

12 Jul 2015 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

2 Sam 6:1-5, 12b-19
Psalm 24
Ephesians 1: 1-14
Mark 6:14-29



[Proper 10B/Ordinary 15B/Pentecost 7, July 12, 2015](#) Textweek

The image from the first reading of King David, near naked, “*leaping and dancing before the Lord*” is an image of Divine delight. It evokes for us an image of the king, free, open, empowered and inspired; a king completely exposed before God and the people; a king who dances at one with his people, as an expression of sheer delight in placing God in the centre of the kingdom.

Such an image provides a stark contrast with the political climate and the rulers of today! And the scene of David dancing also provides us with an opportunity to contrast and compare our own energy levels. Consider what scene you paint yourself into to portray and express your energy, your attitude toward God and your relationship with those around you.

Back to the reading, and away from the crowd, peering through a window is a critical observer of the scene; Michal, “*daughter of Saul*” and wife of David; she “*looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.*”

Again, the inclusion of Michal observing from the window evokes a somewhat sad and lonely image; someone hidden, withdrawn and unable to share in the sheer delight of what is unfolding; someone not able to welcome the ‘coming in’ of the lord; untouched and even resentful of the Divine delight that is being sung and danced into reality below them.

Perhaps this second image more readily resonates with those looking on from their ivory towers in Canberra; and perhaps our own energy levels will also find a resonance with Michal.

David and Michal are of one flesh; a marriage of both ‘delight’ and ‘despise’ of ‘leaping’ and ‘looking’ of singing and complaining; a marriage of open nakedness and hidden withdrawal.

The light in the narrative is so obviously embodied in David and as we follow the narrative we find the outworking, the amazing grace, of his dance before the Lord;

“David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. ¹⁸When 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, ¹⁹and 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.”

The king, before God, or in the presence of God, is the one who gives, makes offerings, who blesses and who dances with delight. The gospel reading gives us further insight into the complex dynamics of the competing energies that marry together within us and give shape to who we are.

Through the person of Herod, another king, we see both the empowerment of David, and the disempowerment of Michal.

Power and fear are dancing within Herod, jostling for position; the scene deliberately is another celebration and again there is a dance, evoking the shifting energies that will determine the outcome.

Herod hears of a power that is greater than his; *"Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.""*

Herod's fears call into question all that he has done; both his use of power and its application; Herod had executed John and had seen his head on a plate, but now he questions that reality: *"he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."*

If we follow the narrative as we did in the first reading we find that with Herod, unlike David, there was not integrity with the word of God in his rule as king.

Herod had imprisoned John, but; *"Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him."* and *"When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him."*

Herod recognized a power greater than his own power, even though he was king; however, as we discover, following the dance, he turns away from the Divine energy of John's word in order to keep face before his guests.

David's divine dance brought to life, giving, making offerings, creating blessing; the dance of David brought hunger to an end; he *"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."*

Herod is danced into making choices, into choosing a divine empowerment, or being empowered only by the expectations of others, it is a dance that drove Herod into the beheading of the Divine word..

In the modern age, more so than in the times the ancient scriptures were written, more and more of us can identify with the character of the King; sure we can off load some of their attributes to our political leaders, but we also know that we have powers and temptations that go beyond the imagination of the kings of the past; so these stories are very relevant to us for reflecting on the life choices and the life orientation we set for ourselves ; and Paul underlines that relevance for us.

The New Testament reading today is the introduction of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and we'll be reading from that letter over the next six weeks, so today rather than unpacking it, a short reflection...

The two narratives, and the dramatic theatre, of David and Herod have spoken to us of the dance of life, the movement and the dynamics that are creative of the outcomes of our being.

Every life is part of the universal unfolding that is creation's dance... And so by our choices we too shall either dance with David and *"distribute food among all the people"* or behead the Word of God and display it on a plate to our guests..

Paul writes, in his introduction, to the Ephesians “*by the will of God*” and without any intentional pun goes on to talk about inheritance; “*In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance..... according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things..... so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.*”

What is the inheritance we have received? What dance have we been invited to join? And what is the inheritance we plan to leave? These are confronting, but important questions for each and for all of us.

A recent speech from Ban Ki-moon, like the letter of Paul, encourages us to dance the dance of David:

“An African proverb teaches that “fine words do not produce food”. That wise counsel is foremost in my mind as leaders gather in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for a pivotal global financing conference to put the world on course to end poverty and protect the planet.”

'We can be the first generation that ends poverty'

Ban Ki-moon