

Script For 2 Samuel 6 Sermon

In 2007 the Heads of State from 21 governments descended on Sydney for the APEC conference. Maybe you remember how the whole CBD was shut down for a few days. Barricades went up, streets were shut down and a public holiday was declared so that the city could be kept clear for the leaders of nations to come and meet.

One of the most impressive elements was the motorcade of the President of the United States of America. His motorcade has more than 20 vehicles and the particular vehicle he travels in is a feat of engineering in itself. It's bomb-proof, it's chemical attack safe and bullet proof. The doors are 8 inches thick and the tyres are made not of rubber but of kevlar so they can't be punctured.

Streets were shut down for blocks in every direction so that he could be driven in this car to the meeting.

Now that's how you enter a city.

Today, as we turn to the Scriptures, we gonna see how God enters his city. And I got to tell you, it's not all that impressive.

We're going to pick up the story from the beginning of the chapter. From Verse 1: (slide)

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ²David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. ³They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart ⁴with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. ⁵David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. (slide to black)

Now it sounds like David is doing the right thing by God, but he's not. It sounds good because David gathers 30 000 of his best warriors to go with him to bring the ark of God back with him. He's turned up as the warrior-king, with his army to take the ark of the LORD back into his city. This ark is a box about this big and symbolised God's presence with his people. It's called "the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim" (which is a kind of angel). 30 000 soldiers to accompany the Lord of hosts or Lord of armies seems right.

And David and all the house of Israel dance with all their might we're told. And we can imagine the spectacle this would have been. Thousands of soldiers, tambourines and cymbals and harps and lyres and dancing and singing. What a show David has put on! How spectacular it would have been to see David bring the ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem, to the city that God has given him!

So what's the problem? Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. They put the ark of God, they put the object that symbolised God's presence, on a cart. Now we sit here and think 'what's the big deal?' but those who first heard this back in ancient times would have been horrified if they heard something like this taking place. There are two reasons why this is such a terrible thing for David to do.

Firstly, in that part of the world, at that time, travelling on a cart with one person in front and one person behind as Abinadab's sons are doing was a sign of defeat. Why? Because when an invading country comes in and conquers your country you have two options: stay and be made a slave or killed or put everything on a cart and move somewhere else. It would have been humiliating to have to leave your land in this way. Everyone would know that you were defeated and had no other option.

Secondly, and more importantly, David should have known that there were rules about who carried it and how they were to carry the ark.

Let me show you:

From Deuteronomy 10:8 (slide)

"At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day." (slide to black)

Who were to carry the ark? The Levites and only the Levites. They had been set apart for this job.

How were they to carry it? Exodus tells us:

25:14 says

"You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, by which to carry the ark." (slide to black)

And pretty much the same thing is repeated a few chapters later in 37:5.

So the ark is supposed to be carried on poles by Levites and David has the ark on a cart surrounded by his men.

This would be like asking our Head of State, the Queen to pop up into the back of a ute.

"There you are, Your Majesty. Good as gold. There's a crate for you to sit on. Nah, hang on that one's a bit grubby. This one's a bit better. There you go. Now if the dog starts getting a bit friendly, just shove him out of the way. He likes to lick your face, but if you don't let him up you'll be fine."

Can you imagine?! But this is God that is being treated with such disregard. Putting the symbol of God's presence on a cart! A cart! How could they do such a thing?

And to make it worse, David has brought an army and is dancing and celebrating as though he's achieved a victory. David is exalted, God is humiliated. He's left to being wheeled around on a cart. This is NOT how you enter a city.

Is God going to put up with this? Let's see what happens.

From verse 6, (slide)

"⁶When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. ⁷The anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God. ⁸David was angry because the LORD had burst forth with an outburst upon Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah, to this day. ⁹David was afraid of the LORD that day; he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come into my care?"¹⁰ So David was unwilling to take the ark of the LORD into his care in the city of David; instead David took it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹¹The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household."

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The oxen pulling the cart stumble and Uzzah, who was walking behind the cart to make sure nothing fell off, grabs the ark to make sure it doesn't slip and as he does so he is struck dead by God. The text says he dies beside the ark of God. As I read this it seemed to me like a massive over reaction. How does it sit for you? Does it seem like God has gone a bit too far?

If I had to guess, I would say that most of us would feel something closer to David's anger than the Lord's anger. Maybe not anger but indignation? Confusion? I don't know exactly why this is foreign for us. Perhaps it's because we're not pre-Temple Jews. Perhaps it's because as Australians we generally don't have much time for pomp and ceremony. Or because Australians don't really revere our Head of State like other cultures do.

But God is unwilling to let people treat him with such disdain anymore. Our God is not a God who can be domesticated. He will not be dumped on a cart and carried around like a trophy. He will not be regarded as nothing much more than a valuable ornament. He is the Lord of Hosts, he is the Ruler of the Armies. He made heaven and earth. He is YAHWEH. He is God. And while he's not confined to a box of course, he will no longer tolerate the insolence that David is displaying here.

And as a result, David was afraid and left the ark of the LORD with someone else and went home. The ark of the LORD did not enter the city of David for three months.

