

Don't Take Away the Job From Jesus

by Hans Peter Royer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following God's prescribed ways in our relationship with Him, illustrated through the story of David and the Ark of the Covenant.

Duration: 38:14

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 13:12, 2 Chronicles 15:2, Matthew 6:33, John 12:25-26, John 14:6, John 14:23

Topics: "God's Way"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing that God is the master and we are His servants. He highlights the tendency for us to try to make God follow our agenda instead of following Him. The speaker uses the example of Moses giving carts and oxen to the Meritites but not to the Kohatites, to illustrate that not everyone is meant to have the same role or responsibilities in the church. He also emphasizes the need to submit ourselves to God rather than trying to dedicate things to Him, as everything we have is ultimately given by Him.

Transcript

For this final lecture, I chose 1 Chronicles. And if you do have a Bible, feel free to turn there with me. In 1 Chronicles, we have a story about the Ark.

It's actually written down twice. You also find it in 2 Samuel. Exactly more or less the same words, at least for a few verses.

It's a story where David got established in Jerusalem, with his kingdom, but the Ark was kind of forgotten. It was out in a shed like this, probably. And it was just forgotten, basically.

And then I have a great idea to bring the Ark back to where it belongs, in the midst of his people. And so, in 1 Chronicles 13, they all have a good idea, I think so, to bring it back. Now, let's see the story how it went.

1 Chronicles 13, verse 1. David conferred with his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. He then said to the whole assembly of Israel, If it seems good to you, and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send a word far and wide to the rest of our brothers throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their own towns and pasture lands, to come and join us. What for? Let us bring the Ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of it

during the reign of Saul.

The whole assembly agreed to do this because it seemed right to all the people. By the way, that's democracy. So David assembled all the Israelites from the Sihur River in Egypt to Lebohana to bring the Ark of God from Kiriat Yerim.

David and all the Israelites went with him to Bala of Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God the Lord, who is enthroned between the cherubim, the Ark that is called by the name. They moved the Ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart, with Uzzah in Ohio guiding it. David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals, and trumpets.

When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the Ark because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the Ark. So he died there before God.

Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day this place is called Paris Uzzah. And David was afraid of God that day and asked, How can I bring the Ark of God to me? This is one of the stories that I never appreciated when I read the Old Testament. There are several stories because if any story is unfair, unjust, it's this one.

Because there's Ohio and Uzzah, these two faithful men, they lead the cart on which the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies, is sitting on. At one point, the oxen stumble, and the Holy of Holies is falling off, and Uzzah reaches out his hand to keep it from falling to the dirt, and when God sees this, he strikes him dead. That's not fair.

I never understood this for the longest time. It's also interesting, we read here, David assembled all the people, let's do this, and everybody said, that's a good idea, democracy. And it seemed right to everyone.

And then it's also interesting, David says in verse 12, How can I bring the Ark to me? You know, people always ask how. People always ask for methods. How can we do that? Give me a method, God.

By the way, it's also interesting, why didn't David ask this question a little bit earlier? How can I bring up the Ark? It seems like it's true of men that first a disaster must happen before we finally come to the point where we turn to God and ask God how to go about it. It seems that we try to cope with our own strength, with our own mind, with our own fantastic ideas, and only until we totally collapse, a disaster happens, there is a divorce, there is a fight, there is whatever, and then when we are at the very end, we come to God and say, Well, God, by the way, what did you think about the whole thing? Why don't we start with that? It's my strong conviction in the meantime that people only learn by experience, by our mistakes. I mean, what do we teach our children? We teach our children this and this and this, but when do they learn it? After they haven't done what we told them.

It seems to be true. It doesn't have to be that way, but looking at life, looking at myself, those lessons I know by now is those where I failed. Now, what did David do after he failed so miserably in trying to bring up the Ark to himself? Well, he did one good thing.

He read the Bible. That's not bad for a start. And he actually read the book of Leviticus, which is, you know, not the most exciting book, but he did.

It says in 1 Chronicles 15, just on the same page, in verses 1 it says, After David had constructed buildings for himself in the city of David, he prepared a place for the Ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said, No one but the Levites may carry the Ark of God. What a surprise! How come he knows all of a sudden? Because the Lord chose them to carry the Ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever.

Why did he know now? Well, he read the book. He read the book that God gave to us as a revelation of himself. And then in verse 12 we read, He said to them, You are the heads of the Levitical families.

