

“So, You Think You Can Dance . . . ?”

11 July 2021—7th Sunday after Pentecost—2 Samuel 6:12-23

Salado UMC, Salado, Texas, 76571

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“One must still have chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

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Hear our day’s lesson and ask yourself: when is it appropriate to dance in church?

So, David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; 13 and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. 14 David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. 15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

16 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.

17 They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. 18 When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, 19 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.

20 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!” 21 David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people

of the Lord, that I have danced before the Lord. 22 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 shall be held in honor.” 23 And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death. (2 Samuel 6:12-23).

There is no spiritual act in life more important or persistent than forgiveness. Examples of brokenness caused by the absence of forgiveness fills our Bibles. Jesus addresses the problem multiple times. Forgiveness is so important that Jesus called attention to it with clarity in “The Lord’s Prayer.” That striking sentence in the Lord’s Prayer causes any sensitive person to choke on the words when praying: “Forgive us our trespasses even as we forgive those who trespass against us.” If we miss the solemn implications of that sentence when we pray, then Jesus’ commentary in the very next sentence of that passage stops us dead in our tracks: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15). With that sentiment then, we have no place to hide.

As some of us have missed some church this summer, let’s catch up a bit. After Saul’s death, Israel and Judah anointed David King of Judah. Prior to this anointing Israel’s North and South fought against one another. This period of time lasted long enough for David to gain six sons born to six different wives. Oddly, none of the wives who had children with David happened to be Michal. Do you remember Michal, daughter of Saul?

Michal could not forgive her husband’s exuberance when he escorted the Ark into Jerusalem. David’s open praise of God delivering the Ark somehow hits a raw nerve in Michal. Maybe her pain and hurt stems from her family’s waning fortune owing to Saul’s death (1 Samuel 31). Or perhaps Michal yearned for her prior husband (Paltiel the son of Laish) from whom Israel took her (2 Samuel 3:12-16). Whatever the reason, at the sight of David’s dancing “she despised him in her heart.”

The text also tells us “And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death” (2 Samuel 6:23). Did she not have children because she and David’s relationship was so bitterly acrimonious? Did they have nothing to do with one another? As Mark Twain wrote: “Familiarity

breeds contempt . . . and children.” But perhaps it was more about contempt than familiarity? Or was her barrenness because of Michal’s resentment toward God’s anointed that God closed her womb. Or did David and Michal not live as husband and wife because of David’s folly and her bitterness?

Do you ever remember experiencing someone gifted and filled with joy dancing into a place of pain or distress? A friend told me about her church where Sunday school hit the skids. This being so, a Sunday school class invited a gifted teacher to lead their class for six weeks. She wove humor and enthusiasm into her lessons. The first week, the class began to loosen up and engage the lesson with one another. The second week, they laughed out loud and began to sense the good news of the gospel. By the third week, the class added chairs for newcomers. They were dancing metaphorically as if no one was watching. During this third week, midway through the lesson, a member of the Sunday school class next door came in and said, “It’s OK if you all don’t want to take the Bible seriously, but could you please keep it down for those of us who do!”

It is tempting to write off a killjoy like this . . . or Michal. People like this need our kindness and our friendship. Michal’s story is one of hardship and despair and, until God delivers her, she will not be able to celebrate any aspect of life.

It is amazing how many people like Michal live with unsettled issues. On occasion it is with parents and/or family members. Often the unsettled issues are with friends or co-workers. These issues often surface at the death of a parent, a reading of the will, or some other critical point in a family’s life. Then, like a volcano/earthquake, all the pent-up feeling explodes. Our behavior sometimes surprises outsiders, and sometimes family members.

Michal, Saul’s beautiful daughter—and first wife of David—had no children her whole life. Can we now guess why? This is part of the long and sad part of David’s story. The Bible tells us that at one time David and Michal had an ideal relationship. But, over the years, a long war, a dead father, many dead brothers—not to mention the dead Philistines had disrupted what had once been something beautiful. Michal turned bitter and was most likely unwilling to forgive her husband. Michal, the daughter of a king, as well as the king’s wife, displayed resentment that consumed her.

James Garfield was a lay preacher and principal of his denominational college. He was ambidextrous and could write Greek, with one hand and Latin with the other at the same time. In 1880, America elected him president. After just six months in office, Charles J. Guiteau shot Garfield in the back. He never lost consciousness. At the hospital, a doctor probed his wound to find the bullet, but couldn't, so he tried a silver-tipped probe. Still, no bullet. Finally, they took the President back to Washington, D. C.

Despite the summer heat, they kept him comfortable, but he grew weak. Teams of doctors tried to locate the bullet, probing the wound nonstop. In anxiety they asked Alexander Graham Bell, who was working on the telephone, to see if he could locate the bullet and he too failed. The president hung on through July and August, but in September he finally died—not from the wound, but from infection. The repeated probing, which the physicians thought would help, eventually, killed the president (Mark Hatfield (7/12/22—8/7/11) told this story).

Hatred destroys people, and no matter how deserving of revenge the enemy may be, to continue to carry the desire for vengeance is simply to “roast in your own fire.” It is forgiveness that lifts a huge burden off our souls. If Michal had discovered this fact of human nature, then perhaps joy would fill her life with joy and perhaps children rather than filling her life with hate and venom. Are there unsettled relationships rumbling under the surface of your family life? Are there deep hurts to resolve before it is too late? Who will be first speak the words: “All is forgiven?”

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