

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz Transfiguration March 6, 2011 2 Samuel 6:1-15



The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

¹ David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ² He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. ⁶ When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷ The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God. ⁸ Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. ⁹ David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" ¹⁰ He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household. ¹² Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I own a very nifty little book entitled, The Expert's Guide to 100 Things Everyone Should Know How To Do! Chapter 25 Shake Hands. This is written by Letitia Baldrige. She was the social secretary to the White House and chief of staff for Mrs. John F. Kennedy. She is the author of 20 books on manners! If anybody should know how to shake hands she should. She shook hands with President Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy and all the very important people who came to visit the first lady! She says, "*The handshake is usually the first physical contact adults have with one another, so for your own sake, make your handshakes a good experience! The other person will form several opinions of you in the process, such as whether you are a warm person; an affirmative, take-charge kind of person; a half-hearted, snobby person; or a wimpy, cold, hesitant untrusting person. Make sure your handshake is firm, not a limp-fish grip, but also not a killer body-builder crusher. Be sure not to have any remnants of the miniature pizzas, little hot dogs, or blue-cheese dip on your fingers...A good handshake carries some good body language with it...step forward, put forth your right hand, and smile while looking the other person directly in the eyes.*" How hard is that? There are all kinds of things that are very practical in my book. How to do the laundry, how to remove a stain, how to iron a shirt, sew on a button, pick produce, buy fish, build a fire, have a great smile! Do you know how to do that? Smile? I know people who have a wonderful smile! It makes you feel

good just to see them smile! There are two chapters on smiling—how to have a great smile—and how to smile when someone takes your picture. There's more to it—than saying, "Cheese!"

Today in God's House—by the power of the Holy Spirit we are going to learn something *very practical*. This Transfiguration Sunday we are going to:

Learn About God's Glory!

- 1. From Uzzah who died**
- 2. From David who danced.**

Today we are thinking about the Ark of the Covenant! I'm afraid—when most people today think about the Ark of the Covenant they think of Raiders of the Lost Ark—the 1981 movie produced by George Lucas and directed by Steven Spielberg—followed by 3 sequels! It's not the point. God's Word says, **"They shall make an ark (a chest/box) of acacia wood. An ark—people right away would have thought of Noah's ark—in which the LORD saved Noah and Mrs. Noah—Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives and all the animals—two by two. Ark is also the same Hebrew word for the little basket all covered with tar—with pitch—in which Moses floated—till Pharaoh's daughter came to take a bath in the River and found him! All this would immediately pop into the mind of the children of Israel. **"Make an ark of acacia wood."** Acacia wood is hard wood—brown to orange in color—commonly used for cabinet making! It was supposed to be 3 ¾ feet long and 2 ¼ feet wide and deep. **You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you. You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel. Exodus 25:10-24****

The mercy seat! Think about that! *Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!* The mercy seat—where the Holy and Eternal Almighty God—deems to draw near to his wretchedly sinful people. How merciful and wondrous is that? Jump ahead hundreds of years. David in the King—fighting his fierce enemies the Philistines. David asks the LORD—should he go out and attack the Philistine Army? The LORD said, **"You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines."** And David did as the LORD commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer. Now David gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God. There were very specific rules from the LORD himself—how this was supposed to be done! The sons of Kohath—one of the Levites—were supposed to carry the ark. You can look it up in Numbers chapter 6. They were supposed to pick up the ark—by the poles—with their shoulders. Do not touch the ark. If

you do—you will surely die! Sound familiar? **The wages of sin is death!** Romans 6:23 It doesn't get much simpler than that. **The wages of sin is death.** When God says don't touch something he isn't kidding!

God's Word says, "**And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.** Makes sense—doesn't it? I mean the ark is heavy—made of hard wood like oak or walnut—covered inside and outside with pure gold. Inside are the tablets of stone with God's Word carved on them, Aaron's rod—a dead shepherd's rod—with living sprouts of flowers—and some manna—not fresh—but never spoiling! It was a wondrous ark—with wondrous contents. And it was heavy. So—wouldn't it be easier—to put it in a wagon—a new wagon—which of course showed respect—and so? And some really nice oxen to pull it—and a kind of honor guard—Uzzah behind and Ahio out in front—and 30,000 soldiers. This was really a parade. So we are good—and so? Not so much! ⁶ **When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.** Are you surprised? God's Word says, "**And David was angry because the LORD had burst forth against Uzzah...And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David...** v.8-10a Angry with God? David was not the first and David would not be the last. But it is not by any means a good attitude. By grace alone the LORD would help David overcome this heart and attitude. Afraid of the LORD? This too is perhaps understandable—but not a Godly attitude either. One of God's most precious gifts is the gift of time—to help David understand and have a new heart and a new attitude!

