**Week Five- April 10/11 - 2 Samuel 6**

**Introduction**

Last week, we saw David officially re-anointed as king by the Israelites and winning battles over his enemies. In chapter 6, we will see the next step in his plan to establish the kingdom of Israel: bringing the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem. The idea of bringing the ark to the capital and keeping God at the center is great, but the way David initially goes about trying to accomplish this is not in line with God’s instructions. **Can you think of any examples of people who were trying to do the right thing but went about it in the wrong way? This could be from a movie, book, history, someone you know, or even your own life.** *Leaders, this is a tricky warm-up, so you might want to start with your own answer. See Note 1 for some examples.*

**Read 2 Samuel 6:1-5**

**Why might David want to bring the ark to Jerusalem?** *(The ark is the physical symbol and manifestation of God’s presence on earth, given to Israel in Exodus. As David is establishing his kingdom, he wants God at the center of it, in the capital. He is trying to create “the city of God.” See Note 2 for more on this.)*

God gives the Israelite priests clear instructions about moving the ark earlier in the Old Testament. **Read Exodus 25:14-15; Read Numbers 4:15.**

**In light of these passages, what is wrong with the way they are transporting the ark in David’s time?**

**What happened the last time Israel mistreated the ark?** (See 1 Samuel 4:5-11, 6:1-12) *Note that they’re transporting the ark here the same way the Philistines did!*

**Read 2 Samuel 6:6-11**

**What is your initial response to Uzzah’s death here? Does it feel fair because of the law? Unfair because of the immediate context? Scary because of God’s power? Something else?** *(Remember, Uzzah and his family were priests who had the law, so they knew how the ark was supposed to be transported but disobeyed and put it on a cart anyway. While we don’t know Uzzah’s exact thought process at the moment the ox stumbled, we do know that God was good to His word that whoever touched the ark would die.)*

**How would you describe David’s response to this incident?** *(Very focused on himself, full of fear and anger, “unwilling” to make things right.)*

**Have you ever been frightened by God’s power? How did you respond?**

When it says that Uzzah “reached out” and “took hold” of the ark, it seems to be drawing on the language of Genesis 3 and the fall, when Eve is said to “reach out her hand” and “take” of the fruit. **What is the significance of this connection?**

**Where are you trying to work for God by your own effort and wisdom rather than joining with God’s work through obedience and surrender?**

**What are we losing as we try to do things our own way?**

**Read 2 Samuel 6:12-15**

David does things right this time. There are priests bearing the ark, sacrifices being made, and proper worship. After just “six steps,” we are told that David and the priests stop and worship. **What does this action reveal about the change in David’s perspective?** *(He is in awe of God’s power and grateful for His mercy, and no longer takes for granted that God will bless his plans and actions.)*

**Do you ever take God’s mercy and blessing for granted? What would it look like for you to live and worship with a “six step” mentality?**

We also see that David is wearing a linen ephod, the garment of a priest, and doing all the priestly things (offering offerings, blessing the people, leading worship).

**What role have priests played in the story of 1 and 2 Samuel so far?**

**Any ideas why David might be stepping into the priestly role here?** *See endnote for extended explanation.*

**Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23**

Michal is not too pleased with David’s costume change. **What does David’s rebuke of his wife reveal about how her heart was in the wrong place?** *(Possibly comparing David to her father Saul, holding him above her husband; focused on appearance rather than worshiping God.)*

**Do you ever find yourself focused on superficial things like appearance rather than on worshiping God? What might it look like for you to worship with the sort of “abandon” David shows here?**

**Conclusion**

While trying to inaugurate Jerusalem as the city of God, David and the priests mess up big-time and find themselves in fall-like sin. David responds in selfishness, anger, and fear, but he repents. In take two, David and the priests rely on God’s wisdom to move the ark rather than their own, and blessing results from their surrender. In order to do this in a worshipful way, David must let go of caring for the opinion of others, even his wife. He exchanges his royal robes for humble priestly dress and in this beautiful act becomes a picture of the coming Messiah. Next week, we’ll see God’s approval of this devotion poured out in an extremely important covenant promise and blessing He gives to David.

**Note 1:** Some examples of characters doing the right thing in the wrong way…

*From pop culture*-- In *Zootopia*, Judy has a really good heart and wants to make Zootopia a better place. But she moves forward too quickly and relies on her own knowledge and abilities, which ends up creating division and violence in the city instead of the unity and peace she was seeking.

*From elsewhere in the Bible--* In Mark 9, we find the disciples trying to cast out a demon, but they are unable. After Jesus casts it out, they ask him why they failed. Jesus responds, “this kind can come out only by prayer” (Mark 9:29, NIV). Instead of going to God in prayer, the disciples had been relying on their own power and abilities, and this stopped them from accomplishing the work God had for them.

*From my life--* I was planning a service project and having a lot of trouble with fundraising and logistics. Rather than praying and surrendering it to God, I tried to meet the goals and perfect everything by trying harder. This led me into anxiety and despair, instead of the hope and joy God had for the project.

**Note 2:** The idea of making Jerusalem the “city of God” would have been something David and the Israelites were actively thinking about. Psalms 46-48 explore the importance of “the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells” (Psalm 46, NIV). They place this ideal firmly on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. David’s Psalm 68 presents the procession and worship as the arc is moved and refers to the “temple at Jerusalem” before a real temple has even been built or planned. When David’s son Solomon builds the temple, he is actively trying to build and complete this “city of God.” Unfortunately, like his father here, he tries to do this in his own power rather than God’s.

**Note 3:** The first priest in the Bible is a priest-king: Melchizedek. Afterward, we get Aaron and the Levites, but they seem to mess up, a lot, which is something that’s on glaring display at the beginning of 1 Samuel. This sets up an expectation as the story waits for a better priest, and another permanent priest-king. This expectation is stated clearly in 1 Samuel 2:35: “And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.” This is partially fulfilled in 2 Samuel 7 but ultimately fulfilled in Christ. In 2 Samuel 6, when King David takes up the mantle of a priest, there seems to be an intentional link back to Genesis 14 and Melchizedek. That hilltop where Abraham meets Melchizedek seems to be the same hilltop as Jerusalem, where David is bringing the arc. In both places, the story following the appearance of the priest-king is God making a hugely important covenant. David also understands the importance of Melchizedek, and through the Spirit writes Psalm 110. This is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament, and is explored deeply in Hebrews 7. In this psalm, David is not talking about himself but about Jesus, the coming anointed one (Messiah) and priest-king who will be victorious and forever restore humanity’s relationship to God through his intercession. (I can’t imagine anyone will have time to really get into this stuff in study, but it’s worth digging into and meditating on.)