

The Heart of Worship – 2 Samuel 6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Story Behind 'Heart of Worship'*

1. In his book, *The Unquenchable Worshiper* Matt Redman, who's written so many of our favorite praise songs here at CCO, tells the story of how he came to write the song, "The Heart of Worship."
2. The church Matt attended had been incredibly blessed w/some fantastic musicians & composers.
 - a. The worship was incredible. But after a time, something went missing.
 - b. As the bands became more proficient & the sound improved, the sense of God's presence diminished.
 - c. In Matt's words, "The fire that used to characterize our worship had somehow grown cold."
 - d. "Where once people would enter in no matter what, we'd *now* wait to see what the band was like first, how good the sound was, or whether we were 'into' the songs chosen."
3. The pastor, Mike Pilavachi, decided to take some radical steps to turn things around.
 - a. So one Sunday when the congregation arrived, they discovered the sound system had been removed & there was no one to lead worship.
 - b. Mike said, "When you come through the doors of the church on Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God? What are you going to sacrifice today?"
4. The first few meetings after that were awkward as people struggled to learn that true worship means offering one's heart to God.
5. Giving expression to that was difficult at first, but over several weeks, people realized worship is about more than singing songs.
6. It didn't take long before the power & presence of God was renewed as they gathered to worship.
7. Over the next weeks they added the instruments back in.
8. Matt shares, "Out of this season, I reflected on where we had come to as a church & wrote this song,"

When the music fades, All is stripped away, & I simply come;

Longing just to bring something that's of worth That will bless Your heart.

I'll bring You more than a song, For a song in itself Is not what You have required.

You search much deeper within Through the way things appear; You're looking into my heart.

I'm coming back to the heart of worship, & it's all about You, All about You, Jesus.

I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it, When it's all about You, All about You, Jesus.

B. *Today - 2 Samuel 6 is David's discovery of the same truth.*

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

¹Again David gathered all *the choice men* of Israel, thirty thousand. ²And David arose & went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells *between the cherubim*.

1. The last we heard of the ark of the covenant was when it was returned by the Philistines 70 yrs before.
2. It had been left at the home of a priest named Abinadab in the city of Kirjath Jearim, referred to here by its ancient name – Baale Judah. [Joshua 15:9]
3. Now that Israel had a new *political capital* at Jerusalem, King David moved to secure it as the *religious* center as well.
4. The ark was the main fixture in the worship of Israel.
 - a. It held the 10 Commandments, written by the very finger of God.
 - b. It was the place where atonement was made & their covenant with God renewed.
 - c. And it was the place where the visible presence of God was manifested, making it in a sense, His throne.
5. So David gathered a all the most important & powerful people & went to get the ark.

B. Vs. 3-5

³So they set the ark of God on a new cart, & brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; & Uzzah & Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. ⁴And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; & Ahio went before the ark. ⁵Then David & all the house of Israel played *music* before the LORD on all kinds of *instruments of fir wood*, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, & on cymbals.

1. It's 9 miles from KJ to Jerusalem. So they made a cart for it, loaded it on, & set out.
2. The whole way as they went, the people played instruments & sang, celebrating what they knew was an important turning point in their history.
3. Abinadab's 2 sons were the ark's official keepers. Ahio went before it while Uzzah came behind.
4. This was one happy parade! The people were stoked!
5. Little did they know they were in for a rude awakening.

C. Vs. 6-7

⁶And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God & took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, & God struck him there for *his error*; & he died there by the ark of God.

