

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - July 12, 2009 - Proper 10 B  
2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29  
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With television shows like *Dancing with the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance*, it seems that many Americans have rediscovered dance. And that's great! Dancing can be a great form of exercise. There's aerobic dance, ballet, tap even river dance. Dance gives expression to the inner depth of a person's feeling and emotion.

Life itself is a dance. Sometimes it is as frenzied as the dances of the early sixties, the Twist or the Swim with their ups and downs, ins and outs, and moving all around. Like the tango, life can suddenly change direction, first in one direction, then suddenly in a different one. Life can be as precise and methodical as the box step, one and two and three and four, or as free formed and spontaneous as modern jazz. Sometimes life is as slow and gentle, lilting and graceful, like a Viennese waltz.

The relationship within the Holy Trinity is sometimes characterized as a dance. The theological term for it is the Perichoresis. It is the dance of mutual enjoyment and affection shared between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Love is given, so, in a sense, the Father leads. Love is received fully perfectly in step by the Son. And the Spirit of love bursts forth back to Father in a wave of un-choreographed spontaneity.

People's relationship with God may also be considered a dance. People are aware of the blessings of life and creation. Their praise and thanksgiving is like their spiritual soulful dance expressing their adoration to God. It is a dance that take on many forms, many styles.

Music, art, prayer, reading and studying scripture, all comprise different dance steps that people learn, use and enjoy. People in church, like you and me, enter into a dance of sorts when they participate in the liturgy, a dance done by the entire congregation moving with the Spirit of God.

Yes, liturgy is dance. When people come together to offer prayer, praise and thanksgivings, they dance before

the Lord, just like King David is doing in the Reading from the Old Testament for this morning.

I think it would be a good thing if people will dedicate as much attention to dancing their relationship with God as they give to watching shows about dancing. I think it would be a good thing for people to learn better how to dance with the Creator of life, that One in whom we all live and move and have our being.

David, the great king of Israel, dances before the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred treasure chest, if you will, that contains the agreement whereby God agrees to be God for the people, and the people agree to be God's people.

David is installing the Ark in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is his capital city, and this event is a capital event in the people's religious and political history. Jerusalem becomes the religious and political center of the emerging Kingdom of Israel. It lays the foundation for Israel's Golden Age under David and his son to follow, King Solomon.

When David takes custody of the ark it is in essence the transfer to David of the custody of the presence of God. Since long ago, long before the people were ever in their promised land, the Ark has served as a symbol of God's presence with them. Now, it is becoming symbol of religious and national unity among of the various tribes of Hebrew peoples. As he returns the Ark to its prominent place in the Holy City, its very presence and association with David, increases David's greatness and authority among the people. Everything about this great day indicates the God is strongly with David, and so, also strongly with the people.

Israel had forgotten its dance with God. And so, both literally and figuratively, David remembers for them. David dances before the Lord with all his might. It is liturgy; it is dance. For David, it is utter joy. David teaches the people, and leads them to dance again.

Here is this brash young man. Here is this spontaneous dancer. Here also is this valiant warrior. Once a lowly

shepherd, once the youngest of many brothers, then anointed by the prophet Samuel, he emerges as the one chosen by God to lead the people. Here is the one who slays the giant Goliath with just a stone. Here is someone who is a person after God's own heart. Here is someone whose family and ancestors God promises to bless forever. Here is someone who dances before the Lord.

But here also is someone who is just a frail human being, someone just as capable of sin as you and I. David will go on to rule and govern. And he will succumb to the temptations of power. David will break his vows, and encourage others to do the same. He will suffer the loss of an unborn child, and years later the loss of his own son's love and respect, then he will suffer the death of that son, too. There will be times that David will not choose, or will not be able, to dance before the Lord. There are times when David will not enjoy life, but will simply have to endure it.

There are times when people still today cannot enjoy, but can only endure, what is going on in their lives. There are things in people's lives, in your life and mine, that keep us from dancing before the Lord. There are times when the sorrows of our lives threaten to overtake us; times when the shadows and cares of this world hide the light of God's love from our eyes and His warmth from our aching and barren hearts; times when we forget what true joy is.

People lose their job; or they cannot find one, no matter how hard they look. Money is tight, friends are few, and you or I, someone we know, or just someone we happen to meet doesn't know where his or her next meal is coming from. Your loved one is sick; my loved one is dying. Right in the middle of the dance floor, somebody seemingly shut off the lights, turned off the music, and we can't for the life of us remember even one more step. The dance of life becomes a dance of desperation and death. Even when we forget, God does keep dancing.

Today's gospel reading also reminds us that this dance of life is not always life giving. It can be twisted by fear, anger and hatred. Herod has heard that Jesus is casting out demons, going around the countryside healing the sick, helping the people of Israel to dance once again.

Jesus' life giving dance, like John's, frightens him. Herod stops John the Baptist from dancing. Herodias' dance before Herod is a dance that brings grief and death both physically and spiritually as John the Baptist is beheaded. John: the one who points the way to Jesus in life also foreshadows Jesus' death.

Even as Jesus walks the lonely path to the cross, abandoned by His disciples, beaten, rejected by those who were His own, Jesus' dance of life is not finished. Through His life, death and resurrection you and I are set free from those things that keep us from dancing: our fears and our hurts; those things which cause us not to see ourselves as the beloved children of God that we truly are.

The Good news is that God does keep dancing. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to dance before God just as David did so long ago. As God incarnate, God enfleshed, Jesus comes to bring healing and wholeness to a broken world, a world that forgets how to dance. He came to bring healing and wholeness to a world that forgets its creator, to a world that is created to participate in the dance of life with the Trinity.

As we exchange the peace, as we share in the Eucharist you and I participate in the dance for which we were created. You and I participate in the very dance of the Trinity itself. You and I experience God's reconciling love, a love that sets us truly free to love others. You and I in turn can teach others how to join in the dance of life. We can reach out our hands in love.

I don't mean to imply we will always run around dancing. There will be times still when you and I might not feel like kicking up our heels, cutting a rug, shaking our booty, or even tapping a toe in time with the rhythms of life. The joy that Jesus wants for each of us, though, is complete joy. Such joy comes in the fact that we are beloved; we are not alone in this dance.

God is joyful and God is dancing. God's footwork allows us to dance; God's joy allows us to make that joy our own.

Thanks be to God.