

“Before the Lord”
2 Samuel 6:18-23
(Preached at Trinity, January 13, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 6** sets before us the episode of David seeking to move the Ark of the Covenant into the holy city. It did not go as expected. David had gathered choice men from all of Israel, thirty-thousand in all. There was rejoicing and music as they advanced. The Ark had been placed upon a new cart and Uzzah and Ahio led the procession. As the oxen stumbled Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the Ark and he was immediately smitten dead by God. The music was silenced and the news made its way throughout the procession. Everyone would have been stunned by what had happened.
2. David at first became angry and sent the Ark into the possession of Obed-edom whose house was greatly blessed while in possession of the Ark. David got the message. The problem wasn't with the Ark. The problem was with irreverence towards God.
3. David determined to move the Ark a second time. Only this time, he gave proper reverence towards God.
1 Chronicles 15:13-15 NAU - "Because you did not *carry it* at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance." ¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁵ The sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles thereon, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD."
4. As with the first attempt to move the Ark, there was great celebration. But now David's heart was even more joyous because he knew he was giving God the glory He deserved. He was treating the Ark in accordance with God's command.
2 Samuel 6:14-15 NAU - "And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his* might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet."
5. We should be careful about incorporating the ancient worship of Israel into our own worship. That wasn't the point. I've often encountered individuals who want to model Christian worship after the Temple worship – with dancing, and all sorts of loud percussion instruments. God permitted many actions that were symbols and types, not to be incorporated into the church.

Calvin: “We know that in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ the veil has been rent in twain to show us that the time of types has passed, and that henceforth we must worship God in another way—not as to substance, but as to form. God has always wanted to be worshipped in purity. Let us note that God permitted his people to have many things in common with the pagans. Now it was customary for the pagans to dance and leap while worshipping their idols. Although dancing before the ark may not seem to be an action we would really approve, nevertheless God could have granted such permission to His people. It was done in accordance with the times, which we must always remember.”¹

6. As the procession was advancing towards Jerusalem the unexpected once again occurred. The scene of the joyful occasion briefly shifts to an observer watching from a window. The joy of the occasion was marred by the critical heart of David’s wife. Michal looked out of the window and saw David rejoicing and despised Him.
 7. Last time our attention was fixed upon the wickedness of Michal’s critical heart. Her critical words were cutting, filled with scorn and criticism. She was void of respect for her husband. She was void of love and empathy. And she couldn’t comprehend the great joy of bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.
 8. Michal stands as a great warning to us all. It is easy to develop a heart of criticism, always looking down in judgment at the actions of others. Such people can be a terrible blemish upon the life of any church.
 9. David’s response provides a sweet salve upon this otherwise sad scene. He tells Michal: **2 Samuel 6:21-22 NAU** - “It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD. ²² “I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished.”
 10. David is basically telling Michal, “You gazed upon me from your lofty window, and condemned me for my exuberance before the Lord. But it wasn’t before you that I was dancing, and I wasn’t seeking your approval. It was before the Lord that I celebrated this morning.”
- I. First, David’s action reflected his deep humility before God
- A. David demonstrated his humility in stripping his royal robes
 1. He took off his royal garments to which he was accustomed and which designated his lofty position and put on the garments of a pauper.
 2. We are reminded of the humility of Jonathan years before as he was willing to divest himself of his own royal robes and humble himself before David. **1 Samuel 18:3-4 NAU** - “Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.”
 3. Still another cast off His royal dignity before God. **Philippians 2:6-8 NAU** - “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

¹ Calvin, John, *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992) pages 266-267.

