

Holy Movement: Sunday July 11, 2021 8:30

Scripture Lesson: 2 Samuel 6: 1-5, 12b-19

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are beginning a new series entitled Holy Movement.

- The purpose and rationale of this series is one of many.
- First off, I would like to name the obvious; that we have been in a holding pattern due to the ravaging effects of the Covid-19 virus for over a year and counting.
- As many people are being vaccinated throughout the US and worldwide; this has allowed us all to be able to come together again; but let's face it; things are not the same;
- For one, there are new variants of the virus that is coming out; letting us know that this pandemic is not over by any means;

- However, thanks to the scientists and health industry and more; being vaccinated has given many of us some sense of normalcy again.
- So part of this Movement series is naming and acknowledging; that we are not cooped up as we have been before.
- Most of us have chosen not to remain in isolation anymore and for all of this and more, I am thankful.
- So the main purpose then for this series is to begin to paint the vision for how we are to get into formation, for the tough work that lies ahead in spreading love, inclusion and peace for all of God's people.
- For the reality is that being in isolation has placed a lot of the Church's activity and programming on hold.

- Also as you may have noticed; this in itself has placed a toll on the Church and the world as a whole.
- The reality for the Church as it pertains to worship attendance and membership; is that the Church nationwide has taken a further hit; roughly 30 percent to be exact.
- This means that there are at least 30 percent of the people who were volunteering and worshipping in parishes and synagogues are not anymore.
- So this is a long way of naming that this attrition is something that churches are going to have to reassess and deal with.
- The bottom line; is that for whatever reason, the time period of isolation has opened up a palpable shift in our culture; where people as a whole are making different decisions with how they are going to be using their time; mainly because I suspect

that Covid has taught all of us so much more how valuable our time really is.

- Secondly, for two years now, I have designed sermon series that have invited tough dialogue, conversations and questions; as it pertains to how we become a reconciling Church towards the neighborhood and community that surrounds us.
- We have talked about racism, sexism, oppression and more and now in my mind, **it is time for us to get moving.**
- We have named the areas of oppression, marginalization and more; **so now it is time to set up ministries; that will allow us to** get into formation;
- Ministries that will allow us **to get into formation** as it pertains to how we might reach all of God's people and invite them into community with us;

- **Ministries that will** inspire, empower and liberate people to become their best selves in Christ Jesus.
- **Ministries that will** address systems that perpetuate racism, oppression and marginalization and explore ways to tear them down once and for all.
- Furthermore, as I attempt to craft messages to the individual for this service and the Church as a whole in the later service; there are some hard truths through our scriptural lesson this morning; that let's us know that how we move into a new sense of normalcy will be different than before.
- For a year changes a lot;
- And the temptation for the majority of us will be to resume things as normal;
- But this is where I will gently challenge all of this morning;

- This is where our scripture this morning will boldly challenge us as well after I am done with it;
- Because the questions that I raise is; **how can things go back** to the way they used to be; after racism has been exposed yet again at its painful core?
- **How can things go back** to the way they used to be, when some of our friends and family that were here are not physically here anymore; for a myriad of reasons that I will not go into...but I am sure we can all testify this to be true.
- **How can things go back to the way** they used to be; when our entire government structure as we know it; has gone into a major reconstructive process as we experienced an election of a new president; VP and local and city government officials?

- **How can things go back to the way** they used to be; when too many isms have been exposed for the harsh reality that it is;
- **How can we go back** to the way things used to be, **when our period of isolation** has revealed so much;
- **When this period of isolation** has actually allowed us as a Church to enter into the 21st century with technology that required all ages to get on board and do it quickly;
- **How can we go back to the way things used to be?**
- **Should we go back to the ways things** used to be?
- **These are the questions that this Holy Movement Series** will address and more; as we figure out the way forward together.

- **And so tying in our scripture this morning; King David came to an important but similar realization that I have named as it pertained to the Ark of the Covenant in our text this morning;**
- For in painting a picture of what is happening in our text this morning;
- The ark of God had remained neglected for many years.
- Since that tragic day when Israel lost the ark in the battle against the Philistines, it had been housed in a temporary shelter at Kiriath-jearim under the care of Eleazar (cf. 1 Sam. 7:1, 2).
- David, however, aimed to make Jerusalem not only the political but also the religious center of the nation.
- Now to give you all a mental picture; the biblical accounts describe the **Ark** as large, about the size of a 19th-century seaman's chest, made of gold-

plated wood, and topped with two large, golden angels. (Show picture)

- It was carried using poles inserted through rings on its sides. The **Ark** has been linked to several of the Old Testament's miracles.
- Whether it was destroyed, captured, or hidden—nobody knows.
- One of the most famous claims about the **Ark's** whereabouts is that before the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, it had found its way to Ethiopia, where it still resides in the town of Aksum, in the St. Mary of Zion cathedral.
- But watch this; this is where things get interesting and where I am going to pitch my sermonic tent;
- When David rescued the ark of the covenant, he transported it **in a new cart** instead of the hands of the priests.
- And so why did David decide to come up with a **new cart** for this Ark?