1. Picture the scene:
 - a. As the cart makes its way up that dirt road toward Jerusalem, one of the

- wheels drops into a rut.
- b. The cart tips, & the ark slides to the edge.
 - c. Uzzah rushes over to steady it. But the moment his hand touches the ark, he drops dead.
 - d. It's obvious to the dozens watching God has struck him down!
 - e. There's a gasp from those standing near, & all the noise & celebration quickly stills as the news travels to the farthest edge of the crowd.
2. Why did God smite Uzzah? Why would He strike him dead for seeking to do a good thing?
 3. To answer that, we have to go back about 500 yrs before this.
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4. In Exodus 25, God made it clear the ark was to be moved in only one way –
 - a. It was to be carried by poles through rings in its sides.
 - b. And only priests from the family of Kohath were to carry it. [Num. 4:15]
 - c. Under **NO** condition was **anyone ever to touch** the ark itself.
 - d. As the earthly representation of the throne of God, it was **utterly holy** = Sacred, in the most extreme sense
 5. The reason God wanted the ark carried, not moved about in a wagon, was because He didn't want the worship of Israel to degenerate into a **mechanical form**.
 - a. Their covenant with Him was meant to be a close, intimate relationship– pictured by their **carrying**, not **hauling**, the ark.
 - b. They weren't to reduce their relationship with God to a religious ritual, which using a cart or wagon to move the ark would quickly lead to.
 6. But 70 years before, when the Philistines had returned the ark, they'd sent it on an oxen-drawn cart.
 - a. Now as David moved it to Jerusalem, he just did what the Philistines had done.
 - b. He made a new cart, loaded up the ark, & set out.
 - c. The musically was loud, the excitement grand, the celebration fervent. The emotions were running high!
 - d. But God wasn't impressed because while they were doing a good thing, they were doing it the wrong way. God's Word was being disobeyed.
 7. When Uzzah reached out & touched the ark, it was the final act that **demanded** God's judgment.
 - a. While Uzzah was motivated by a desire to protect the ark –
 - b. The fact is, by **touching** it, he showed a shameful disregard for the God of the ark.
 - c. Uzzah's presumption was a signature symbol for the way all the people, including David, had come to view the ark. = It had become little more than a piece of interesting **furniture** -
 - d. **The very thing** God had given commands it was **not** to be – **a mere religious artifact**.
 8. When Uzzah dropped, it was a sober reminder that God is REAL, HOLY, POWERFUL, & HERE!
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9. Contrast the moment **before** the cart tipped & the moment **after** Uzzah fell.
 - a. **First** there's celebration, music, noise, excitement – & it's all **religious** in

- nature. They're bringing the ark to Jerusalem. God is going to be installed at the political center of the nation. Whoppee!
- b. But within seconds the entire crowd stands in stunned silence because Uzzah lies dead beside the cart that's been the center of their rejoicing.
 - c. All the excitement – as *religious* as it looked & sounded, was *void* of God.
 - d. When God *did* reveal His power & presence – **Silence!**
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10. Why did Israel put the ark on a cart instead of *carrying* it as God instructed?
 - a. The answer is simple – they didn't look to God's Word for instructions on what to do;
 - b. They took their cue from the world – that's how the Philistines had moved it.
 - c. The people thought, "If it was good enough for them, it's good enough for us."
 11. Sad to say, this is the way many Christians & churches live today.
 - a. They don't look to God's Word for direction on how to live their personal lives or how to conduct the mission of the Church;
 - b. They look to the so-called *experts*; psychotherapists & church growth specialists.
 12. A group of churches unite in a campaign to reach their city. They want to see God's glory manifest.
 - a. So they appoint a *board*, which looks for some *celebrity* who can fill an arena, a "*big wheel*" who can really pack 'em in.
 - b. Boards & big wheels; that's what a *cart* is. [Thanks, Jon Courson]
 13. God wants to bless, He wants to shower His favor on our city & send revival. But He will share His glory with no man.
 - a. He will not bless our carts – our slick programs.
 - b. He simply wants us to look to Him, to ask Him, then make ourselves available to Him to be used by Him.
 - c. He doesn't need or want carts, boards & big wheels.
 - d. He wants us – just us. He wants us to carry Him on our lives everywhere we go.
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14. Uzzah dropped dead because Israel's *disregard for God* had grown to a critical point.
 15. Their procession was a great religious show, but it was void of God.
 - a. They'd become accustomed to God's grace through the peace & prosperity they enjoyed under David's reign.
 - b. But an equally important aspect of God's nature had been neglected – His holiness!
 - c. Uzzah's death was a hard-won reminder that *God is holy*.
 16. We ought to be thankful what happened to Uzzah doesn't happen to us every time *we* forget about the holiness of God.
 - a. There wouldn't be many people left alive.
 - b. But at key moments throughout history, God has sent a sober reminder that He is holy.
 - c. Achan, Korah, Ananias & Sapphira all died at crucial points in the History of God's People because they refused to honor God as holy.