You and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the Ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared it for. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way.

There is a lesson to be learned. And this is this. God loves to be with us.

He longs to be with us. But according to his ways. Not according to ours.

Because there is only one way. This is not New Testament theology. That's in the Old Testament.

We see it here. When the Lord Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

There is no other way. You need to come to God on his terms. Not on ours.

And his term is his own Son. That's questioned very often. And I love one passage in Mark 14, where Jesus on Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified, he prayed three times, My God, if there is any other way to save humankind, do not let me drink this cup.

Let it pass by me. He prayed it three times. I have a question.

Did the Lord Jesus have to drink the cup? Yes or no? Yes, of course. You know what this is telling us? There is no other way. The Lord himself prayed three times, If there is another way, don't let me do this.

And God said, I am sorry son, there is no other way. You must drink it. By the way, I have news.

If there is one other way to the Father except Jesus, I have bad news. God does not listen to any prayers. Why do I know that? The Lord himself prayed three times to his own father.

He turned to him in prayer, Don't let me do this, if there is another way. If there is another way, God the Father did not listen to the prayers of his only son. And he will certainly not listen to yours.

So if you believe there is another way, you can stop praying at this moment. It will not make sense for the rest of your life. Now, what was the described way of carrying the Ark? Well, let's go to the most exciting book.

It's Leviticus, but another one is Numbers. Numbers is a little better actually. Tells a little more stories.

But go to Numbers chapter 4 please. Numbers chapter 4 tells us how to carry the Ark and who must carry the Ark. The point is not so much how, it's again more who.

Numbers chapter 4 verse 1, The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Take a census of the Kohatite branch of the Levites. The Kohatite branch of the Levites. By their clans and families.

Count all the men from 30 to 50 years of age. From 30 to 50 years of age. Who come to serve in the work in the tent of meeting.

This is the work of the Kohatites in the tent of the meeting. The care of the most holy things. When the camp is to move, Aaron and his sons are to go in and take down the shielding curtain and cover the Ark of the testimony with it.

Then they are to cover this with hides of sea cows, spread a cloth of solid blue over that and put the poles in place. Now what do we learn from here? Who is to carry the Ark? The Kohatites, a branch of the Levites. Only them.

They are to carry the Ark. Not only that, they had to be between 30 and 50 years of age. Not only that, they had to carry the Ark on the two wooden sticks which were put in place on their shoulder.

It says in Numbers chapter 7, just two pages over, it says in verse 1, When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils. Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of the families, who were the tribal leaders in charge of those who were accounted, made offerings.

They brought as their gifts before the Lord six covered carts and twelve oxen, an ox from each leader and a cart from every two. These they presented before the tabernacle. The Lord said to Moses, Accept these from them that they may be used in the work of the Tent of Meeting.

Give them to the Levites as each man's work requires. So Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the Levites. He gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershonites as their work required.

He gave four carts and eight oxen to the Meritites as their work required. They were all under the direction of Itmar, son of Aaron, the priest. But, now listen, Moses did not give any to the Kohatites.

Why? Because they were to carry on their shoulders the holy things for which they were responsible. There are many things in here. And what I like about it, you try to do this in your church.

You get two oxen, you get four, and you get none. People stream out. We are all the same.

We are Christians. We must be treated the same. If he gets two oxen, I get two oxen.

That's unfair. It's democracy. Never meant to be.

In our church today, everybody has to be treated alike. Everything must do the same thing. Everybody must be mentioned.

And if I only have two oxen, that's unfair. I leave the church. I try to find another one.

Well, some got two, some got four, and some got none for a very good reason. The ark was never to be put on a cart. The ark was only ever to be carried on the shoulders.

By the way, do you know where David got the idea to carry the ark on a cart? Don't you remember? Somebody else did it just before him. Anybody remembers? The Philistines. They put the ark on a cart

because it caused trouble in their own country.

So they sent it back on a cart. Do you know where David got the idea from the world? Our church is like that. We get all the great ideas from the world and try to copy it.

And everybody says, that's great. Very good. Democracy.

Everybody agrees. Good idea. What was David's sin? And that's the point.

You know what David did? He took away the work from the Kohatites. He copied the world and took away the work from the Kohatites. Now, you know what's fascinating? Our Lord Jesus, remember in the Old Testament only the Kohatites, the priestly descendants.