- In a nutshell, I think that David was in a similar place as we are as a church today...
- For remember I said the Ark which I believe is a powerful metaphor for the Church; had been neglected.
- Now David desired to put this Ark back in its rightful place and come up with a way to keep it safe and close.
- David however learned the lesson really quickly and perhaps this is where the old adage comes in; **do not put the cart before the horse;**
- For by placing this ark on a new cart; all it did was make the ark itself shaky and at risk of becoming damaged.
- For what was required for this ark to be transported as I paint the picture, was to be able to carry the ark some six miles or so east and a little south to Jerusalem.

- This journey involved some changes in elevation since Kiriath-jearim was located in the hills, and so was Jerusalem, but in between there were lower lying areas, which meant some up and down hill maneuvers.
- Now there was great rejoicing as David and the Israelites brought the ark to Jerusalem. David and those with him celebrated with all their might ([1 Chronicles 13:8](#); compare [2 Samuel 6:5](#)).
- All sorts of musical instruments and singers participated in the celebration, and from the context, we can infer that there was enthusiastic dancing as well.
- But Suddenly something went wrong, and one of the oxen nearly upset the cart.
- We are not told exactly what happened. Perhaps the oxen stumbled, or they may have been startled by some enthusiastic gesture on the part of someone who ventured too close.

- In some way, the oxen momentarily got out of control, and this motion was transferred to the cart, causing the ark to be jolted in such a way that it appeared it would fall off the cart.
- The thought of the ark crashing to the ground was too much for Uzzah, walking along side the cart close to the ark.
- Instinctively, Uzzah reached out his hand and took hold of the ark to steady it. When he did, God struck him dead.
- The celebration came to a screeching halt.
- Joy turned to amazement and bewilderment.

- So what went wrong? And what was the solution?
Our text never actually tells us.
- But for me, David's experience really opened up my eyes to be able to name something important; that will hopefully make space for this Holy

Movement to transpire under the new leadership that I am striving to bring;

- And that is that David teaches all leaders including myself the important lesson **of not implementing new things just for the sake of doing new things;**
- Or bringing about change just for the sake of bringing about change;
- That is not my purpose.
- Furthermore, I am so glad that this story paints the picture very clear that this should not be the goal of any leadership; nor is it the goal of the leadership that myself and Caity and the First UMC pastoral staff is striving to bring; to upset people's apple carts just for the sake of being able to do so.
- However the role of the leader (and this is where David learned eventually); was **to make sure that the Ark was brought back to the people.**

- You see the original intent of the ark was **to be carried and cared for by the people;**
- God gave very clear instructions about the ark of God.
- God not only gave specific instructions about how it should be made; God indicated who should carry it and how it should be transported from one place to another.
- In [Numbers 5](#), God tells exactly how the tabernacle should be taken down and carried to its next resting place.
- So this is a long way of my naming this important truth;
- And I will do so by reiterating my point again; That as I begin to enter into year three of ministry and leadership and Pastor Caity begins her ministry with us; the goal of this Holy Movement series is not to plant **a new cart ministry;**

- The goal of this Holy Movement Series **is to bring the Church back to the people...**
- **The goal is** to make space for the people to be able to carry out the mission and values of our community;
- **The goal is to** make sure that the people who are the Church; are invested and inspired to carry the Ark and to know that they are needed to do so.
- For the reality is that in our churches; the harvest is plenty and the workers are too few. (Matthew 9:37)
- And just like the Ark had been neglected in our text; in many ways the Church has been neglected as well;
- **For I researched the possible motivation for why David tried and put the Ark on the cart in the first place...**
- And then the Holy Spirit invited me to explore the possible weight of this Ark during this time;

- Now in light of the fact that most commentaries do not calculate the weight of the Tabernacle; I was happy to find an article by Josiah Derby who made the attempt to do so.
- So Josiah attempted to calculate the weight of the Ark of the Covenant, including the weight of the gold overlay.
- He calculated the weight at about 288 pounds (131 kilograms), and argued that it would be too heavy for four men to carry on their shoulders, each having to bear a load of about 72 pounds (33 kilograms).
- And there are other theories out there with different numbers, but the common agreement was that the Ark was heavy!

