

"A Dancing Fool." – August 13, 2017  
by Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Glori

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2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

Some people have problems with King David's dancing, wishing that this morning's Old Testament lesson was in someone else's Bible. Being a veteran of the "worship wars," I understand that those who hale from a traditional or conservative worship background, might wish to ignore or explain away this passage, or do anything but learn from it.

But, here's the thing: even David's wife Michal didn't like David's dance. Whatever you can read between the lines regarding their marital issues, her objection makes her the first defender of traditional, decent-and-in-good-order worship. And yet, she does not come out of this encounter with God agreeing with her.

But, perhaps we should not put too much emphasis on David's over-excited behavior either. It would be simple to say that this type of worship is God-pleasing and ignore the possibility that David's action spring from something more than delight in God. He was shrewd enough politically to know how badly his new kingdom needed validation.

It was a tremendous coup when David returned the Ark of the Covenant to his capital city. Of course, he would be the one to lead the parade and be proud of it. As to judging which type of worship is supported by today's passage, we need to recall the liturgically focused forms in Jerusalem's worship, a style of worship that displays the mark of King David. However, one great dance does not a theology of worship make.

When we remove these obstacles, what is left in this exceptional story? Simply one thing: there is something rotten in Denmark when we have become too

puritanical, too prim, too stuffy to party before God, when something beautiful happens. The truth is you don't bring the Ark to Jerusalem every day! And it isn't every day you welcome a new leader gifted with wisdom, strength, skill, and devotion. This is a tremendous moment, and it needs to be celebrated with silly hats, and horns, and yes, even with the king dancing nearly naked!

Over the decades I have been present at many church festivities and celebrations. The vast majority were far less than "Let's dance and shout hallelujah" events. These were times where mortgages were burned, and buildings were dedicated; but had a visitor been in attendance, she might have mistaken the occasion for one of those solemn times the prophet Isaiah often wailed about. Somehow, going to church takes all the whoopee out of us. I wonder why that is?

On several of those occurrences, I understood my fellow worshipers well enough to know that had they gone to a Seahawk or Mariner game, following the church event, they would have gone holy bananas!

Perhaps, we are discreet in church because we perceive things differently; we see things through a different filter. Maybe we aren't as joyous as at a ballgame, but at worship, we recognize that all of life and its blessings are interwoven with a holy purpose. A touchdown with ten seconds to go in the fourth quarter is one thing; an infant's baptism is another.

Joy and hilarity are suitable on both occasions, but is it not a different type of joy when with water and word a child of God is claimed for all eternity? Perhaps it is not that our 'whoopie' disappears in worship; it simply has a grateful hush of reverence about it.

But, to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, there remains the problematic possibility that many of us imitate King David so seldom, because we are no longer in touch with the splendor of what we are about. We tip-toe around because we have lost the wonder. I know this to be true because there are Sundays when the pastor sleepwalks through the service, even when he appears to be animated.

But then, there are more Sundays when the excellent, absurd 'good news' of what we are doing, breaks upon our stony shores, and we can no more program these epiphanies, than we can count the stars. But, we must be careful not to smother them; we can be quick to ask God for a softer eye and ability to make merry be for God.

Remember Jesus' parable of the elder brother who refused to enter his father's party? It was time to make much merry, but the elder brother did not live in that time zone. He lived in what someone has called "Duty-Ville" where nothing ever changes. Grace, those love-filled moments when the unexpected holy falls upon us, are the times to shred the time sheets and even the prayer books, and, like John Travolta, dance like a holy fool, dancing a holy Alleluia to the giver of all good and perfect gifts. Alleluia. Amen.