They were allowed to do that. Now, one title out of 285 of our Lord Jesus is mentioned in Hebrews 4. In Hebrews 4, in verse 14, we read, Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. Who is the high priest, the Levitical descendant, so to speak? Jesus Christ, the Kohatite.

By the way, in Luke chapter 3, interestingly, it says a little thing. In Luke chapter 3, verse 23, we read this. Luke 3, in verse 23, Now, Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry.

You know what else we read? In John chapter 8, in verse 57. John 8, 57. They come, the Pharisees come up to him and say, You are not yet 50 years old that you said to him.

And you have seen Abraham? How old did the Kohatites have to be? I turn your attention back. You read it in this one chapter, 4 of 5, 9, between 30 and 50 years. Between 30 and 50 years.

Between 30 and 50 years. Sometimes I thought, why does he repeat himself? To make a point. Our high priest is for eternity between 30 and 50 years of age.

Kohatite. And by the way, how did they carry the ark? On two wooden sticks. I know somebody else.

A Kohatite between 30 and 50 years old who carried two wooden sticks up on a hill on the shoulder. What is our sin today? You know what it is? We constantly take away the job from Jesus. That's our sin.

Just like David took away the work of the Kohatites. So we Christians today try very hard to take away the work from Jesus. It's very dangerous.

As we have seen in David's case, it had very severe consequences. And so it does today. Can you put on the one overhead? I'm kind of excited about Greek mythology.

Maybe for a reason because we have a work down there. I pick up books and I always read that. It's fascinating, Greek mythology.

But there is one poor guy. These stories are funny. There is one God who is a little stronger than the other one and he goes out with his wife so he gets jealous so he banishes him and so on.

And so it goes back and forth. You have the half-gods, by the way, in Greek mythology. Where do they have all these ideas from? They all come from the Bible, by the way.

It's fascinating. But there was a poor guy, Atlas, he's called. And Atlas, I can't remember.

I'm sorry, I didn't bring my book. But he did something severely wrong. So he was punished.

He had to carry the world. And that was a punishment. It was not a virtue.

He was punished by carrying the world. But you know what? Today in our, and especially among Christian leaders, if somebody is strong and says, we evangelize the world, we can do it, it's seen as a virtue. It's a punishment.

Because by doing so, we take away the work from Jesus. We do that very often and easily. Thank you.

Switch it off. Now, how do we do that? You know, well, you may say, well, I can see that. That's kind of interesting.

But how do we take away the work from Jesus? Well, in a very subtle way we do that. And we wouldn't recognize it. That's the thing.

One prayer that I hear every day, now, don't feel guilty if you pray it today. That's not the point, really. Oh, maybe you can feel guilty, I mean.

We pray it every day, Lord, please be with us. It's a very subtle thing. When we, now, don't take it, because it also may have a, how would I call it, a devotional side of it.

You know, sometimes we just feel down. We feel depressed. We just feel, ah, so unworthy, whatever.

I say, please, God, be with me. You know, that's okay. I have nothing against that.

So don't misunderstand me when I'm saying this. But as we pray, theologically, it's a completely wrong prayer. To pray, Lord, please be with me.

Bless me today. Go before me today or whatever and do what you want and so on. Especially this be with me.

This is the one point that is a bit of a subtle one. Go with me to John chapter 12. I want to show you what I mean by that.

When we pray go before me, that's pretty good. But when we say go with me, that's something a little different. It says in John chapter 12 and verse 25, I read this verse.

I think it was the first session. The man who loves his life, he will lose it, while the man who hates his life and his world will keep it for eternal life. Verse 26.

Whoever serves me must follow me. And where I am, my servant also will be. And it says in 2 Chronicles 15.

2 Chronicles 15 and verse 2 I just read. He went out to meet Asa and so on. Listen to me, it says, The Lord is with you when you are with him.

The Lord is with you. You see, the question is not, Lord, please come with me today. The question is, are we with the Lord? You see, Jesus says, My servant will be where I am.

It doesn't say, I will be where my servant is. But we have changed that. And what we may say is, Lord, you see, I have my plan.

Here is the schedule. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, that's for today. Lord, I have worked it out well.

It's all well done. Now, you know what would be good, Lord? Please come with me and help me a little bit. And do your job.

Now, you know what happens? I am the master and he is my servant. All I ask him is to help me. Here I have exchanged a role.