17. Israel thought they were worshiping God when in fact they were doing something God had told them **NOT** to do.
 - a. If they *continued* down this path of *self-indulgent religion*, there's no telling where it would end.
 - b. God loved them too much to let them carry on in what would end up being their ruin,
 - c. So He *halted it* in the death of Uzzah.
18. Worship, however happy or joyous, which fails to recognize God's holiness is *never* pleasing to Him.

D. Vs. 8-9

⁸And David became angry because of the LORD'S outbreak against Uzzah; & he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.

⁹David was afraid of the LORD that day; & he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"

1. David's first reaction was *anger*; "How *dare* God rain on our parade like this?!?!"
 - a. "I mean, come on God, we're doing all this for YOU!"
 - b. Then You go & strike down the guy who was only trying to help You?!?!"
2. But as David pondered what happened, he realized anger was the wrong reaction.
3. His questions led to some hard lessons as he went in search of answers when he returned to Jerusalem & called for the priests to read the words of Moses regarding the ark.
4. He learned the reason Uzzah died was because they were going about moving the ark all wrong.
5. And the more David learned about God & about how the people were to worship him, the more *concerned* he became, realizing how far the nation had strayed from God's instructions.
6. David's fear came from the realization that while he & the people had been *sincere* in their intent, they'd been sincerely *wrong*.

E. Vs. 10-12a

¹⁰So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. & the LORD blessed Obed-Edom & all his household. ¹²Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom & all that *belongs* to him, because of the ark of God."

1. In 1 Chr. 26 we learn Obed-Edom was a priest in the family of Kohath, the family of Levites given charge of the ark.
2. While it was in his home, he prospered greatly.
3. This was God's way of confirming they were now on the right track in dealing with the ark.
4. When God's Word was obeyed & His holiness respected, blessing followed.

F. Vs. 12b-15

So David went & brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. ¹³And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen & fatted sheep. ¹⁴Then David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; & David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵So David & all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting & with the sound of the trumpet.

1. How long the ark stayed at Obed-Edom's house isn't said, but it was long enough for David to search the scriptures & learn of God's instructions for how it was to be treated.
2. When news reached David of Obed-Edom's unique blessing, he decided it was time to finish what they'd begun.
3. But this time, they'd move the ark in the right way; on the shoulders of the priests.
4. Even more, they'd *honor the holiness* of God by stopping every 7 paces to offer a sacrifice.
5. As they went, they played music & celebrated. But this time, there was a *confidence* in their worship that what they were doing was pleasing to God because it was **in line with His Word**.
6. David confidence was expressed by *abandoning* himself to God in worship.
 - a. As he danced & played, his *royal robes* got in the way, so he took them off.
 - b. So he removed the emblems of his office & stripped down to the garment of a commoner.
7. David understood that when we stand before God, it's level ground; no one is exalted over another.
 - a. When it comes to worshipping God, roles & offices don't exist.
 - b. We all are all the same, equals, peers; before God.
8. This was *real worship*! It was loud, exuberant, joyous, excited, intense.

9. Some of us grew up with the idea that for worship to be real it has to be marked by *quiet reverence*;
 - a. We think of people on kneelers in a darkened sanctuary, incense burning, candles flickering, a Gregorian chant in the background.
 - b. Now, that *is* one expression of worship & there are times when such quietude is right –
 - c. But what we see *here* is equally a valid expression of worship.
 - d. David, in a smock, dancing his heart out before the Lord.
10. But let me add this as a balance—notice v. 14.
 - a. It doesn't say David danced **IN the Lord**. He danced **BEFORE** Him.
 - b. There are those who practice what they call, "dancing in the Spirit."
 - c. They say when the Spirit comes on them they *have* to dance; that they have no control over it.
 - d. They validate their position by appealing to this story.
 - e. But it doesn't say the Spirit came on him & made him cut a rug.
 - f. This was a *voluntary* but *sincere* & heartfelt expression of love for God.
 - g. He was worshipping the Lord with all his strength.

G. Vs. 17-19

17 So they brought the ark of the LORD, & set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings & peace offerings before the LORD. **18** And when David had finished offering burnt offerings & peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. **19** Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women & the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of *meat*, & a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.

