

Sermon Title: Living Before The LORD

Series: Seeking God's Kingdom, Part 38

Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:1-16

Main Takeaway: Seeking God's Kingdom means living before the LORD with a heart shaped by His Word.

This week I was thinking a lot about the difference between knowledge and assumptions...

[SLIDE 1] Know vs. Assume

When we *know* something to be true...
We've spent time thinking about it...
We've tested it...

But when we *assume* something to be true...
It's the opposite...
We've not spent time thinking it over or testing it...

And yet what we know and what we assume...
Both shape how we live.

But the danger of assuming...
Isn't just what my middle school English teacher told us...

The danger of assuming...
Is that it can feel exactly like we know what we're doing...
Until something goes *very* wrong.

That's exactly what happened to David in 2 Samuel 6.

At this point in history...
David has control of Jerusalem...
And he's already started to build it back up...
And now it's time to go and get the Ark of God.

The only problem is...

David assumed he didn't need to check the delivery instructions first...

Now here's the thing...

We haven't heard about the Ark of the LORD for a while...

The last time we saw the ark was when it was placed in Abinadab's house...

Way back in Part 7 of this series (we're now in Part 38)...

[SLIDE 2] 1 Samuel 7:1 - So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They brought it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD.

About 50 or 60 years have passed since they brought it to Abinadab...

And during all this time...

The ark was basically sitting in storage.

But now that David took the throne...

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem became one of his top priorities.

But he didn't just send a couple guys to do the job...

[SLIDE 3] David turned bringing the Ark back into a massive national event.

2 Samuel 6 mentions 30,000 of David's able young men went with him...

But we also get a wide angle picture of the same story in 1 Chronicles 13...

It says that David assembled ALL Israel to bring the Ark back.

But why's the Ark so important?

It's just a box... right?

Well...

No.

This wasn't just a box.

Because...

[SLIDE 4] Inside the ark was God's Law, written on stone tablets.

Remember when Moses received the ten commandments?

That's what's inside the ark.

So this box represents the very Words God spoke to His people.

But it's even more than that...

The narrator says...

[SLIDE 5] 2 Samuel 6:2 - He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.

The ark was: *called by the Name*...

That phrase is a Hebrew way of saying: The ark *belongs* to God.

It's like when you're at a picnic and you write your name on a red Solo cup...

That means... that's *your* cup!

In the same way...

The ark *belongs* to God...

It's *called by the Name* of the LORD Almighty.

In other Scriptures, the ark is also called God's "footstool"...

So we can picture the LORD sitting on His throne in heaven...

But His footstool is here on earth with His people.

And inside the footstool is His Word.

But on either side of the footstool are *cherubim*...

Those *cherubim* weren't cute little baby angels...

They were powerful spiritual beings that guarded the throne of God.

Why does God need throne guardians?

He doesn't.

But people in ancient times would have understood this...

Because in their time...

It was a normal thing to have guardians beside the throne of a king.

And so...

The ark of God isn't simply a fancy religious box...

And it's definitely not a cosmic weapon like some thought in *Indiana Jones*...

[SLIDE 6] The ark represented the very real presence, Word and authority of the Almighty God, Israel's true King.

That's why bringing the ark back to Jerusalem was an incredibly important, nation-wide event.

And so verse three...

[SLIDE 7] 2 Samuel 6:3-4 - They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it.

[SLIDE 8] 2 Samuel 6:5 - David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

By the way — as a drummer — I have to point out...

That four of the six instruments mentioned (the highlighted words)...

They're all types of percussion instruments.

Imagine how that must have sounded...

Stringed instruments with make-shift wood and metallic drumming...

Rhythms banging and clanging to the melody...

As everyone was singing along...

This was quite the celebration!

This is the victory walk Israel has been waiting for!

And everything was going great...

Until it wasn't...

[SLIDE 9] 2 Samuel 6:6-7 - When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen

stumbled. The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.

At first glance... that feels harsh.

I mean...

It seems like Uzzah was just trying to protect the ark...

So why strike him down for just trying to help out?

Well...

Remember when I mentioned that David should've checked the delivery instructions?

The thing is...

There are actually specific instructions in the books of Exodus and Numbers for how to carry the ark.