4. Michal knew nothing of humility. She was full of worldliness. She loved the pomp and display of earthly royalty. To see David lower himself was vile in her sight. She described it as David dancing naked before the young maidens like a tramp. His actions threatened her own prestige as David's wife. She only cared about her own self-importance.
 5. David was the king. He sat on a throne. But as he stood before God he saw himself as small. He lost himself as he worshipped God.
- B. David's humility was a sincere expression of his heart
1. There is a textual matter in **Verse 22**.
 - a. The ESV follows the Septuagint and translates it with the focus upon how Michal would regard David:
2 Samuel 6:22 ESV - "I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. "
 - b. The Hebrew describes how David would see himself. Most English translations follow the Hebrew text.
2 Samuel 6:22 NAU - "I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes"
 - c. Compare with **Psalm 131**
Psalm 131:1 NAU - "O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me."
 2. Humility is a modest opinion of one's own self-importance. Christian humility is a condition of the heart whereby our pride and self-importance are progressively weakened. Humility enables us to bow in absolute submission to the sovereign authority of Christ. Humility enables us to set our minds on Christ rather than upon ourselves.
 3. The nature of pride is we have a great sense of self-importance. Michal sat in the window consumed by her own self-importance, completely blind to her smallness before God. People consumed by pride will find it impossible to submit themselves in worship to God. Never could she imagine following the leadership of David in worship of God.
 4. True worship demands being reduced in our own eyes. For God to appear as infinitely large as He truly is demands that we see ourselves as small as we truly are.
 5. The reason people barge into worship without reverence is because they see themselves as worthy. They see worship as more about them than about God. What is most important is that their particular style of worship is being practiced.
 6. To worship God properly we need to become as nothing. The greatest of men are less than nothing in comparison to God.
- II. Second, David's action demonstrated uncompromised commitment to God
- A. David cared little of what others thought as long as God was pleased
2 Samuel 6:21 NAU - "*It was before the LORD*"
1. Surely David wanted harmony with his wife.
 - a. Strife in the home can be a terrible plague
 - b. The Christian is tempted to compromise to satisfy their unbelieving mate. This must have been a severe testing for David.

- c. This is never allowed for the Christian. The words of 1 Cor. 7 imply that some unbelieving spouses will choose to depart because of their mate's commitment to Christ. But the believer must not violate their commitment to Christ in order to avoid strife.
 - d. Every married person must decide clearly—will I live before my mate to gain their approval or will I live before the Lord. This is what is meant in the New Testament:
Ephesians 5:22 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
2. This is how we live in this world
Colossians 3:17 NAU - "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus"
- a. When Joshua spoke before Israel he told them to make a choice
Joshua 24:15 NAU - "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
 - b. The Apostles made the choice
Acts 5:27-29 NAU - "The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."
3. David made his commitment clear to Michal
2 Samuel 6:21-22 NAU - "So David said to Michal, "*It was* before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD. I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished."
- B. We must always think more of God's opinions than that of men.
- 1. David states that he was celebrating "before the Lord." To David, he had one audience. In his worship of God, he wasn't seeking the approval of his servant girls, nor his army, nor his wife. David was focused only upon the audience of God.
 David was Israel's king, but first and foremost, he was the servant of God.
 - 2. Paul stated that he had but one audience
1 Corinthians 4:3-4 NAU - "But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. ⁴ For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord."

3. Most people live their lives before men. They care most about the opinions. It controls what they say and what they do. Their possessions serve the purpose if impressing others.
This passage tells us there is a higher focus – to live before God alone.
3. Michal cared about outward status, about the opinions of men. She was born into royalty and she is still enjoying the status of royalty.
 - a. David crushes her sense of entitlement. God chose him over her father and before God he would celebrate.
“*It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD.*”
 - b. Saul had been rejected because he would not humble himself before God. David was a man with a different heart.

Conclusion:

1. **Chapter 6** displays clearly the difference between the one with a worldly mind and the one who has a focus upon God.
2. For David, God shined brighter and more glorious than anything this world had to offer. He tells Michal basically, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!”
2 Samuel 6:22 NAU - "I will be more lightly esteemed than this"
He had humbled himself before God, but he wasn’t nearly as humbled as he needed to be before God. David recognized our best before God isn’t nearly what He deserves.
3. We desire a good reputation, but our highest reputation is that which glorifies God. And we are to be much more moved by the opinions of God’s people than of the opinions of this world.
2 Samuel 6:22 NAU - "with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished."
In other words, David is declaring to Michal – Those you find so easy to despise were the ones worshipping with me today. I am much more concerned about their opinions than of yours.
4. As we saw last time, those who refuse to bow before God will be judged. **Verse 23** tells us God judged Michal with barrenness. She was banned from the lineage of the king. She was banned from the lineage of Christ. The house of Saul had come to an end. God will be worshipped.
Psalms 2:10-12 NAU - "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"
5. Probably the greatest judgment upon Michal was her lack of joy. David was happy. He had found something worth rejoicing over. He found great joy in worship. Michal, on the other hand, was bitter and unhappy. The best she could do was look out the window and murmur from her cold, critical heart. She probably went to her grave an old, bitter woman.
6. There are those who rejoice in God and in His work in the lives of others. There are others, who continually criticize in their heart. They continually find fault. Which one is most like you?