

**Summer By the Lake: Dance**  
**2 Samuel 6: 12-22**  
**July 24/25, 2010**  
**Trinity United Methodist Church**  
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David's life reads like a soap opera, or maybe a whole season of professional wrestling. He is a young, unknown shepherd boy when out of the blue, the prophet Samuel comes and anoints him as king. That's when the drama begins, because David is the youngest of his family and as it happens, there is already a king. David can sing and play harp, and finds himself singing in the palace for the current king, who discerns pretty quickly that this young boy is a threat. Mentally ill, the king alternates between craving David's music and wanting to kill him. Meanwhile, he sends him on ridiculous quests, promising David his daughter's hand as a prize. Her brother Jonathan already loves David and sends him into hiding, running from Saul and fighting the enemy Philistines at the same time.

By the time we get to this part of the story, Princess Michal has been given in marriage to someone else, Saul and Jonathan have been killed in battle, and David has been crowned king by all the people, uniting the once tribal society into one kingdom. Michal is sent for and ensconced in the palace. Other wives follow. David chooses Jerusalem as his capital, conquers the residents, and goes off to find the Ark of God's presence, the symbol and location of God's power and authority on earth. After one guy dies of carelessness (a whole Bible study on that one – too much for one sermon) and a 3-month pout, David once again resumes the journey of the Ark. He throws on the priestly ephod, a sort of apron, without the robes underneath because he's not really a priest, and goes dancing without a care in the world, letting it all hang out all the way into the Holy City. He scorns his wife's criticism of his conduct, marries more women, has an adulterous affair, has his lover's husband killed, loses their baby, and then ends his life an old man trying to renew his vigor with a pretty young thing in his bed.

Soap opera, right? But there are lessons to be learned. Here are some things you can learn from a soap opera (from *You Know Your Life is a Soap Opera, If...*)

Lesson 1. As long as the story continues, so will the complications.

Lesson 2. There are many ways to trap a man into marriage, but no ways to trap him into a happy one.

Lesson 3. Whatever you think you've gotten away with, someone was always watching. In fact, before you utter one incriminating syllable, check to see who's lurking out the window, outside the door, under the bed and behind the drapes. Depending upon the severity of your sin, you may want to sweep the room for listening devices.

Lesson 4. A coma is no excuse for bad hair and makeup.

Seriously, what can we learn from this soap opera/professional wrestling life of David, who dominates today's scripture by dancing half-naked in front of God and everybody?

Well, just that. We are all, really, dancing half-naked in front of God and everybody. If you are a guy and the whole idea of dancing makes you nauseous, bear with me. Pretending that you are playing basketball half-naked in front of God and everybody doesn't really solve the problem, but the metaphor might work better for you if, every time I say the word 'dance' you think, 'play ball.'

David's a great man, full of power and glory. He moves from handsome musician to handsome warrior to handsome king. The girls all love him. His wives fight over him. His children resent him. He's a mixed bag. The one thing he has going for him is that everything he does, he does in front of God. When he sins and hides, he comes clean before God.

David dances, and God is his partner. Or he plays ball, and God is coach. Everything about David is all out there, for God and everyone. In fact, it's all about God for David. He doesn't seem to care what anyone thinks – he is all about God. The story of his dancing in front of the Ark invites us into that kind of life, life that is abundant, life that is unafraid. A life lived fully in the Presence of God.

In our little church growing up was a little boy named Jeff. An illness in his toddler years left him mentally handicapped. During the children's moment, when the pastor or children's leader asked any question, Jeff always raised his hand and his answer was always the same, "Jesus!" The leader would answer with something like, "Yes, Jeff, Jesus is good," and then ask the original question again, "Now, what farm animal gives us milk."

What a great lesson when one day the same thing happened and the leader said, "You know, Jeff always answers 'Jesus,' doesn't he? He understands something I forget. It's all about Jesus, always."

David dances, and it's all about God. When he plays ball, he knows the coach is right behind him on base. David doesn't hide, even when he's in hiding from Saul. He knows God is with him, always, and he lives his life that way. He's out there. He sees no point in hiding anything, apparently. It drives Michal crazy, and he treats her mean, and even that is hanging right out for all to see. How else would we know about it, unless they told us?

