

“Dancing With the Word of the Lord”

Psalm 78:1-7

Psalm 119:1-2

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-15

September 10, 2006

Sermon preached by

Pastor Rob Fulton

First United Presbyterian Church

Bellefontaine, Ohio

So, let me ask you a question this morning: When's the last time you've been DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD? Strange question, isn't it? Well, in the 6th Chapter of 2nd Samuel, a fascinating story is told about King David, Israel's great and mighty king, DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD...becoming so excited and thrilled with the Word of God that he actually stripped down to his underwear and danced with all his might before God and everybody. It's a wonderful story! But before I share it with you, let me first share a portion of another of David's wonderful psalms:

Psalm 78:1-8

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 13-23

Leader: Friends, I invite you to hear and believe, for this is the Word of the Lord!

People: Thanks be to God!

***“I Love Your Word, O Lord”* Tune # 441**

So here's how our story goes this morning: After defeating the Philistines in a mighty battle, the new young king recaptured the Ark of the Covenant which the Philistines had captured from David's predecessor, King Saul, the weak and ineffective first King of Israel. Now, the Ark of the Covenant was, you will remember, the foremost symbol of God's special relationship with Israel. For IN the Ark were supposedly housed not only the two tablets God had given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, upon which God had inscribed the Ten Commandments, but also Moses' scrolls of the first five books of the Bible...the Pentateuch...the Law. In other words, the Ark of the Covenant contained “the Word of the Lord.”

Well, so excited and thrilled was King David that the Ark was back in Israelite hands...that he had recaptured this foremost symbol of God's sacred relationship with the nation of Israel...that he had the Ark of the Covenant brought to his new capital city of Jerusalem. And as the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Word of the Lord, was brought into Jerusalem with great fanfare and celebration...with trumpets blaring and drums beating...with harps and tambourines and cymbals all playing...with strong soldiers marching and pretty girls dancing...David got so caught up in the spirit of it all that he stripped himself down to his skivvies and started dancing...dancing with the Word of the Lord...dancing to the glory of God...David and God whirling around before the ark with such passion and enthusiasm that they became as one...a oneness of such magnificence and joy that not even the tongue-lashing David got from his wife, Michal, couldn't dim the glory of it all.

For you see, at about the same time David was fully caught up in dancing with the word of the Lord, his wife, Michal, who was also the late King Saul's daughter (and who must have had some prim and proper Scotch Presbyterianism in her background because she never did ANYTHING that wasn't done “decently and in order”) looked out the window

of the palace and saw David dancing in his underwear before God and everybody. And she was disgusted...MORTIFIED to say the least. So when her husband, the King, finally made it home that night, she let him have it right upon his nearly bare backside. *"You may BE the King,"* she told him in her most condescending tone, *"but you made an absolute FOOL of yourself today by dancing around in your underwear like the village idiot! Even the servant girls saw you nearly naked, for heaven's sake! What in God's name did you think you were DOING?"*

"I was dancing to the glory of the Lord," David replied, and then his voice took on an acid tone, *"the Lord who chose ME instead of your father and made ME the King of his people, Israel. And I will go right ON dancing in my underwear to honor God just as long as I like. YOU may think I'm a fool, but frankly, my dear, I don't give a (flying flip)!! I only care to give honor to God by dancing with the Word of the Lord."*

And then the story concludes with these rather pointed words, which I'll leave you to interpret on your own: *"And Michal, Saul's daughter, never had ANY of the King's children."* (2 Sam.6:12-23)

Now, isn't that a wonderful story and a wonderful image to consider...DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD!? Can you imagine getting SO EXCITED...so CAUGHT UP in the joy of God's Word that you go DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD? Of course, David's story is from a long time ago and an age much different from our own. And nobody goes DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD these days, now do they? Ah! But there's where you're wrong, my friends. There's where you're wrong!

The Jewish author, Chaim Potok, writes about modern-day life among the ultra-conservative Jews of New York. In the Orthodox synagogue each year the Torah is read from beginning to end. And when the cycle of readings is complete, a special celebration called Simhat Torah is held. As part of the festivities, the sacred Torah scrolls are brought down from the "Ark" where they are stored and each of the men of the synagogue, beginning with the eldest, goes DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD.

In his book, In the Beginning, Potok tells about one particularly joyous occasion when *"the white bearded Torah reader was dancing with one of the heavy scrolls as if he had miraculously shed his years."* The synagogue was crowded and warm that night so David Lurie, the main character in the story, goes outside for some fresh air. As he gazes up at the stars, the sounds of the celebration continue behind him. Under his feet he feels the vibration of men dancing with the Word of the Lord. And suddenly, David begins to wonder...wonder whether Gentiles ever dance with their Bibles. His friend, William, goes to the big Presbyterian church on Madison Avenue, and David wonders, do Presbyterians ever DANCE WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD?