1. David wanted **ALL** the people to enter into the blessedness of worship.
 2. So he gave each family some food to take home & enjoy as a way to celebrate with one another & the Lord.
 3. When we worship, our aim is not our own fulfillment or satisfaction; the aim of worship is the glory of God, to be a delight to Him.
 4. But the fact is, when we *really do that* – we **ARE** blessed.
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5. This was a great way for David to bring home the reality of what their covenant with God was about.
 - a. It wasn't a formal, legal arrangement. It wasn't stuffy religiosity.
 - b. It was a relationship of intimate joy & celebration.
 - c. What better way to signify that than by sending them home with some good grub.
 6. [Maui – Hula Grill: Family, food]

H. Vs. 16 & 20

16 Now as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window & saw King David leaping & whirling before the LORD; & she despised him in her heart

20 Then David returned to bless his household. & Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, & said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"

1. Michal hadn't been part of the procession that brought the ark to Jerusalem; she stayed home.
2. Looking out the window from the palace she saw the procession with David leading the way, dancing his heart out. It made her ill!
3. What bothered her was that David had taken off the marks of royalty, the emblems that separated him from everyone else.
 - a. Michal was a Jewish-princess. Status & Image were *everything* to her.
 - b. As a member of royalty by both birth & marriage she was hung up on appearances.
 - c. To see the man who now secured her connection to power, wealth, & prestige – dancing through the streets in a smock like a commoner was the height of embarrassment.
 - d. She lost all respect for her husband.
4. Later, when he walked in the door, she let him have it; the sarcasm so thick you

could cut it with a knife.

I. Vs. 21-23

²¹So David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father & all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play *music* before the LORD. ²²And I will be even more undignified than this, & will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor.” ²³Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

1. David knew Michal’s scorn was born of her *addition to image*. So he reminded her that a preoccupation with image was the cause of her father’s rejection by God.
 2. God had chosen David to replace Saul because, for one thing—he wasn’t concerned with image.
 3. Of far greater concern was the glory of God.
 4. And if glorifying God meant being seen as silly or foolish by others – then so be it.
 5. In fact, David said being foolish even in HIS OWN EYES won’t stop him from exalting the Lord.
 - a. If God’s Word called him to do something David considered humbling, he’ll do it.
 - b. Because ultimately, *dignity* isn’t something man decides. That’s God’s call.
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6. Michal thought David was embarrassing himself.
 - a. But David knew better because he’d been among the people as they worshiped.
 - b. They weren’t embarrassed by seeing their king worship –
 - c. It made them *proud* to see him submitting himself to God.
 - d. His faith wasn’t feigned, a political tool to secure the support of the religious right.
 - e. It was real & they honored him for it.
 7. But Michal, stuck up in her palace window, not interested in the things of God, despised David *for his worship*.
 - a. The result = she remained childless,
 - b. We don’t know if this was a divine judgment or if David refused to give her an heir.
 - c. It doesn’t really matter – the result is the same either way; & teaches us an important truth –
 - d. Those who mock worship will themselves be *spiritually* barren.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Applied

1. There are several great applications from this chapter & I trust the Holy Spirit has already pointed out some applications for you.
2. But as we end, I want to speak to those who’ve not entered into the joy of open

- & free worship of God.
3. Don't let concern for what others might think hinder your worship. Don't be a Michal. Be a David.
 - a. Our guideline for worship is this: Let the posture of your body reflect the posture of your heart.
 - b. That means if you want to sit, kneel, stand, lie on your face, dance, do it!
 - c. Just be mindful of the caution to not distract others in their worship.
 4. Now, when we gather here for service, our worship is centered on singing. But I've met people who just aren't into music, so singing just isn't a great way for them to give expression to their love for God.
 5. If that's you – understand that worship is much, much more than singing.
 6. David **danced** because it was one way to love God **with all his strength**.
 - a. But that command says we're also to love God with all our heart, mind, & soul.
 - b. So maybe there's **another way** for you to worship God.
 - c. It might be in creating a work of art.
 - d. It might be in writing poetry, or studying some subject so you can take it captive to Christ.
 - e. Remember Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire*? He said he knew God had made him fast & sensed His pleasure when he ran. He ran as a way to worship.
 - 1) It's too bad the people around him had such a narrow view of what worship is.
 - 2) They wanted to take away from him the very thing that he wanted to give to God.
 7. God made you unique.
What's your passion?
When do you feel most "in the zone"?
When are you most fully alive?
That's precisely the place God wants you to worship Him.