

## Living With All Your Might

*2 Samuel 6:12-22: So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.*

*As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, daughter of Saul, looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart.*

*They brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.*

*David returned to bless his household. But Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David, and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!"*

*David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appointment as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord, that I have danced before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in my own eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor." And Michal the daughter of Saul had not child to the day of her death.*

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We have been exploring the idea of dancing in the Bible this Lent. How is God inviting us to “let go of/give up” the cares and worries of this life and trust God and metaphorically, or even literally, dance? Today we will think about King David. In this text we are told that David danced before the Lord with all his might. With all his might. With the totality of his being. A good basketball coach might say, “He left it all on the court.” A Buddhist priest might say, “He was fully alive and fully in the moment!” A dancing instructor might say that every cell of his being and his heart were involved in the dance. David danced before the Lord with all his might.

Can you think of a time in your life when you’ve witnessed a person dancing or celebrating with all their might? Or a time when you’ve seen a person REALLY LIVE with all their might?

Like many of you, I’ve had the privilege of attending many funerals in our beloved city. One funeral I will never forget was the service held for Reinald Collins: wife of Angela, father of Reinald Jr., stepfather of Lynn Bland and son-in-law of Marie Lunzy. Many of you know that Ronald died way too early after courageously battling Lou Gehrig’s disease — a terrible and awful disease — in his mid-40s. He fought that illness with all his might till his last gasp; he was surely one of the most courageous souls I’ve ever met. His funeral was held at Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, and I had the honor of doing the eulogy.

When the family came in and was seated, there were some moments of praise and worship. And then Reinald’s mother got up and started dancing in front of the casket. In that dance, she poured out her love for her son, her grief at his death, her faith in Jesus — she danced with all her might and all her feeling and all her soul. To lose a son in his 40s from such a terrible disease and still dance? Her expression of pain and also faith in that dance was powerful. I’ve heard Pastor McAfee from New Bethel say at funerals, “Bring it all to God! If you can’t bring it here, where can you bring it!” Reinald’s mom brought it all to God that day. For many of us, the

memory of her dancing with all her might and soul will be forever etched in our memories.

Bob Burkholz, Susan's father, former county commissioner and longtime member of this congregation, loved Valentine's Day. Each Valentine's Day he would bring flowers to people in his life whom he loved. Yes, his wife and his daughter. But also friends, former teachers, and to whomever the spirit led him to bring flowers. A few years back on a Valentine's Day I ran into him. He was carrying a few carnations wrapped in a ribbon. I can't remember to whom he was bringing the flowers, but I do remember being struck by the focus and the joy in his face that day. He was totally, completely focused on the holiday and on spreading beauty and love. While his feet were not dancing, his spirit was dancing with all his might. Bob did know how to really live, to really enjoy and celebrate life. And when he talked with you, he was fully present.

This past week, there was a video going around on Facebook. It was a clip of the University of Michigan's basketball coach, John Beilein, after their victory over Louisville last Sunday. He got a water gun and came running into the locker room squirting all the players, who were jumping up and down with joy. Celebrating with all their might and unexpected victory. Taking time to rejoice and savor — even with another game on the horizon.

Can you think of times when you've seen people really celebrate with all their might? No holds barred. Leaving it all on the court. Really living?

### **A New Thing**

In this story in 2 Samuel, David was the new king of Israel, and a new thing was happening. The Ark of the Covenant had been in the hands of the Philistines for many, many years and now was coming back into the hands of Israel. You may recall that Goliath, the giant whom David defeated, had been a Philistine. The ark had been stolen by the Philistines many years before. It represented the very presence of God to the people of Israel. It was a rectangular box about 4 feet in length and a little over 2 feet in depth and width. It was constructed of wood and plated

with gold. Its lid of solid gold was called the mercy seat. Two cherubim, angel-like figures at either end, framed the space around the central mercy seat from which God's word was honored. The ark contained three items: the tablets of stone that Moses had delivered to the people from Sinai, a jar of manna from the years of wandering in the wilderness, and Aaron's rod that budded. Aaron was Moses' brother, and his wooden rod was used in a lot of the miracles — turning water into blood and so forth, when the people of Israel were set free. These objects were the continuing and reminding evidence that God worked among them.<sup>1</sup>

And David's returning the ark to Jerusalem was a sign that God Godself would be at the very center of the community and of the country. David wanted the people to know that, when he was king, God was ruling them, God was king. No separation of church and state back then.

And the fact that God was coming among them again in this way was not just cause for a proper state dinner, not just cause to bring out the best china. It was cause to let loose and celebrate with abandon, joy — with all one's might. The fact that God was coming among them again in this way meant that they were coming home to their very selves. And David made multiple sacrifices of animals along the way and passed out delicious food to all the people. This ark was not just for a few elite people who would sit properly with their tea cups and pinkies in the right position. No, this ark was for all the people because God was for all people and was coming among them all.

And David danced. Danced with all his might.

Again, think about this. Can you think of some times or moments or images of when you've witnessed people celebrating with all their might? Living out loud with every cell of their being?

Two things really strike me about this story. The first thing is the depth of David's celebration.

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<sup>1</sup> Petersen, Eugene. Leap Over A Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians. Harper Collins, 1997. P. 148.

As a leader, he wasn't concerned in this moment about being proper or following everyone's expectations for his behavior. He loved God and was rejoicing at the promise of God among his people. It welled up from his very being, and NOTHING could hold back his passion and his joy. And think about it, this dancing was because of God's presence alone. There had been no major battle prior to this. No major victory. No enemy defeated. No major campaign that was over and accomplished. David is dancing solely because the presence of God was coming among them once again!