The truth of the matter, of course, is that we Presbyterians, like MOST Gentiles...and like many Jews for that matter...dance with many partners in front of the altars of our lives, but RARELY do we do much DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD. We dance with our jobs...we dance with our families...we dance with our checkbooks and our bank accounts and our stock portfolios. We dance with our busy schedules...our community responsibilities...our social obligations...our kids sports schedules. We even dance with our CHURCH responsibilities...teaching Sunday School...helping with Women's Association...serving as an Elder or a Deacon...working on a committee...singing in the choir. But RARELY, if ever, do we do much DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD.

You see, DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD is simply an IMAGE...a SYMBOL...a METAPHOR, if you will, for studying...learning...living with the Bible. And like ANY dance, it's something we've got to LEARN how to do.

Several years ago, inspired no doubt by Dancing With the Stars, Janet and I took Ballroom Dancing Classes which were offered by the Cultural Arts Commissioning and,

though I was reluctant at first, I have to admit, it was actually a lot of fun. I sort of learned to make my two left feet do the steps that I was supposed to do for the foxtrot...swing dancing...and a little bit of waltz. Notice, I said “sort of” learned to make my two left feet do the steps...because you see, as soon as the classes were over, I promptly FORGOT how to do all the steps. Precisely, because I didn’t keep it up! Precisely, because I didn’t PRACTICE! Precisely because it did didn’t sink in and become a part of me. So now, every time the opportunity presents itself for Janet and I to actually do some dancing, which isn’t that often, believe me, she has to not-so-gently remind me how to do the steps all over again!

Now, my POINT with all of this is that DANCING is something you’ve got to LEARN to do...and PRACTICE doing...and KEEP AT doing if you’re ever going to become a good dancer. And the very SAME thing is true with DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD as well. If you want to learn and live with God’s Word, you’ve got to STUDY God’s Word...you need to PRACTICE God’s Word...you’ve got to LIVE and BREATHE it until it simply becomes second nature to you...until it becomes so much a part of you that you move with the Word of God like Fred Astaire used to move with Ginger Rogers...or, for a younger folks who doesn’t remember Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers...like Patrick Swazey and Jennifer Grey moved in the movie Dirty Dancing! Or for an even YOUNGER generation...like Louie Vito and Chelsie Hightower danced on last fall’s Season 10 of *Dancing with the Stars*. As easy and fluid and flowing as Fred and Ginger...or Patrick and Jennifer...made their dancing APPEAR...and Chelsie tried her best to make her dances with Louie appear...I’m sure it took HOURS and HOURS of practice...and study...and work to make it look so effortless. And the very SAME is true of our relationship with the Lord...AND with THE WORD OF THE LORD.

Where all of that begins, of course, is right here in Sunday School on Sunday mornings when we join with OTHER Christians who are ALSO trying to learn how to DANCE WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD. We may be 2 years old...or 95 years old (and that is precisely the range of ages of the people involved in our Sunday School program!) But it is HERE...IN CHURCH...with OTHER CHRISTIANS...that we learn what DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD is all about. And it is HERE...in our Christian Education program...that we learn the moves...the steps, so to speak...that will enable us to dance with the Word of the Lord THROUGHOUT our lives. Yes, to be sure, we ideally teach our children to “Dance with the Word of the Lord” when they are young so that they may know the joy of dancing their whole lives long. Which is precisely why we put so much emphasis on Christian Education and Sunday School for our children and youth.

But make no mistake about it. You are NEVER too old to learn to dance...ESPECIALLY when you are DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD. Maybe you never learned to study God’s Word when you were young. Now...today...NEXT SUNDAY is the perfect time to start. Maybe you USED to come to Sunday School...maybe you USED to be part of a Bible study group...maybe you USED to read God’s Word regularly. Or maybe you’ve just gotten out of the habit of DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD and need to take a refresher course to remind you of the steps again. Whatever the case, now...today...NEXT SUNDAY is the perfect time to come and learn how to live your entire life DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD.

You see, the truth of the matter is that David “danced with the Word of the Lord” precisely because he loved the Lord...and he loved the Lord’s WORD. It wasn’t a BURDEN. It’s wasn’t a CHORE. It was a JOY for him. And the more he could give glory to God and honor the Lord by “dancing with the Word,” the more he WANTED to do it...even if it meant a tongue lashing and estrangement from his prim and proper wife Michal. *“I dance to*

honor the Lord and I'll go ON dancing to give glory to God. YOU may think I'm foolish, but I don't care! I only care about giving honor to God by dancing with the Word of the Lord!"

Wouldn't it be GRAND...wouldn't it be WONDERFUL...wouldn't it be MARVELOUS if WE TOO were so filled with joy and eagerness and excitement about God's Word that WE TOO spent our lives DANCING WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD?! Wouldn't it be AMAZING...wouldn't it be SPECTACULAR if WE TOO loved the Lord and loved the Lord's WORD so much that we couldn't HELP dancing in honor of our God?!

I INVITE you...I ENCOURAGE you...I IMPLORÉ you...ALL of you – young and old and everywhere in between – to join us next Sunday and the next Sunday and the next Sunday after that...each and EVERY Sunday...as together we learn to DANCE WITH THE WORD OF THE LORD! It's a dance I can double-dog GUARANTEE you, you will NEVER regret learning!

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.