But of course we know that's not the way it is. He is the master and we are the servants. Where I am, my servant will be.

So we need to look at Christ and follow him. Rather than telling Christ what's on my agenda and ask him to follow me. See, I just say this.

This is a very little subtle way that we do that. Unconsciously. But it creeps in.

Just watch your own... No, don't do it all the time. But at one stage, watch how you pray. Listen to the words that you use in your prayer.

Because we should pray intelligently. You see, sometimes... I remember when I joined prayer circles years ago, I always prayed at the first one. Because it was the fifth one, all the good phrases were used up.

It's just evangelical phrases. And I catch myself, sometimes in the evening, especially when I'm tired, I say something and I must admit I did not even think about what I was saying. Now, I don't know if this really is what God intended as prayer.

I think prayer is supposed to be intelligent conversation. And so it's good to check our own prayer life to see where we stand. One other very subtle thing, the obvious one you find easily yourself, but that's a subtle one, how we take over the work of Jesus.

You see, one is, I go ahead and you follow me, Jesus. So I'm taking the work, I'm taking responsibility. I'm the coetite.

One other way is to dedicate our lives to God. You know, we should not dedicate our lives to God. It's a very subtle thing.

Let me try to explain what I mean by that. We can pray, God, I want to serve you. I dedicate my life for mission work, or as a pastor, or whatever it may be, or a mother for three, four children.

I dedicate my life for you, Lord, to do this. It sounds very right. It sounds very spiritual.

But it may be wrong in a sense. It means I'm taking over. You see, when I dedicate something to someone, it means I have something to offer.

And what I have to offer, I dedicate to somebody. That's very generous. That's a generous thing that we do in the world.

You see, if somebody dedicates his money to build a highway or a bridge, he dedicates something he has to a good cause. And we sometimes as Christians think we dedicate our gifts, our personality, our availability, whatever, to God. Now, it says in Joshua 24, I'll just read it to you.

You see that in many houses, you see this verse for a very good reason. It says, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord and so on. Joshua says, you know what Joshua says a little later? Joshua said to the people, you are not able to serve the Lord.

How can we dare serving the Lord? We are not able in a sense from our strength, from our capacity to serve God. You are not able to do that. It says in 1 Corinthians 4, I'll just read this to you in verse 7. He says, For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not? You see, if I have something, I can dedicate it to someone.

But you know what God says? Everything you have, you receive from me. So in that sense, we can never really dedicate something to God because He has given us in the first place. You know what we can do? We can submit ourselves to God.

It's not a play on words. It's very, very important to understand this. Because when I dedicate myself to God, now you may have used the word I dedicate and you have meant submission.

That's perfect. Don't worry about words. I'm speaking about an idea, a concept that lies behind it.

We may not be aware of that. So if you say, God, I dedicate my life to you and you meant it in the right way, great! Don't care about words. I'm speaking about a concept.

You see, when I dedicate something, I dedicate me, my abilities, what I can do for God. When I submit, I simply say, God, you are Lord. All I want to do is submit to this Lordship, abide in you and live out of your resources.

See, this is the difference between dedicating and submitting. Now we have a choice. How do we live? Can you put on the next overhead, please? There are a few different ways to live a Christian life.

One way is rowing. And I'm afraid it's not a small number of Christians who row. I don't know if you ever been rowing.

You know, it's a sport, of course. Australians are pretty good in that, by the way, as far as I know. And you know, it may be a sport, but really, rowing, all progress depends on self-effort.

If you don't row, you stand, or you just go along with a wave, whatever it is. Rowing also is very exhausting. I did it sometimes.

Now, my muscles are not trained for rowing, so I get tired quick. You may be a bit more trained and you cope a little longer, but not forever. No matter how strong you are, I go rowing with you and I just sit there and I give the pace.

I will see you exhausted after a while. It's an exhausting, a continuous effort. This is when I dedicate my life to God.

I help you, God. I do it for you. I give up my life for you, like Peter said.

It's so painful. I notice that too. I sometimes took out my kids, you know, rowing on our little lakes in Austria.

It's painful because I'm not used to that. And it's affected only in calm conditions. You had pretty high waves last week when I flew down.

I saw it on TV. You try rowing. It won't get very far.

As far as I can guess. I'm not an expert. I know nothing about it.

But I assume it won't work. That's one way to live our Christian life. There is another way.

