

Fr. John Bedingfield, St. John's Silsbee
Pentecost 6B Proper 10 Sermon 071209
2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Psalm 24
Amos 7:7-15; Psalm 85:8-13
Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Come Holy Spirit and fill this place. Give us the power of the spirit. And in that power, let us have joy. Amen

David again gathered all the men of Israel, thirty thousand. And besides men, there were women and children. Probably making the number closer to eighty thousand. David and all the children of Israel set out from Baale-Judah, to bring up from there the Ark of God. So David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and those who bore the Ark of the Lord dance, with all their might.

The people went and gathered up the Ark of God and brought it up to the City of David – brought it HOME.

The Ark of God is a box, built to God's specifications, as given to Moses. Some say the box contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, which (according to Moses) were written by the very hand of God. And at the corners of the Ark were cherubim – small angels – who, according to Jewish theology, held the legs of an invisible chair, the throne of God. So the people believed that God sat a few feet above the top of the Ark of God.

That is what they brought back to the City of David that day. They brought God home. They brought God into their midst. And there was joy!

The King of Israel (crown, robes, the whole nine yards), the *King* of Israel, David, danced down the street in front of the Ark – *in his underwear!* “Girded in a linen ephod,” translated, “in his underwear.” He danced down the street in his underwear because he could not contain his joy over the fact that God was coming home. God would again be in their midst. Have you ever experienced that kind of joy?

All of you parents ... was there a particular Christmas when your child wanted a present. Not just any present but *the* present. They began to ask you about the present sometime in September; and they asked you for it *every* day. They wrote multiple letters to Santa Clause and they assured you that if they only got this *one* present, their lives would be complete. And on Christmas day, when they opened the present, when they finally held it in their hands; it didn't matter what else was there. It didn't matter who else was there. It was just them and the present. And it started with eyes as big as saucers. Then there was the smile that threatened to split their faces in half. And then they would shake, and maybe squeal a little – or maybe squeal a lot. And ultimately they would jump up out of the floor and start to *dance*. They danced because of the joy they experienced at having their heart's desire. That is unbridled joy.

That is enthusiasm. “Enthusiasm,” comes from the Greek, εν τηεος (*en theos*), “in God.” Enthusiasm – experiencing joy in God. That’s what the children of Israel were experiencing when God came to be present with them.

We Episcopalians don’t think much of dancing in church – on the whole. How many people here have seen liturgical dance? Of those, how many of you enjoyed it? Those numbers bear out my belief that many Episcopalians don’t care for dancing in church. For those who do like liturgical dance, they recognize that it is a particular kind of worship. It is beautiful. It is moving. It is joy-filled, in its movement. But most Episcopalians believe that you shouldn’t do that in church. No. I will not dance this morning. ... well, I can’t really say that. If the power of the Holy Spirit takes over, I may be dancing all over the place. But the bottom line for Episcopalians is, we believe in the 11th Commandment ... “Thou shalt not be tacky.” And we worry about being tacky – a lot! So we don’t *do* anything. If you don’t move, you can’t do anything silly.

We come in to church “in silence.” We take our places in silence. We stand, sit, kneel, stand, sit, kneel – on command. We do not touch each other. We do not interact with each other. We interact forward and back (congregation to celebrant and vice versa), but not side to side (congregant to congregant). And this lack of movement can sort of BIND the joyous Spirit of God.

That’s not to say that there is anything wrong with our manner of worship. It is my manner of worship – and has been all my life – and I love it. There is also a huge place in our hearts and in the church for quiet, contemplative worship. Worship that is reverent and silent is a wonderful thing. But when we take our desire not to be tacky so seriously that we shut down the power of the Spirit, we not only bind ourselves in a little cocoon– but we try to bind God as well.

We tell God, “Let’s don’t get too carried away with this spirit thing. We’ll be fine. We get it. We understand that the Holy Spirit is here. You don’t have to show us. Let’s don’t ‘wander around’ while we worship.” And we lose an opportunity. An opportunity to experience the same joy that the children of Israel did when God came into their presence ... because, my brothers and sisters, God **IS PRESENT ... HERE ... TODAY.**

That red Sanctuary light tells you that God is present in this room. That red light represents that fact that the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are *here*, in this room, right now! **God is present!** That font back there contains Holy Water, which indicates that God is present here. The Holy Spirit is still moving across the water. The Holy Spirit is known in Scripture as the “Breath of God.” ... Breath ... Take in the Holy Spirit. **GOD IS HERE TODAY!** As surely as God was there when David danced, God is here.

I don’t expect to see dancing here today. I don’t even *ask* to see dancing today. What I ask is that you open your minds – I know that your hearts are already open – open your minds to the possibility that the joy of God can be so wonderful, so omnipresent in your lives, that you cannot contain the joy. *En Theos* – Enthusiasm.

I have celebrated the Eucharist since 2005; most weeks, twice a week – sometimes more, sometimes less. I don't know how many times that is (nothing when compared to what Fr. Jack has done). But in the celebration of the Eucharist, I say the Eucharistic Prayer every time. Now we have several Eucharistic Prayers (A through D, 1 and 2) and I change them with fair regularity. But the basic story I tell through the Eucharistic Prayer is always the same. When I celebrate the Eucharist, it would be very simple for me to develop a rote delivery of that part of the service. That way the inflection would always be the same, the timing would always be the same and I could get it done and get on with the day. Perhaps even think of other things while I was saying the prayers. But I can't do that. And I can't do that because every time I celebrate the Eucharist the words are brand new. God speaks to me every time I celebrate the Eucharist. The power of the Spirit is *right here* in word and action, when I celebrate the Eucharist.

I love being a priest. And I love being a priest because, among other things, I love being able to express to other people, the joy that I experience in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Spirit ... *IT'S YOURS ... IT'S HERE ... TAKE IT!* And when you take it; let it out. *Let it out!* Be child like in your love of the Lord and see what kind of power comes from that.

Amen.