Our widows and widowers group asked me to come and talk to them about the things that are common to all those who are grieving after the death of a spouse. Trying to get ready (I've never lost a spouse), I talked to a few people who have experienced that trauma. One of them said to me, "The best thing advice I got was just to let myself grieve. I didn't ask God to fix it. What would he do? I felt angry at God sometimes, so I let him have it. Sometimes, I just wanted to cry. So I did. It won't do any good to try to numb yourself or run away or get mad at yourself for feeling lonely or thinking it stinks. For a year, all I did was grieve before God. I won't tell

you it wasn't painful. However, as I look back, it was a year where I felt God more near than I ever had before. ”

Who are you dancing with? Who are you grieving with, complaining to, wondering with? Who do you talk to when things go wrong? Are you living your life with the thought that maybe, just maybe, God is with you? The coach is not in the dugout – he's on the field.

Jesus came for that reason. To show us God is with us. Not just present, but on our side. To invite the Adam and Eve in us to stop hiding and come out. To invite the Gentiles to join the dance the Jews had been dancing since Abraham, the dance with the living God. Jesus came to reveal God's heart, he died so we could be one with God, come out of hiding, cast off our sin and enter in to God's life. He rose to show us we have nothing to fear. Why do we keep hiding? Why do we refuse to dance? It's all about God anyway. Jeff was right. Jesus is not just the reason for the season, he's the reason for everything.

James had a sore on his toe, and wanted me to make it better, but he kept pulling it away from me. “Don't look at it! Don't touch it!” He hid it behind his other foot. How could I help him if he wouldn't let me have it?

David invites us to throw off the masks we wear. His dance is an enticement to stop avoiding God and to face him with all we are.

What holds us back, sometimes, is the thought that we have to be perfect for God to use us, for God to be visible in us. God, meanwhile, is waiting for us to let him work with us, imperfect as we are. Michal thinks David is a fool. She's right. He knows it, but he also knows that he is God's fool.

I use highlighters sometimes when I read. What does that highlighter do? It highlights, of course. It emphasizes, stresses, points out a word or sentence. Because of the highlighter, the word is more noticeable.

In the Hebrew Bible, the word 'glory' is related to the word 'weight.' To glorify something or someone is to give weight to them, to emphasize or stress or show the weight or significance of that person. It also has the connotation of light – adding light to that person. Glorifying God is like stroking a highlighter over his presence with us. That is what David does, as he dances before the Ark. David is willing that God should use all of David – foolish, half-naked, imperfect ego that he is – to highlight God.

Can we accept that God is glorified, lifted up, highlighted, just in our willingness to dance life with him? Our lives are about God! Can we spend our time and energy, not trying to clean ourselves up but in trying to open ourselves up to God? Jesus didn't die for the righteous, he died for sinners. He didn't die for the perfectly complete, but to perfectly complete us.

God is glorified in us. In Colossians 1: 27, we're told that the glorious riches of the mystery made known is simply this: that Christ in us is the hope of glory. God's radiance is in us! So the writer goes on to instruct, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him!" (Colossians 3: 17)

Messed up, imperfect, cracked pot us! God dances with us, into the world through us. Wash the dishes, and there is the glory of God. Talk to your neighbor – look, God! Jesus appears in the restaurant as you tip the waitress and in our eyes as we offer forgiveness. The "I'm sorry" for words harshly spoken makes God real, and the way you tie your shoes and do your job reflects God to the world. Forgiveness offered highlights God's mercy. Love your wife? God's there, just beneath the surface.

David got it. He got that life was with God, in God, through God. He lived for God. He followed God's lead and danced God's dance. When he stumbled and fell, he looked to God to lift him up. When he turned away, he still heard God's voice and turned around. David danced with God, his life showed God's glory, not because it was perfect, but because always and forever he kept coming back to dance with God.

Jesus issued this invitation in Matthew's gospel: Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (Matthew 11: 29-30).

In other words, you'll dance. Maybe your life is more like a soap opera than you'd like it to be. Or maybe you think, "I'm too boring a person for God to really shine through." Whether you live large like David or much smaller and out-of-the-way, he invites us to dance with him. To learn the unforced rhythms of grace. To let him simply show up in us, to use our lives for all they are worth like a highlighter, so those who don't know God's love can see how transforming it can be.

And old Japanese proverb says, "We're fools whether we dance or not. So we might as well dance."

Amen.