

Rev Sally's Sermon

July 11, 2021

In the Old Testament lesson for today, we see King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel. The ark had been with the people for many years. A box built by Moses to hold the Ten Commandment, the Ark had been with the people through the years in the wilderness, providing a reminder of the Lord's presence with them throughout their struggles. After the people had moved into the promised land, the ark continued to be a symbol of God's presence with and provision for his people. Now as the people established a new nation, the Ark again stands among them, a tangible reminder of the Lord's presence, a reminder of the Lord's holiness in their midst.

And as David led the Ark into Jerusalem, he worshipped the Lord. He danced with all his might. The whole congregation sang songs of praise and played music – with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals. And every six paces David would stop the procession and make a sacrifice unto the Lord. David knew he was in the presence of God Almighty. As he worshipped, he touched the holiness of God and in response he offered all he had to the Lord.

David's worship was in response to the holiness of the Lord. We also experience the holiness of God. This is the "otherness" of the divine. This is what is not human - what is transcendent. Like David, at times, we experience this holiness. When we taste the bread and wine. When we hold a newborn child. When we walk through a garden in the spring. When we read a passage of scripture and it illumines our heart. Different people experience the holiness of God in different ways.

But for all of us the experience transforms. It changes us. It shapes us more into the image of God. But the holiness of God isn't always safe or easy. Part of the story is left out of today's reading. As the Israelites brought the Ark to Jerusalem, it started to slide off the cart and when it did, one of the Israelites, Uzzah, reached out to hold the Ark, to keep it from falling, and when he did, he was struck dead. There has been much discussion about this and why the Lord would allow this to happen to someone with only good intentions. But I think that the important point is to realize that the holiness of God is very different from us. It is powerful and rightly fills us with awe, and with fear. But it is this differentness that shapes us, that purifies us, that transforms us for the service of God.

Just as David brought the presence of God's holiness into the midst of His people, so we are also called to allow God's holiness to dwell in our midst. We do this as we worship together- as we commit time to being in God's presence, as we come to this altar, as we open our lives to receive the life and love of Jesus. Through this worship, God's holiness resides among us.

But this worship isn't just about what's done before this altar. Worship of the Lord's holiness is spread into the world through the actions of our lives. David didn't just dance, sing and sacrifice. He shared the bounty of God's blessings with all God's people. He blessed them in the name of the Lord with a feast – the sustenance of life.

When David experienced the holiness of God, his life was shaped by this encounter. As we encounter the holiness of God our lives will also be transformed. We can't touch the holiness of God without being transformed. We will reach beyond ourselves and serve those in need. We will listen to the lonely. We will be patient with others, knowing that the Lord has been patient with us. In other words, we will generously share the blessings we have received. We will share our experience of God's holiness.

I don't know about you but for me this past year has been a time of transformation. I'm not the same as I was a year ago. The holiness of the Lord has been all around, even when at times I had difficulty recognizing it. As I look back, I see just how blessed I have been. I am healthy. I have what I need. I'm vaccinated. Now, it's time to share my blessings. Now, it's time to show forth the holiness of God.