It's called sailing. And I believe that's the way God intended us to live our Christian life. To put up the sail, submit to the wind, and enjoy a ride.

When you sail, you notice a few things. The power comes from outside the craft. It's not you producing the forward motion.

It's the wind in the sail that drives your boat. You are active, yes. I did a sailing course.

But on a lake in Austria. So forget it. If you put me in the sea, I'm probably lost after five seconds.

But I know a little bit how to sail. They taught me. I'm even a sailing instructor assistant.

But don't ever ask me how to sail. I don't even know how it works anymore. But for a week, we got taught how to sail.

It's quite active. You move back and forth. You do certain things.

It's fun. But it's relaxing. And the resting doesn't slow down the forward progress.

You can even rest sometimes. Just have a Coke or whatever. And you still go forward.

And it's effective even in rough conditions. I know Australia is one of the leading countries with the states, I think, in riling. You have your competitions here.

I read in the newspaper, the big, what it's called? American's Cup, right? So, you know more about it than I do. Australia got it now? Or not? New Zealand has it. All right.

But it's effective in rough conditions. So, that's our choice. We can be a cohort of ourselves.

Try to do everything in our own strength. Or we can simply submit. And let the Lord do His job.

And submitting to Him, be available and follow Him. There is one other way. And maybe one or two are sitting in here.

I don't know. That's the hardest way to live. If you're rowing, tie to the pier.

Of course, no progress, regardless of the effort. If you try to come to God, anywhere else but through Christ. If you try to find fulfillment anywhere else but in Christ, there will be no progress at all.

It's exhausting and a totally futile activity. Apart from Christ, you can be as religious as you want. It will be absolutely futile, because you're tied to the pier.

And it's a waste of effort, regardless of conditions. That's the situation with a man and a woman who does not know Christ. Doesn't go anywhere.

And we have a great responsibility and a great joy ahead of us, the responsibility is to abide in Christ. To remain dependent on Him each and every day of our lives. To say, Lord, I can't do it.

I dig a few holes, remember? And I'm looking forward to how you will fill them. To abide in Him. And it's our great joy to walk with Him, to walk with God.

And stand on a sideline and watching Him at work. It's great to hear testimonies. I heard some testimonies this weekend.

How you came to know the Lord. It's fascinating. Just watching the sign, stand on the sideline, and say, yeah, great.

That's great. And to be part of that plan, to be part of that kingdom, is the most fascinating thing. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you so much for the incredible privilege of being yours. I thank you so much for the freedom that we have gained in knowing you, our Lord. You're the only one who has ever paid for our sin.

Nobody else, not even Moses, as we heard in the previous lecture, could do anything like it. However perfect, however godly a person may be, we can never stand in the place of somebody else. Only you can, and you did.

And thank you, Lord Jesus, that you did not remain in the grave. That you rose again. That you came to life in order to rule your own kingdom.

You're the head of the church, Lord. Not any pastor, not any bishop, not any preacher. You are the head of the church.

And from you, the whole body is held together. And Lord, sometimes looking at the church, it's chaos. Just chaos.

And yet, Lord, you're not turning back with a chip on your shoulder. You're stepping right in it, making something very beautiful out of it. Lord, it's such a privilege to live in the relationship with you in this way.

I want to thank you for these people here. I want to thank you for those you gave a vision to reach people with Christ. That you gave them the strength and the joy to organize, to work, to be available with hands and feet and mouth to make something like this happen.

Thank you for that. For the obedience of those people. Because yes, Lord, you do it all.

And yet, you need people who give in. People who make themselves available. People who obey and trust.

So, I thank you for these people. It's a great privilege, Lord. And so, Lord, we commit our lives into your hands.

And we know that the same Lord Jesus, who is here now, is with us tomorrow, next week, next month. There is no changing in your nature. You're the same yesterday, today and forever.

And we can rely on you more than on anything else on this planet. Thank you that we don't have to carry the world. And that you don't punish us like Atlas was punished to carry the world.

You do that, Lord. All you said is, Come ye unto me. All you are heavy laden and burdened.

And I will give you rest. It's so amazing to stand in that rest. To rest in you.

I thank you for that privilege. And may we never give that rest away to anyone and to any teaching to anybody else. But defend this rest.

It's my prayer that we may never lose that. And it's all available in you. Exclusively.

Thank you for this hour we have now. Thank you that you speak. Amen.

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