

David's New Car - Part 1

by Vance Havner

God's people and work must be done by God's people and God's way, not by borrowing from the world or trying to do things our own way.

Duration: 31:16

Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:1-2, Ezekiel 37:1-14, Matthew 5:13-16, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 23:27, Acts 2:42-47

Topics: "David"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of David and the Ark of the Covenant. He emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility in carrying out the Lord's work, contrasting it with the impersonal nature of relying on machines and technology. The speaker also criticizes the church for borrowing ideas and techniques from the world instead of seeking guidance from God. He highlights the significance of the local church and encourages listeners to focus on their own spiritual growth and involvement in their communities.

Transcript

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They also provide stimulating material for group interaction. Permission to broadcast or to copy this tape in any form must be secured in writing from CBC Media Ministries. Let me take a moment just to say, and I can't say really how much this week's meant to me, this renewing of fellowship with so many old friends and the making of new friends.

I've been coming here quite a while myself, as you know. I was just thinking of a time years and years ago when at our last meal, the black cook, dear Lena, came in to sing for us. And Savior, Just a Closer Walk With Thee was her song.

And something unusual happened that happened the whole week, and I haven't heard of it happening since around here. I looked around, and people were trying to get a hold of their handkerchiefs. Didn't make a very difference whether they were Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Alliance.

Seemed like it affected all of us alike. And Lena just melted down that crowd. Got us down to our right size, and that's worth a lot, you know, these days.

She transcended all denominational lines. Got us around to the general common denominator of the whole crowd. And isn't that what it's all about anyhow, Just a Closer Walk With Thee? Isn't that what we've been meeting here every day to think about, talk about, pray about? Some of you have given testimony that you have renewed that closer fellowship with the Lord.

The other night we had a demonstration of that that everybody could see and feel. And so I rejoice in it. And I'm so glad that our brother McQuillan stressed the importance of the church, the local church.

Sometimes that doesn't get proper attention in this matter. Whatever happens, it's going to show up in the church, the local church, and the local Christian. The church is just Christians, after all, just people.

And I am greatly interested in that because most of my work is in local churches. I don't stand on the outside and criticize them. I stand on the inside and exhort, reprove, and try to help them.

Anybody can grumble about some things in some churches. But I try not to engage in that. And then some folks never can find one good enough.

Like the fellow that already belonged to four different denominations, getting ready to join another one. The preacher he had, Pastor Pro Tam, because any pastor he had was Pro Tam, said, This is going to be my fifth denomination. The preacher says, Well, it never does any harm to change labels on an empty bottle.

Beginning in September, the Lord willing, I will be having ten church revivals before the first of December, if I can manage to keep navigating that long. I need your prayers. Now, I'm not trying to be anxious and say the right thing, but just merely that.

But pray for me. I need a lot of praying. I'm not as young as I used to be.

I never have been nearly 79 before, and I don't know how to do it because I've never been there before. And that takes a lot of wisdom that cometh down from above. So, we thank God for the place that the church occupies.

And I want to talk to you about David's new cart. And we read from 2 Samuel, the 6th chapter. Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000.

And David arose and went with all the people who were with him, from Baal, of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was in Gibeah. And Uzzah and Ahiah, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God. And Ahiah went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments, made of firwood, even on harps and psalters and timbrels and cornets and cymbals.

When they came to Nacon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it. For the oxen shook it, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah. And God smote him there for his error, and there he died by the ark of God.

And David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach for Muzzah. He called the name of the place Pirazuzza to this day. That's as far as we'll go for the moment in the reading.

David decided to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The Philistines had captured it during the last sad days of Eli. And it had caused so much trouble that they got rid of it, put it on a cart, and returned it.

And for a while it stayed in the house of Abinadab. David undertook to bring it to Jerusalem. His motive was good, but his method was wrong.

His intentions were good, but his implementation was wrong. God had ordered that the ark was to be carried only on the shoulders of the Levites. David loaded it on a new cart, drawn by oxen.

Now, he got his idea, no doubt, from the Philistines. And the new cart was an expedient borrowed from the enemies of Israel. And on the way, you know this simple story, the oxen stumbled and those who tried to steady it died.

Some people don't think the punishment fits the crime here, and they worry about us and why. This strange tragedy has some serious lessons for us today. The church is carrying the ark on a new cart these times.

Just as David borrowed the idea from the Philistines, the church today has borrowed from the world many of the vehicles of her ministry. We study the techniques of this age, the gadgetry of the business world, the social world, and the entertainment world, looking for new carts on which to carry the ark of our testimony. We hold a wet finger up to the air to ascertain which way the popular wind is blowing and set the sails to catch the breeze.