First, you're definitely not supposed to touch the ark.

If you did, you'd die.

So to prevent that...

The LORD told Moses...

[SLIDE 10] Exodus 25:14-16 - Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it. The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed. Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you.

But instead of using poles...

David's men used a new cart.

That sounds reasonable, right?

Work smarter... not harder.

But when the LORD gives specific instructions...

You have to pay attention.

And so when the oxen tripped and the ark started to fall over...
Uzzah reached out to stop it from falling...
And the LORD struck him dead.

Again, that sounds harsh...
But the underlying issue before the oxen tripped was that David
And his men didn't obey what the LORD had commanded.

Instead, they set it on a *new* cart...
Just like the Philistines treated it way back in 1 Samuel 6.

Maybe they didn't know any better?
Maybe they didn't read that part in Exodus and Numbers?
That's still no excuse.
As the king, David was supposed to study the Word of God every day.

But somehow, David either missed or ignored God's instructions...
And he ended up treating the ark in the same way the Philistines did years ago.
And because of that, one of his men died.

At first, David's angry at the whole situation...
But he was also afraid of the LORD...
He said in verse 9...

[SLIDE 11] 2 Samuel 6:9 - "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?"

He was so afraid of what might happen next...
That instead of taking it home to Jerusalem...
He had it taken to the house of Obed-Edom.

And for the next three months...
The LORD blessed Obed and his whole family.

Once David heard how the LORD blessed Obed because of the ark...
He realized what went wrong...

1 Chronicles gives us this part of the story...
 Once David realized what he did...
 He said...

[SLIDE 12] 1 Chronicles 15:13 - It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way.

But now they were ready to do it right.

And as they carried the ark back to Jerusalem...
 It was quite the scene...

[SLIDE 13] 2 Samuel 6:14-15 - Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

So while the ark is being carried into Jerusalem...
 David's dancing before the LORD...
 Israel was shouting in celebration...
 And trumpets were sounding off at their arrival.

And this whole situation with the ark...

Uzzah's death...
Obed's blessing...

David's initial anger and fear...
Then his dancing...

All of that shows us the truth that...

[SLIDE 14] God's presence is *holy*, but His presence is also *good*.

God's holiness and goodness are not synonyms.

God's holiness means that He's completely pure...
 He's set apart from everything sinful...
 But His presence isn't something casual or harmless...

Scripture describes His holiness as a consuming fire...
 Like the sun, His holiness is life-giving...
 But anything corrupt or unclean cannot stand in its presence.

And so Uzzah's death reminds us that the LORD's holiness...
 Is not something to treat casually.

Obed's experience reminds us that the LORD's presence is not something to run away from either.

And now we see David treating God's presence with reverence *and* joy at the same time.

And as the celebration comes closer to the Jerusalem walls...
 The narrator pans the camera up to a window...
 Where David's first wife was watching...

[SLIDE 15] 2 Samuel 6:16 - ...Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

We first met Michal way back in 1 Samuel 18...
 And back then...
 She was in love with David.
 Now?
 She despised him.

What changed?

Well, we can't know for sure.
 But we do know that a lot has happened since she first met David.

Not long after they got married...
 Her dad tried to kill David...
 So Michal risked her life to help David escape.

But then Saul gave her to another man...
 And years later, apparently before she had any children...
 David demanded that she would be returned to him...

That could almost make a nice Hallmark movie...

Two kids fall in love...

Get married...

Life circumstances force them apart...

But in the end, they come back together.

And they lived happily ever after.

But that's not how it went down!

Because when Michal was brought back to David...

She found that he already had multiple wives and children.

Again, we don't know everything that's going through Michal's mind...

But there's definitely a lot of history behind that window.

Because she once loved him with all her heart...

But now...

As she watches her first love outside dancing before the LORD...

Her heart despises him.

That echoes what the LORD said long ago...

[SLIDE 16] 1 Samuel 16:7 - "People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Michal was looking at David's outward appearance...

But the LORD was looking at what was in her heart.

In fact...

The heart is one of the main themes in the books of Samuel...

Hannah prayed in her heart...

Samuel encouraged the Israelites to return to the LORD with all their heart...