The clothes we wear matter right? I mean, to lot's of people it matters far, far too much but what we wear matters. If I go to a wedding and I'm not wearing a suit it looks like I don't care about the event and therefore the couple. If I turn up in shorts and a t-shirt, it says I couldn't be bothered to put in any more effort.

So what does David wear when he goes to recover the ark of the LORD the second time? And what does it show? Let's read from v12 (slide)

¹²It was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; ¹³and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. ¹⁴David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. ¹⁵So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet." (slide to black)

David was 'girded with a linen ephod'. (Does anyone know what an ephod is or what it symbolises?) It's a priestly garment. It what the priests would wear. I think it looks a little like a poncho, but it's hard to be certain. What it symbolises is that David is no longer acting like the warrior-king, but as the priest-king, the one who intercedes between the people and God. And notice what else he does, he sacrifices to the Lord, part of his role as the priest.

As we read on, we see that the ark of the LORD is brought into the city, and placed inside a tent. (That obviously is not going to be a permanent solution but a *house* for the Lord won't happen until Solomon). David blesses the people and sends them back to their homes with bread, meat and a cake of raisins.

This shows us a few things worth mentioning. God has blessed the whole nation through his servant David. Through David, God has provided for his people and they have celebrated the Ark of God coming into the the city of David.

It shows us that David has been humbled. Rather than coming out as a victorious warrior-king, he has acted with humility and now brings in the ark of God as the servant of the Lord. Rather than putting on a grand parade to show off his might, David sacrifices to the Lord and presents offerings and blesses the people.

David treats God the way that he ought to be treated and so the ark of the Lord enters the city of David, Jerusalem. Being able to bring the ark of God into the city is a big deal. It's God saying that he is behind David, supporting him. From now on, David will be king over Israel, but as the servant of the Lord. The reign of Saul and his family has come to an end. That's the point of the interaction with Michal: Saul's reign has come to an end, David is the one who will rule over the nation under God. Michal was a daughter of Saul but she refuses to join in the nation's celebration because she refuses to align herself with David. She will have no children and so there will be no more of Saul's family. David and his descendents will be king.

David wanted to bring the ark of the LORD into Jerusalem. He went out in all his glory, with his soldiers and trumpets and put God on a cart to wheel the symbol of God back in like a trophy.

But our God will not be domesticated like a trinket. He will not be displayed like a toy. He who threw the stars into heaven and holds back the wind and the rain will not be wheeled around as if in defeat. This is not how God will come into his city.

But when David humbles himself and approaches as the servant of the LORD he is able to bring the ark of the LORD into the city. And so the symbol of the presence of the LORD comes into Jerusalem and David and all the people are blessed. God came to town and his people were blessed.

And roughly a thousand years later God came to town again.

We'll look at Matthew's account of it. We'll head to Matthew 21 (3 slides)

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹ The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

¹² Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers."

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Just as he did in David's time, God came into Jerusalem.

In David's time, he entered symbolically as the ark of the LORD was carried in. A thousand years later, God himself, the Lord Jesus, came into Jerusalem. Not at the head of an army, not even on a mighty war horse, but on a donkey.

When David brought the ark of God into the city of Jerusalem the crowds danced and celebrated. There was shouting and singing.

When God the Son came into the city of Jerusalem, the disciples lay their cloaks and cut branches from the trees to lay before him. The crowd shouted out "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!" The whole city was stirred up.

When David brought the ark of the LORD into the city, it went into a tent that he prepared. Later, his son Solomon would build a Temple for it.

When the Lord Jesus comes into the city he enters the Temple and drove out those who were using it for their own profit.

When David brought the ark of God into Jerusalem it brought blessing for all the people.

When the Lord Jesus entered into Jerusalem it would bring blessing to the people also. But the blessing would not be food to take home.

Just a few days after God entered Jerusalem, he was arrested, put through several miscarriages of justice and nailed to a cross. God himself hung until he died in the city of Jerusalem.

The God who would not bear the indignity of having his ark be so mistreated that he struck down Uzzah on the spot, bore the most humiliating punishment the Ancient Roman war machine could imagine.

The Lord God, in the person of Jesus, entered the city in humbly and was killed. The Holy God was willing to be despised and rejected by all and killed. Why would he do that? Why allow himself to suffer a humiliating and painful death? He did it to secure our salvation. He did it because there was no other way that we could be made right with God.

Our Lord Jesus suffered ridicule and death because of the plan of God. David, when he was talking with Michal said that he was willing to be despised and even humiliated in order to be obedient to God.

So where do we sit? Will we, like David, like the Lord Jesus be willing to suffer if that is God's will? Or will we be like Michal; embarrassed by what people do for God? Do we come before God full of pride because of what we have, like David and his army? Or will we come before him with empty hands, knowing there is nothing we can offer and simply serve him.

The God we serve is not small fry. He is not another option among many. He is not simply the object of our own 'personal faith' as though he is our God but no one else's. He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. He is mighty, magnificent and worthy of all praise. And yet, he died for you. Trust this God. Amen.