- **So as I personalize David's dilemma for us; although I cannot produce to you all an actual number for how heavy this ark was; what I can tell you is that the ark was heavy and that was probably an understatement.**
- So with this knowledge, I am plopping my pastoral hat on and I would wager to say that the most probable reason why David probably tried to put the ark on a cart, was because he did not have anybody willing to carry the ark.
- What is your plan David?
- We need your plan David?
- I don't understand why you don't have a plan David?
- And then as I place my heels in David's shoes; I realize that perhaps David buckled under the pressure of it all to get things right....and get it done right now; because my aha moment is that

this is what rookie leaders like myself tend to do....

- We tend to lose sight in attempt to please people that we rush things;
- We don't think things through because we are more worried about our leadership being received that the results sometimes produce these new cart ministries;
- We tend to overlook key details that can allow us to envision a plan where God's vision can be fulfilled completely;
- And don't get me wrong, I am not blaming the people....because the people are going to be the people;
- But the leaders who were called according to God's plan at some point are going to have to clothe on a thicker skin; myself included....
- Because new cart ministries just don't work...

- The ministry always must be about the people and these things take time;
- They take patience;
- They take preparation;
- They take prayer;
- They take setbacks;
- They take trial and errors;
- They take faith;
- Because to get people to move from point A to point B in my experience is the equivalent of us trying to move a mountain with our bare hands;
- But with God...all things are possible...
- And that is what this story teaches us;
- David knew that he did not have the human power necessary to carry the Ark the way God intended to;
- So instead of believing that God could provide a path for the people to be able to carry this Ark again;

- He rushed things.....and lost God's vision
- Today Church, I stopped by to say that the Ark is heavy;
- Furthermore; The Ark is in desperate need for God's people to return...because we have work to do....
- So today is a day where I cast the vision to you so that the Ark can be carried the way God called it to be carried.
- Part of the Church Membership invitation asks if you and I are willing to give of our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness to the world and to the local Church;
- Throughout this series which will last roughly 5 weeks; we have a Ministry Fair set up next door in the West Vestry.
- You will see vision boards labeled Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service and Witness and various

ministries listed in each category to invite you to prayerfully consider signing up for.

- This is phase one for how we begin to carry our Ark together.
- Phase 2 will involve my reaching out to various leaders in each of these sections over the next few weeks and getting training groups together to get all of our volunteers on board so that the Ark can be carried.
- So this Ministry Fair is not about replacing any of the people have been doing these things all along;
- It is about weight distribution folks...
- For the Ark is heavy;
- And the Harvest is now.....
- Thanks be to God

Holy Movement: Sunday July 11 2021 10:45

First Lesson: 2 Samuel 6: 1-5, 12b-19

Gospel Lesson: Mark 6: 14-29

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

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- And this morning, I am presenting to you a unified message; because this is a message that speaks to the heart of the individual and the Church.
- So the purpose and rationale of this series is one of many.

- First off, I would like to name the obvious; that we have been in a holding pattern due to the ravaging effects of the Covid-19 virus for over a year and counting.
- As many people are being vaccinated throughout the US and worldwide; this has allowed us all to be able to come together again; but let's face it; things are not the same;
- For one, there are new variants of the virus that is coming out; letting us know that this pandemic is not over by any means;
- However, thanks to the scientists and health industry and more; being vaccinated has given many of us some sense of normalcy again.
- So part of this Movement series is naming and acknowledging; that we are not cooped up as we have been before.

- Most of us have chosen not to remain in isolation anymore and for all of this and more, I am thankful.
- So the main purpose then for this series is to begin to paint the vision for how we are to get into formation, for the tough work that lies ahead in spreading love, inclusion and peace for all of God's people.
- For the reality is that being in isolation has placed a lot of the Church's activity and programming on hold.
- Also as you may have noticed; this in itself has placed a toll on the Church and the world as a whole.
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- Secondly, for two years now, I have designed sermon series that have invited tough dialogue, conversations and questions; as it pertains to how we become a reconciling Church towards the neighborhood and community that surrounds us.