And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing 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 horn. It has been said many times before—*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness!* **The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord!** Jesus is that blood sacrifice—the Lamb of God—who takes away the sin of the world—the horrible rebellious attitude that says a wagon—a new wagon—is *good enough!* It's the sin—the attitude that says—I'll come to church when it's convenient—when it fits into my schedule—when I feel like it! It's the attitude that treats a wife like hired help—like a maid and a cook and a nanny and worse—to be ordered around and criticized and complained to and about! Sin is an attitude—a rebellious attitude where children talk back to their parents and students argue with their teachers and disrespect them behind their back. For all our sins—Jesus bled and suffered and died.

Because Jesus took all our sins away—we can worship him with joy and thanksgiving! **David danced before the LORD with all his might!** It is not our custom to dance in Church! But it is the custom of people in Africa—in Nigeria and Benin and Togo. They dance when they sing. They can't stand still when they sing. And they dance during their very favorite part of the Church service—when they bring their thank-offerings. They love to bring Thank-offerings! They do it very differently from here in America. In Nigeria you can bring a thank-offering any time during the service. When you hear a Bible reading or pray a prayer—or hear mentioned in the sermon a blessing that you are very grateful for—you think in your heart—thank-offering. So you bring one. You jump to your feet—and bring your gift. Others—encouraged by your example—and thankful, too—will bring their gift. Critical mass is 3 or 4. When the third or

fourth person gets up – everyone gets up. They begin to sing – as they form a conga line and dance to the front – bringing their joyous thank-offerings. Usually there are 5 times during the two and a half hour service--when everyone brings a gift. There is a palpable joy and excitement – as people bring their gifts. How wonderful is that?

When the Holy Spirit fills us with joy – that joy needs to find expression in our daily life. I was at one of our Lutheran High Schools the other day – and saw a student skipping down the sidewalk. You don't see that everyday – someone skipping! I said to them – you don't see people skipping every day. They said, "I know! I'm in a very good mood!" I said, "Obviously!" They said they just found out they are going to a baseball game soon! I said, "Good for you!" They said, "I know!" And away they skipped! When's the last time you felt like skipping? If you pay close attention – you will notice that there are people all around you – going through times of painful difficulty and testing. People who need our encouragement and support. We were walking through the mall the other day. I heard a lady telling her friend, "Both my brothers have Alzheimer's now. I figure it's only a matter of time before I do, too!" Family history – and so? It's times like that – that we need to focus on Jesus – the Son of God who died and rose again – so we can come home to heaven. That first Transfiguration – Jesus shown with a glory we will see when we come home to Heaven, too!

The Experts' Guide to 100 Things Everyone Should Know How to Do. Chapter 69 – how to tell a joke – by Howie Mandel. I thought that would be a good thing to know how to do – to tell a joke. Howie says the only thing harder than telling a joke well – is telling someone how to tell a joke well. Come to find out – Howie doesn't even like telling jokes! He says the worst thing you can do is tell someone – "I'm going to tell you a joke!" Now the pressure is on – on you to tell it well – and even more on them – to laugh! Worse still – is to tell someone this is a really funny joke – the funniest joke I ever heard. Oh, now – now what's gonna happen if I don't get it – or worse yet – it's not even funny? I have watched Howie Mandel many times – especially Howie – the early years. That's when he was really funny. And you know how I knew he was really funny? Howie would laugh at his own stuff. Howie'd try to tell you a story – and he'd be laughing so much – through the whole thing – sometime's he almost didn't get it all the way out. You knew that nobody – absolutely nobody was having more fun than he was. That's how happy he was. And that happiness – that joy was absolutely contagious. You couldn't be by him – and not be happy, too! God is glorious! All through the Bible – again and again – God will shine with glory. In this life – we reflect Jesus' glory – when we reflect Jesus' forgiving love. And when we come home to heaven – we will reflect Jesus wondrous, powerful, unconditional love in Heaven. We too will shine like the stars – all glory reflecting to Jesus – and to him alone. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz