

Fear and Joy in the Presence of God

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having God in our midst and doing God's work in God's way, highlighting the dangers of criticism, jealousy, and doing things our own way.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:16, 2 Samuel 6:20-23, Psalm 119:11, Matthew 6:13, John 13:35, Romans 12:10, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:4, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 John 4:20

Topics: "God's Presence", "Holiness and Reverence"

Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the duality of fear and joy in the presence of God, using the story of David and Michal to illustrate the importance of God's presence in our lives. He highlights that true hope and safety come only from having God with us, and warns against the dangers of jealousy and criticism, as exemplified by Michal's disdain for David's worship. Stegen urges believers to prioritize their relationship with God above all else, reminding them that God's holiness must be respected and that His work must be done in His way. The sermon concludes with a call to examine one's heart and to maintain a reverent relationship with the Holy God.

Transcript

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 Sam 6:16, 20-23 - "... she despised him in her heart... And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death."

When I read this chapter this morning, I found 30 different topics which we could speak about, but I won't relate them all. I will just touch on them, and if the Lord wills, I will speak on them this week.

POINT 1: God with us

We only have one hope: That God is with us, in our midst. Without Him there is no hope. If your hope is not in the Lord God all your hopes are utterly in vain. We will only be helped by one thing: only if God Himself is present with us. You can go all over the world, nothing will help you but that God is with you and helps you.

Example:

Before Mugabe's time, when Zimbabwe was still Rhodesia, a white man left the country and went to Australia because he didn't see any hope among the blacks. But there he was killed in a car accident by a car driven by a black man.

You can go to the moon and stars, you won't be protected or safe if you don't have God. You can do what you want, you can stand on your head, it won't help you. You will be helped by only one thing and that is to have God in your life. Nothing will help you but to have the living God. You can rejoice in your freedom, but there is no freedom without the living God.

POINT 2: Historic context

Let us return to our text and end with the word which I have read:

When David had killed Goliath, the women rejoiced and sang, "Saul killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands". Saul was eaten up with envy, jealousy.

O jealousy! Even when Jesus was killed, the king who was the ruler at the time, recognized that the motive of the people who wanted Jesus crucified, was jealousy.

When Saul saw that this boy was more popular than he was, he was very upset. Then people came to Saul and told him that his daughter Michal loved David. Saul was glad, thinking that he had found a way of getting at David, of trapping him, and that this would be David's end. This could be a means of fixing David, of killing him.

So Saul told David that he would give him his daughter as wife. She was David's first wife. David would be Saul's real son-in-law. In the meantime, he wants to catch him. As the doctor said this morning, one can't trust anyone. A person can speak nicely and give himself out as decent and trustworthy, but in the meantime they want to trap you.

Saul said, "I don't want the normal bride's price, I want nothing other than that you go and kill a hundred Philistines and bring me their foreskins - that will be the bride's price". Perhaps he thought David would get killed in the process, but David conquered and brought the foreskins.

POINT 3: "Lead us not into temptation"

If you are a man of God, if you belong to the Lord, know that satan will be out to get those. That is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation". How many people start the way of the faith but fall away. We walk on white bones. Pray every day, "Don't lead me into temptation", otherwise it won't be long and the devil will have swallowed you.

David was hunted down by Saul and he fled to the mountains. Then Saul took Michal, David's wife, and gave her to another man. David heard that his father-in-law had given his wife to another man, and so, in the end when it was said that David was to be crowned king, David refused to be inaugurated without his wife being at his side. The general and them had to go and fetch her.

This is a deep matter: David is a picture / symbol of Christ, and He also says that He won't be crowned until He has His Bride. You who are His bride, are you maybe busy with other things, "another man"? The Bible says, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God". You flirt around with money, with the world, with different things - satan has got hold of you, he has got you.

They fetched Michal where she was with her new husband. The husband followed her weeping and crying, but he was sent back - she belonged to David. He had taken her knowing that she actually belonged to David.

David said he didn't want the crown or the kingdom without his wife. You go around and live your own life, but in the meantime Jesus is waiting in heaven, not willing to be crowned till His Bride is at His side. Jesus is waiting for you to be at His side.

POINT 4: The ark of the covenant - God's presence

When David had his wife back, he said, "The first thing I want now, is the ark of the Lord with the angels on top". This was made of wood in the desert and covered in gold inside and outside, and the Ten Commandments were inside. On top were angels, and between them was the Mercy Seat.

When God spoke to Moses, He spoke from this ark. This is where God and Moses met, this is where they spoke. God said, "I will always meet with you at the ark, Moses, at the mercy seat". This is a symbol of God's power, glory and mercy. This was a sign that God is in their midst. Dear friends, what is the crux of the matter in our lives? What is our hope? To have the ark where God speaks to us and we to Him? Or are we being distracted by our children, our job, our possessions? Woe, woe, woe. That is why Jesus said, "If you love father, mother, brothers, sisters, children or possessions more than Me, you are not worthy of Me." You are not worthy of Me. Then you are on your way to hell.

The Ten Commandments (the Word of the Lord) was inside. In Psalm 119 the Psalmist says that God's commandment is hidden in his heart. God's Word was in his heart. Everything turned around God in this man's life.

Friends, is God in your hearts? Are you busy with God? Or what are you busy with?

David said that he didn't want to be on the throne if God is not in their midst. What is important to us? God, or our own things? Marriage? David said, "I want God. I want Him in our midst. I want to have God, have contact with Him, being led by Him daily, having fellowship with Him, that I abide in Him." Nothing else was as important to David as the presence of God, in the ark. He wanted communion with God. What do you want? To be with your husband, that he just doesn't come late? Wanting to be with him? Your money, your work, your freedom? What is of prime importance to you? What really matters to you? I want each one now to examine himself: What is important to you? Is it your daughter? Your son?

The ark had been gone for a long time. When the Philistines conquered Saul, the high priest Eli died (he fell over backwards and broke his neck) and his two sons were killed. Eli could no longer see well. His two sons were on the battlefield. Then the message came that the Philistines conquered and that his two sons had died as well, and he was shocked, and fell over backwards (he was quite heavy) and died.

The Philistines took the ark of the Lord and put it in their temple, the temple of Dagon. In the morning they found that Dagon had fallen face downwards before the ark of the Lord. They erected him but the next morning they found he had fallen down again, and his hands and head were broken off. He was headless.

The Philistines were in utter confusion. There were diseases, illness, death and curses that broke out and they didn't know what to do. It was so bad that eventually they decided to return the ark back to Israel.

What is it like in South Africa today? Very bad, because God is no longer in our midst. We have other gods now.

So after some months they took the ark back to Israel and gave it to Abinadab. It was because of the living God among the Philistines that they experienced those results. South Africa is filled with Christians but

where is the living God in our midst? Is Dagon still standing erect, his head and hands still on?

If God is not in our midst things will go wrong.

6:1-5 David got 30,000 men together and went to Abinadab to fetch the ark to bring it to Jerusalem. They put it onto a cart as the Philistines had done. Even if you are a child of God, don't copy the world, don't imitate the way that the world does things. David said, "It has been many years now that the ark has been in the house of Abinadab. Let his two sons come along, one on either side of the cart." They headed for Jerusalem.

6:6-7 At one place there was a hole in the road and the cart swung, and Uzzah, son of Abinadab, tried to hold the ark up and protect it from falling. He was struck dead right there and then.

6:8 David cried and wept, fearing God. This man (Uzzah) was helping, was protecting the ark from falling, and was punished so severely. Maybe they had forgotten the holiness of God. My friends, God is holy! God is holy! Never forget His holiness.

6:9-10 David feared and decided not to continue with the ark. The house of Obed-Edom was closeby and David arranged for the ark to be taken into that house. They left it there. David was very disappointed and down-hearted. They wanted the ark to be with them in Jerusalem, but then God judged them so severely.

So they left the ark with Obed-Edom and David went back to Jerusalem.

POINT 5: Do God's work in God's way

David was seeking the face of God and he realized / discovered that the ark couldn't be carried on a cart but should be carried by the Levites on their shoulders. The priests who were the Levites, were those appointed to carry the ark.

Never forget this for the rest of your life: You can't do God's work in your own way. Woe to you if you try to do God's work according to your own thinking or the way you think it should be done. You may only do it as God has prescribed or commanded. Even if you get as old as Methuselah (who nearly got 1,000 years old, just 31 years short of that = 969 years old), never forget: You can do God's work only in God's way. Will you ever forget that? You can't do it according to your traditions and customs.

And remember that God is holy. Your future will be terrible for you and your children if you don't. You will be troubled like the Philistines whose god was broken and all manner of disease broke out - why? Because they didn't give the honour and reverence to the ark of God.

So when David saw that he had sinned he called the Levites and said, "You need to carry the ark". He heard reports that Obed-Edom was blessed abundantly! He, his children and everything there were blessed because of the presence of the ark. (6:11-12)

6:12 David plucked up courage and went to fetch the ark. Now he did it in God's way. The Levites carried the ark.

6:13 They walked six steps and David said, "Stop! Let a cow be slaughtered." Some translations say a cow and a calf, a heifer. David said, "We can't continue on this most holy way of God without the Blood of the Lord Jesus being shed. We need His cleansing Blood to sanctify us." After that they continued.

6:14-15 When they came to Jerusalem, it was as if a burden had been removed from David, and he jumped around like a calf from the stall! The ark was with them again. He thanked God and prayed for His blessing.

David danced and jumped around like a fattened calf before the Lord. Because the ark of the presence of the Lord had come to them! Bless Israel, o God!

POINT 6: Criticism versus divine love

6:16 But from his house, from an upper window, his wife Michal looked and despised him in her heart: "What! This king embarrasses himself, doing such things below his dignity in front of the people." She despised him. Dear friends, do you see criticism. "I don't think that is right. Why does he do it like that?" Maybe God has commanded him to do that. Is there criticism in your heart? Then repent now! Criticism was born in hell. "Why do they do it like that? Why is it spoken like that?" If you know that critical spirit, you are the offspring of Michal.

Michal wasn't like the son of Saul, her brother Jonathan. He was David's closest friend. They loved one another from the heart, more than a man can love a woman. They weren't homosexuals, but with a divine love, the love we should love one another with, where the one lays down his life for the other. Even though Jonathan knew that David was to succeed his father and that he, Jonathan, wouldn't be king - he loved David even more. What a relationship! What a heart! Or is there criticism and jealousy in your heart? "That is my position! That is where I want to be!"

Jesus said, "The world will know that God lives if they see your love one to another".

Do we truly love each other? That love which, if the world sees it, they will believe that God has sent His Son? I don't want you to go out this tent without having examined yourself. I don't want you to be like ducks where the water just runs off their backs.

We should love one another with a deep love. Do you have that love? Answer that question before God.

Paul said that the Gospel he preached is life to those who accept and obey it, but it is death to the disobedient. Are you obedient?

6:20 After David had placed the ark, he went back to bless his family, and then his wife came along, that demonic woman. And she spoke despicable words, "You embarrassed yourself, denigrated yourself in front of the maids, stripping yourself! You have brought yourself low, being a king." What was in her heart? Was she full of pride? Why did she despise him and look down on him and scold him?

What is in the depths of your heart? What is it that rules in your heart? You can be part of God's work, and yet be cursed. Are our hearts holy? No criticism?

6:21-22 David answered, "Michal, I will humble myself even further".

6:23 God struck Michal to be barren for the rest of her life. She never bore David a child. She received a curse.

CONCLUSION:

What do you say about this? In what condition will you continue from here? We are to rejoice in the presence of God but we are also to tremble and fear.

May God be gracious to us that we won't be like the son of Abinadab: he died next to the mercy seat because he didn't keep God's Word. Maybe you got used to the ark - 10, 20 years in the home. He stretched forth his hand but God had said no one is allowed to touch the ark "because I am a holy God". Never get used to God. Woe to you! Every morning go on your knees and pray, "Holy God, keep me. Whether I am alone or with people, Lord, keep me, You Who are holy, the Holy of holies."

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