- We have talked about racism, sexism, oppression and more and now in my mind, **it is time for us to get moving.**
- We have named the areas of oppression, marginalization and more; **so now it is time to set up ministries; that will allow us to** get into formation;
- Ministries that will allow us **to get into formation** as it pertains to how we might reach all of God's people and invite them into community with us;
- **Ministries that will** inspire, empower and liberate people to become their best selves in Christ Jesus.
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whole in the later service; there are some hard truths through our scriptural lesson this morning; that let's us know that how we move into a new sense of normalcy will be different than before.

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- And the temptation for the majority of us will be to resume things as normal;
- But this is where I will gently challenge all of this morning;
- This is where our scripture this morning will boldly challenge us as well after I am done with it;
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of reasons that I will not go into...but I am sure we can all testify this to be true.

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- **How can we go back to the way things used to be?**
- **Should we go back to the ways things used to be?**
- **These are the questions that this Holy Movement Series** will address and more; as we figure out the way forward together.
- **And so changing things up by bringing primarily the first lesson into our conversation and I may weave in the gospel somewhere as well;**
- **King David came to an important but similar realization that I have named as it pertained to the Ark of the Covenant in our text this morning;**
- For in painting a picture of what is happening in our text this morning;
- The ark of God had remained neglected for many years.

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- The goal of this Holy Movement Series **is to bring the Church back to the people...**
- **The goal is** to make space for the people to be able to carry out the mission and values of our community;
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- We need your plan David?
- I don't understand why you don't have a plan David?
- And then as I place my heels in David's shoes; I realize that perhaps David buckled under the pressure of it all to get things right....and get it done right now; because my aha moment is that this is what rookie leaders like myself tend to do....
- We tend to lose sight in attempt to please people that we rush things;
- We don't think things through because we are more worried about our leadership being received that the results sometimes produce these new cart ministries;
- We tend to overlook key details that can allow us to envision a plan where God's vision can be fulfilled completely;

- And don't get me wrong, I am not blaming the people....because the people are going to be the people;
- But the leaders who were called according to God's plan at some point are going to have to clothe on a thicker skin; myself included....
- Because new cart ministries just don't work...
- The ministry always must be about the people and these things take time;
- They take patience;
- They take preparation;
- They take prayer;
- They take setbacks;
- They take trial and errors;
- They take cultivation;
- And faith...lots of faith....
- Because to get people to move from point A to point B in my experience; is the equivalent of us trying to move a mountain with our bare hands;

- And where I would tie in our gospel briefly is that with John the Baptist, the imagery of John the Baptist being beheaded as his sacrifice for doing God's work;
- This powerful and gory imagery really informs us how truly difficult and grueling it can be for the people attempting to do God's Work.
- For these oppressive systems are not going to be overturned willingly or easily;
- So our work for justice, love and inclusion for all must be intentional;
- And placing our ministry on a cart just won't do;
- And so that is what this story teaches us;
- David knew that he did not have the human power necessary to carry the Ark the way God intended to;
- So instead of believing that God could provide a path for the people to be able to carry this Ark again;

- He rushed things.....and lost God's vision
- Today Church, I am believing in God that a movement is happening....
- I can taste it...I can feel it....I can even see it....
- So the invitation for you is this.... the Ark is heavy;
- Furthermore; The Ark is in desperate need for God's people to return...because we have work to do....
- So today is a day where I cast the vision to you so that the Ark can be carried the way God called it to be carried.
- Part of the Church Membership invitation asks if you and I are willing to give of our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness to the world and to the local Church;
- Throughout this series which will last roughly 5 weeks; we have a Ministry Fair set up next door in the West Vestry.

- You will see vision boards labeled Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service and Witness and various ministries listed in each category to invite you to prayerfully consider signing up for.
- The boards are casting a vision of who we hope to reach and who we hope will join us in our work of carrying the Ark.
- So I ask that you be prayerful in this process of planning your next move;
- I also ask that you be willing and open to what God can do through you in wherever you add your name.
- Do not worry about being capable or able; we will be willing to teach you and train you and we will be gracious in doing so.
- So this is phase one for how we begin to carry our Ark together.
- Phase 2 then will involve Caity and myself reaching out to various leaders in each of these

sections over the next few weeks and getting training groups together to get all of our volunteers on board so that the Ark can be carried.

- For this Ministry Fair is not about replacing any of the people who have been carrying the Ark all along'
- It is about weight distribution folks...
- For the Ark is heavy;
- And the Harvest is now.....
- Let the Church say Amen!