### **The Invasion — of Love**

We don't have the Ark of the Covenant, but God's presence is surely here among us right now. That's why Jesus came, to show us what God's love looks like among us. God's love has invaded this place and is reaching for all of us — every single one of us. No matter who we are or what we've done or haven't done, or even whether or not we fully believe. God's grace and love are always reaching for us. How often do I, do we, really stop and ponder how incredible this is?

I'm one of those orderly people — not a bad thing. That is one of my gifts. And I must confess, I often go through my days on a kind of "autopilot," getting tasks done, doing my work. But how often am I so into my schedule and my to-do list and doing the work of the church and community, that I fail to see the very love of God at work in my life and in our lives and in our community? Oh, for the grace to stop and really see. Oh, for the grace to dance, to really live with all my might.

We often envision God up in the clouds somewhere, with a checklist judging what we do and fail to do. We often envision a God who is behind some curtain, distant, hand on his hip waiting for us to slip up. David knew that God's presence was right here and right now and his love was in the very midst of the people. Oh, may we learn to know this God, this Emmanuel, this God who is with us more deeply. It will surely give us cause to dance.

And the second thing that strikes me about this story is what happened with Michal. Michal was one of David's wives and was also the daughter of Saul, the guy who had been king before David. Michal surely was not too happy about David's dancing. There's her husband, the king, acting very unkinglike, with only a priest's cloth around his private parts, dancing with all his might. Can you imagine one of our presidents doing something like that? Even if we liked the president, we might be like Michal and be slightly disgusted at a display like that.

Now there is surely nothing wrong with respectful protocols. Indeed, rules for respect and care help hold and secure a society. But I think what is going on here is that Michal was trying to control what worship would look like. God is not to be controlled. God's love is bigger and wider and deeper than we can imagine. As C.S. Lewis says in the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, "The ways of God are not always safe." God's ways don't always fit into our human confines and control and needs, but while "God is not always safe, God is always good!"

How often do we seek to control the ways and work of God?

### **God Invites Us to Live Fully**

We see that kind of control in the story Ted read about the Prodigal Son's older brother, too, don't we? We feel for the older son, who was faithful and did the right things all his life. We understand why he would be resentful of the wanderlust son who squandered the father's wealth and was lost. But the love of God will not be contained by our sense of who is in and who is not in. So often, God's love breaks through our containers of understanding to show us a new way and to invite us to really live — to fully live— to live with joy overflowing and to welcome all! That doesn't mean we condone behavior that harms other people. But it does mean we offer a space for ALL people. God's love will not be controlled by human confines.

As you know, we are pondering dancing this Lent. How is God inviting us to stop amid the work and tasks of living and really celebrate life and the gifts of God? As we work for racial

reconciliation, work for justice, fight for our schools, strive to offer spaces for our children to thrive, and more — we will wear out if we do not learn ways to allow God to refresh our souls and teach us to dance.

I'm inviting you to think this morning about times in your life when you are fully alive, fully present, fully living and fully wearing your dancing shoes. These are times we must build on. These are moments when we loosen our control so God's love can burst through in new ways.

Rev. Santana Krishnan pastored the 3<sup>rd</sup> Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati for almost three decades. The church was in one of the poorest parts of Cincinnati. With about 25 members in a poverty community not unlike ours, Rev. Krishnan was only supposed to work part-time and was paid very little. But he loved the community and worked day in and day out. He loved Christmas. And he loved fresh fruit — oranges, pears, apples and bananas. Every Christmastime he would empty out his savings account and buy fruit and spent two weeks going around giving fruit to people and even visiting some of the wealthiest pastors in the Presbytery to give them an orange for Christmas. His practice was to brainstorm a list of all the people he knew from every walk of life and then start sharing fruit. This is a way Pastor Santana danced. He would tell you that this practice of sharing fruit helped him really notice people throughout the year, helped him really live.

### **Write on Your Dancing Shoes**

When you came in this morning, you were given a slip with some dancing shoes on it. Stop and think a moment. When are times and situations when you live with all your might? When you are fully present to life? You probably don't give people fruit for Christmas, but what are times or practices in your life that help you fully live? Collecting beach glass, playing golf, holding your cat, listening to people? What are things or practices in your life where you are fully present — metaphorically or literally dancing with all your might? Write that on the shoe

and put it up on the wall in the back of the sanctuary.

I invite you to discipline yourself to practice this dancing more between now and Easter. Let God free you so you can dance — even as we work for justice in this world.

And one final invitation for this week. Try to remember a child in your life who you have seen dance. Not in a dance recital or after some dance lessons, but a child you have seen dance spontaneously. All children do it. We've seen children do it here at church. They twirl and they twist and they don't care if anyone is watching or not.

This week I invite you to try this sometime. Maybe it will be in your house where no one can see you. Maybe you will be shopping at Meijer and decide to twirl and praise God. Maybe you will be in your garden and can invite the birds to join you. Maybe you will be on the basketball court or on the golf course or warming up for the baseball game and decide to just do a little twirl. And when you do it, please do it with all your might. Out loud or in your heart, thank God for God's love that is always present with you. Thank God for God's love that cannot be contained or controlled by any human container or rule. Thank God for this LIFE. And as we work hard in this world, may we continue to learn to live, remember how deeply we are loved, and dance with all our might.