And the LORD chose David, a man after God's own heart...

Over and over again...

Samuel reminds us that what matters most...

Is the condition of our heart before the LORD.

And really, that's a main theme talked about all throughout the Bible...

[SLIDE 17] Jeremiah 31:33 - “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Proverbs 3 uses the same picture...

[SLIDE 17A] Proverbs 3:3 - Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

Again, this idea of the heart...

And what God desires to write on the tablet of our heart...

Is *really* important.

Because think back to the ark for a second...

We saw that the ark *belongs* to the LORD...

And what was inside it?

God's Word...

Written on stone tablets.

And this is where we start to see the gospel coming through...

Because God's desire wasn't to just leave His Word in a box...

Jeremiah said God desires to write His Law...

on the human heart.

And Paul uses almost the exact same picture...

[SLIDE 18] 2 Corinthians 3:3 - ...you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Do you see the picture?

God's Word was written on tablets of stone...

Inside the ark.

But under the new covenant...

God wants His truth to become part of who we are...

Part of our DNA...

His Word isn't meant to collect dust on our shelves...

[SLIDE 19] God's Word is meant to shape our hearts every day.

And so...

There's this connection between the ark and the heart...

Both were made to hold God's Word.

But the connection goes even deeper.

Remember...

The ark represented God's presence among His people.

But in the New Testament...

Paul says that those who belong to Jesus are now...

[SLIDE 20] 1 Corinthians 6:19 - Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you...

Think about that.

The presence of God is no longer centered around one sacred box...

Or even a sacred temple...

Through Jesus...

God gives His Spirit to dwell within His people.

And Paul goes on to say...

[SLIDE 20A] 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

That should sound familiar too.

Remember what we said about the ark?

It was ***called by the Name***.

Meaning: It *belonged* to the LORD.

And now Paul says...

You belong to the LORD.

Our life is not our own.

Our heart is not our own.

And this is where the gospel matters so much...
Because 2 Samuel 6 reminds us that God is **holy**.

Uzzah learned that God's holiness is not something to treat casually.
But Obed reminds us that God's presence is also **good**.

So...

[SLIDE 20B] How can sinful people live in the presence of a holy God?

The answer is Jesus.

Jesus took our sin upon Himself...
He died... He conquered death...
And he rose again...

So that when we put our believing loyalty in Him...
We're forgiven...
We're adopted into His forever family...
We have the Holy Spirit — The presence of God — is with us...
And He desires to shape what's happening in our heart.

That brings us all the way back to David.

David learned that loving the LORD meant more than having good intentions...
It meant paying attention...
Listening...
Remaining teachable...
Following what God actually said.

Remember...
At first David was angry...
Then he was afraid of the LORD...
But the Word of the LORD changed his heart...

Because once David obeyed the LORD's instructions...
We see him dancing before a holy and good God.

And so...
What we're seeing today really comes down to this...

[SLIDE 21] Seeking God's Kingdom means living before the LORD with a heart shaped by His Word.

How does His Word shape our heart?

I'll leave you with one example...

Earlier this week I shared with the Church Board what's been on my heart...

It's no secret that ever since the summer of 2020...

Our church attendance has been pretty much cut in half.

I know that weighs on a lot of you...

I want you to know that it also weighs on me...

And the Church Board...

And the staff...

But one thing the LORD keeps teaching me is this...

[SLIDE 22] Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

This isn't saying that trusting the LORD means we don't do anything...

Trusting in Him means that in everything we do...

We *submit* to Him...

We *seek* His wisdom and guidance...

And we *trust* that He will show us the way.

Because the reality is...

We can make plans...

We can try new things...

We can work hard...

But...

[SLIDE 23] Let's not assume we know the way forward, without first bringing it before Jesus in prayer.

And honestly...

That's a truth that applies to every part of our lives.

Our desire should be to allow His Word to continually shape our heart...

So that no matter what happens...

No matter what we're going through...

We keep seeking Him...

We keep submitting to Him...

We keep trusting Him...

With everything...

...even with the things we can't control.

That's what it means to follow Jesus as our LORD,

Our Savior...

And our King of kings.

Let's Pray

We pray as Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into testing, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.