

Proper 10 B
2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19
July 14, 2024

“Celebrate Good Times, Come On”
Rev. Dr. Brandon S. Perrine

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart . . . David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals . . . David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with 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 trumpet. 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. 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. 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, 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.

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I'll never forget the heart-pounding excitement of watching Harrison Ford in Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark as a kid. My child-sized brain lit on particular images and sequences: the shocking discovery in the Map Room of the lost city; the Well of Souls where the Ark of the

Covenant had been hidden centuries earlier, still surrounded by scads of slithering snakes; and the climax when evil archeologist Belloq dons a ceremonial ephod and opens the ark to discover only sand...and the angel of death. So much action, all set to an amazing and memorable score by the incomparable John Williams. What a film!

Truth be told, most of what people know about the Ark of the Covenant comes from this film. Today, we have a rare opportunity to hear part of its story in the reading from 2 Samuel. According to the book of Exodus, the Ark had been constructed to divine specifications during the time when the Hebrews were in the desert, following their escape from Egypt. A gold-plated wood box with poles for carrying and an elaborate lid with figures of cherubim on either end, the Ark is said to have contained holy relics including the tablets of the law given to Moses. More than just a fancy box for special items, the ark represented the divine presence with the Hebrew people. Wherever the Ark went, God's presence was.

The Ark preceded the Hebrew armies in many battles, was stolen by their enemies and returned (when it brought bad luck!), and eventually came to the house of Abinadab for safe keeping. When David secured the throne and established Jerusalem as his capital, he knew that it was time for the Ark to be moved there. It was time for God to dwell once more among the people.

With great ceremony and celebration, we're told that David personally oversaw the movement of the Ark to Jerusalem. Scantily clad in just a loincloth and dancing before the Ark with an abandon she thought was unbecoming a king, David's wife Michal looked on in disgust. But David and the people partied it up as the Ark of the divine presence came home to Jerusalem at last. While we may choose to wear more clothes than David did while doing it, this text reminds us that some things really are worth celebrating.

Here at New England Church, we're good about celebrating...certain things. We celebrate babies with baptisms and the coming of age of our

youth with confirmation. We celebrate couples with weddings and we celebrate a person's life when they die with a memorial or a funeral. We celebrate holy days like Christmas and Easter in grand style with decorations and music and special liturgies. We celebrate the start of our program year with Fall Festival. And, once in a while, we celebrate the retirement of a staff person, the reception of new members, or a significant anniversary – like when New England celebrated its 150th year back in 2008. We tend to celebrate the category of life events best known as milestones – the big moments or events that come to define us as individuals or as a community. I think David's move of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem fits pretty neatly in this category. But surely, milestones aren't the only things worth celebrating, are they?

Of course, the short answer is a resounding 'NO!' There are countless reasons to celebrate, not just the milestones, but the little victories and routine joys of everyday life as individuals and as a community. When we do, research suggests that we're happier people overall and higher functioning communities. Dr. Fred Bryant, Social Psychologist at Loyola University here in Chicago, urges us to “savor” the good things, to be mindfully engaged and aware of our feelings, to “swish them around in our minds” as a way of increasing our sense of overall happiness. He suggests that we try doing these things:

1. share our good feelings with others;
2. take mental photographs;
3. congratulate ourselves;
4. get in touch with our senses and use them more consciously;
5. express celebration physically by laughing out loud, jumping up and down, and shouting for joy;
6. keep our experiences in perspective by comparing good ones with unpleasant ones;
7. get absorbed in positive moments;
8. count our blessings and give thanks;

9. avoid killjoy thinking—no raining on the parade;
10. and, remembering how quickly time flies, take time to enjoy positive experiences while they're happening. Savor them. Celebrate them in the moment.¹

One of the observations the Steering Committee made during our Strategic Visioning Process is that, besides milestone celebrations, we at New England church aren't really very good at celebrating the other things as a congregation: things like a successful school supplies drive, the contributions of our many volunteers, or the deep sense of community we experience together. I tend to think that the committee is right. And the truth is, Dr. Bryant's suggestions apply equally to individuals and communities.

Though she didn't know it, Marie modeled celebration for us when she shared her Coming-Home-to-New-England-Church story earlier in the service. She celebrated a variety of diverse aspects of our church: from our understanding of embodied theology, to giving through the Board of Community Outreach, to welcoming new folks as a Deacon, to participating in Books of Note, to volunteering with our children. These things aren't always seen as celebration-worthy, but they are! Taking time to savor our experiences and share the joy we feel when they're happening, makes all of them worthy of celebrating.

And we're going to try and do a better job of lifting up things like this—things we overlook or forget to celebrate. I hope you'll hold us accountable—hold *me* accountable. And I hope you'll consider how savoring the simple and celebrating everyday life experiences, and not just the milestones, might increase your own joy, satisfaction, and sense of well-being.

Unlike David, I think it's best if we keep our clothes on when we celebrate at New England Church. But celebrate we should! We have so many wonderful reasons to. Thanks be to God. Amen.

¹ Stacey Kennelly. "10 Steps to Savoring the Good Things in Life," [Greatergood.berkeley.edu](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/10_steps_to_savoring_the_good_things_in_life), July 23, 2012: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/10_steps_to_savoring_the_good_things_in_life.