talk about what you remember most and what you enjoyed.

LISTEN

Listen to 'Your love is extravagant', Casting Crowns and think about how be extravagant in the ways you worship God.



Bible notes



The Ark of the Covenant was the holiest object that Israel possessed. It contained the tablets of the law, written by God and given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:1). It travelled with the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings and, when Samuel was a boy, it was kept at the old temple in Shiloh (1 Samuel 3:3).

The Israelite elders took it into battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:4), believing that victory would be certain with the Lord among them; but the Philistines defeated them and captured the Ark (1 Samuel 4:11). Yet they found the Ark a dangerous guest: it made them sick and knocked their idols over (1 Samuel 5:3,6). They returned it to Israel and it was kept for many years in an ordinary house (1 Samuel 7:1).

After all David's struggles, the Ark became the crowning glory of his new city, built to be the home of the whole people. The Ark embodied the presence of the Lord of hosts who fought alongside Israel with the fire-angel cherubim (Ezekiel 10). David was bringing the Ark to its new home, where it would remain until the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 586 BCE. God was the cornerstone of David's new city, the divine presence manifested by this precious object. No wonder they danced and sang and played their instruments! Their extravagant worship spoke of their joy at the hope of peace after so many years of struggles with their enemies.

Yet God's presence brought threat as well as joy. There are two disturbing threads woven into this narrative. The Ark remained a dangerous object, filled with the power of God. The verses omitted (vv.6-11) describe the death of Uzzah, who touched the Ark without observing the necessary purification rites. Living in God's holy presence brings risk alongside reward. And we hear the echo of Michal's sadness. The daughter of Saul was married to David (1 Samuel 18:27), but this ended while David was in hiding and she was given to another husband. When David returned, he reclaimed Michal, who returned, followed by her weeping husband (2 Samuel 3:13-16). This woman, used as a pawn in dynastic marriage, finds her voice here; her story is not forgotten.

The celebrations were filled with joy, extravagant expressions of Israel's delight. David marked the moment with dance and song and shouting as the Ark came home. His rich sacrifices to God were balanced by gifts to all the people, so that no one went hungry – the prophets criticised those who offered sacrifice without attending to the needs of the poor. David honours God through offerings and generosity; this is, perhaps, the crowning moment of his monarchy.

First impressions

- What enables you to worship fully? What might hold you back?
- Where do you feel closest to God?
- Whose drumbeats do you follow in your life? God's – or someone or something else's?



A prayer for all ages together

God of all, in silence and peace, we praise your name; in song and dance, we praise your name; in good times and in sad times, we praise your name; alone and together, we praise your name. May we worship you with all our heart, giving you all we have and serving you with joy. Amen.