

In our current sermon series we're visiting Old Testament stories, some that are familiar to most of us, and some that are familiar probably only to those among us who have read the Old Testament pretty carefully. We've talked about Adam and Eve, Abraham, and Moses, characters most of us know pretty well. Last week we ran into Gideon, a name we know, but whose story in the book of Judges is not so well known.

Today's characters are David – as in King David, or David and Goliath – a name most of us know – and Michal, a character some of us might not know so well.

Our story today comes from **2 Samuel 6**, if you want to turn there in a Bible. There's a lot going on here and we don't have time to report it all, but let's put it this way: Prior to 2 Samuel 6, things go really well for David. He becomes king. The king of an adjacent city-state called Tyre sends materials and workers to build him a palace. David begins to realize he is in fact the king of Israel, which must have been some kind of head trip. And David defeats the nasty Philistines multiple times. On that roll, as chapter 6 begins David decides to return to Jerusalem the ark of the covenant that had previously been lost to the Philistines the ark of the covenant – the ark contained the law and commandments God had given to Moses on Mt Sinai. The parade returning the ark is a joyful scene, typified by **v.5 of 2 Samuel 6**....

We're not going to spend much time on it, but a very strange and challenging scene then unfolds beginning in v.6. They're carrying the ark on a cart, returning it to Jerusalem, everything is going well when the oxen powering the cart stumble, and one of the cart's escorts – a guy named Uzzah – reaches out to make sure the ark doesn't tip over. God gets angry with Uzzah for doing that and kills him on the spot.

That's a hard thing to understand – the guy was just trying to protect the ark, for goodness' sake. Let's not spend too much time on it other than to say only certain people were authorized to touch the ark, and Uzzah wasn't one of them. If you're thinking that's not a good reason to kill him, I agree, but we have to leave that mystery for another conversation.

When Uzzah dies, David gets angry with God, and not wanting anyone else killed, stops the procession of the ark back to Jerusalem. They store the ark at someone's home for three months. Then they try again to move it to Jerusalem. This time all goes well, an outcome typified by **vv.14-15**....

So all is well for David again. The ark is back in Jerusalem. The city is in celebration mode. But then comes Michal. She's the daughter of Saul, the king David replaced, so she's not a David fan to begin with. And when she sees him dancing and putting on as the ark comes back to town, well **v.16.... and v.20**....

That's a whole lot of set up for today's punch line. But before we get to that punch line, we show you this photo. That's one of the team members from our fundraiser the other night at Pizza Ranch. He spent four hours in that get up welcoming people at the door. Can you believe it? Scared a handful kids. Intrigued some others. Enthralled others. But he just kept it up. Saying things like “sufferin succotash” to whomever would listen.

Kind of silly, if you think about it. A grown man – they say he was a pastor – dressing up in a cat suit, scaring kids at a public eating house. It might even be disgusting, now that I think about it. Somebody should have said something about it.

When Michal sees David come into Jerusalem dancing with all his might, she has that kind of reaction: How disgusting. A king behaving like... like an everyday servant girl. You ought to be ashamed!

It may come as a surprise to you, but in the New Testament, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the message we have to share with the world, is described in very similar terms. **1 Corinthians 1.18-23**.... To the world, to the unaware, to people who haven't experienced Jesus, the idea that his death on a cross could change everything for all time, is foolish. To the world, it makes no sense that you and I would get excited about a crucifixion. It makes no sense that we could celebrate our release from the bondage of sin because one person died 2,000 years ago.

Want an example of the world? Consider the comedian Bill Maher. I happen to like Bill Maher. I think he's funny, except when he talks about religion. He's not only an atheist – which is his right – he's a militant atheist. Listen to some of what he's said (and I can't use the most virulent ones because I'd have to bleep out half the words):

- *“Religion, to me, is a bureaucracy between man and God that I don't need.”*
- *“We are a nation that is unenlightened because of religion. I do believe that. I think religion stops people from thinking. I think it justifies crazies.”*
- *“Religion is dangerous because it allows human beings who don't have all the answers to think that they do.”*
- *“If you belonged to a political party or a social club that was tied to as much bigotry, misogyny, homophobia, violence, and sheer ignorance as religion is, you'd resign in protest.”*

Bill Maher is a public figure, so his words get a lot of press. What you and I have to understand is that the world in which we live today is filled with people who aren't as vocal or as nasty about faith, but who are just as skeptical. So that when they hear us celebrating a resurrection from the dead that nobody can prove, or worshipping a God nobody can see, or living according to a book that has lots of stories as mysterious as God's killing of Uzzah just because he tried to keep the ark from tipping over, people in our increasingly secular world see us, hear us, and often judge us as being irrational, nonsensical, or just plain crazy.

When I was a kid – and this is surely true for most of you – the church was a pillar of the community. Everybody was there; everybody had a spiritual life. Everybody belonged. Not anymore. Society has changed, and so has society's reactions to us.

Paul said what we believe about Jesus and the cross is foolish to many in the world. To Michal, David's dancing around the ark was foolish and disgusting. But to David, well, let's go back to **2 Samuel 6.21-22**.... David says, you might think it's foolish for me to dance like this, but you're not going to stop me. Because the word that's in that ark, and the God who gave us that word are both too awesome for me to be quiet. I will not shut up. I will not shut down. If appropriate, I will humiliate myself for my God.

The next time you see someone raising their hands in worship and you feel like saying, show off – or, you're not supposed to do that in church. Think about David.

I watched a worship service from one of the TV preachers. I hardly agree with a thing the guy says in his sermons, but I watch because he fascinates me, as do his congregations. During one of the songs on a recent show, there was a guy in the very front row doing this (helicopter) for 30-45 seconds straight. At first I wanted to say, that's weird. Then I remembered David.

Just how much are you willing to embarrass yourself this next week? How about us as a church? How much of the joy of Jesus are we willing to release, regardless of the critics? You don't have to dance, but how about you live with a smile, and speak with hope, and you believe something better is waiting for you? And how about you tell somebody where your joy is coming from. How about you let somebody know this week that he who is within you is greater than anything they face? If you don't tell them, tell us how they're going to find out? **Romans 10.14** says how can they know – where our joy comes from – unless we tell them?

Try an experiment this week. **Live to embarrass yourself if necessary to glorify God.** Then come back next week to shout about in worship.