And instead of asking how does God do it, we're trying to get ideas from how does the world do it. And we have become religious copycats, mimicking the mannequins of this punch-in-Judy show that somebody misnamed progress. But our worship is streamlined, our preaching slanted, the tickle the ears of a generation that cannot endure sound doctrine.

Now, when Uzzah tried to study the ark, his intention was good, but the whole procedure was wrong to start with. Today the ark is rocking and Uzzah is worried and brethren are bothered about the unsteadiness of our doctrine and our wavering churches and the unstable swaying of modern Christianity, since their efforts are being made to stabilize the situation. But it'll end only as Uzzah did in tragedy, for we've started out wrong.

And we must give up our new carts and get God's work on the shoulders of separated and dedicated people. Now, what was the sin of Uzzah? Well, don't forget that he was the son of Abinadab. And all his life he had seen the ark in his home.

It had become a familiar piece of furniture. The ark had become just a box. He had lost regard for the sacredness of it as a symbol of God's presence among his people.

Old Matthew Henry said perhaps he affected to show before this great assembly how bold he could make with the ark, having been so long acquainted with it. Familiarity even with that which is most awful is apt to breed contempt. Uzzah was a Levite, but he wasn't a priest.

And only priests could touch the ark numbers 415, and then only under certain circumstances. Now, we today are in a very real sense Levites, but not priests. And it's a sad day when the ark becomes a box, when we become so familiar with scripture and worship and the ordinances that we lose our reverence.

Alexander McLaren said we have a lost sense of awe. Nothing is more delicate than a sense of awe. Trifle with it ever so little, and it speedily disappears.

There's far too little of it in our modern religion. Watch the Sunday morning congregation, the average church congregation. You don't see much awe out there.

What you see is awful, but not awe. And you hear a lot about relevance, but not much about reverence. You can take God's name in vain in church on Sunday morning.

That's a common thing, though we might be startled to think about it, a coarse and casual familiarity with the things of God. I heard of some travelers down in South Africa back when diamonds were plentiful chanced upon some young fellows who seemed to be playing marbles. And they drew near, and they were playing marbles with diamonds.

Today we're doing something like that, handling carelessly the coinage of the word of God without stopping to examine to see whose image and superscription may be thereupon. In Vienna they have Beethoven's piano. And some tourists were going through one time, and one young girl, a teenager in the crowd, sat down and played some rock and roll on it.

And the caretaker was visibly bothered. And after he was through, he said, Paderewski came through here some years ago. And she said, What did he play? He said nothing.

He had too much respect for Beethoven's piano. I'm sure that that poor little thing must have gone out red-faced after that. A cheap familiarity with the things of God.

It's only by the long-suffering of God that more corpses don't lie around today like others before they are. Beware of the art becoming a box. There's no greater hindrance, it has been said, to true spirituality than a superficial acquaintance with the language of Christianity from childhood.

Now, I think I know a little something about that. I grew up in a home that was really built on faith in God and in his word. And we didn't have many books, but I started out on the Bible and Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Pilgrim's Progress.

That's pretty good fare. I started trying to write little pieces about Bible characters. At twelve years of age, I stood up in the old church and asked to be licensed to preach.

And I had built up some little acquaintance with some of the facts and figures in the book. But there came a time later on when I had to back myself into a corner and say, Hey you, is this real? Or is this a language you have learned to recite like a pirate? And I became greatly exercised about that and considerably troubled about it. We can become so accustomed to being Christians and to being preachers even that we place unholy hands on sacred things.

Now, our intentions may be good, so are others. But Matthew Henry says again, It will not suffice to say of that which is ill done that it was well meant. That won't excuse it.

The problem was not that the oxen stumbled and the cart shook and the ark lurched. There shouldn't have been any oxen. There shouldn't have been any cart to begin with.

And no matter how many Uzzahs tried to steady the ark, were working on their own problem, not going to help matters and speed things along by making better carts and hiring more trained Uzzahs. There are new ways of raising church money, new ways to interest the young people, new ways to increase church attendance, and new styles in church music. And never have there been so many new carts running all over the place.

But never has the ark wobbled like it's wobbling now. There's plenty of fanfaring music, and some of it's lamentable, and some of it's certainly not God's idea. I read here in 1 Chronicles 13.4 that this idea was right in the eyes of all the people.

David had the crowd with him, but he didn't have God with him on this. It's possible to put on quite a religious parade and put on a performance instead of having an experience, a form of godliness without the power thereof. A. W. Tozer, who was a prophet undeniably, said, Evangelical Christianity is now tragically below the New Testament standard.

Worldliness is accepted as part of our way of life. Our religious mood is social instead of spiritual. We've lost the art of worship.

We're not producing saints. Our models are successful businessmen, celebrated athletes, and theatrical personalities. We carry on our religious activities after the methods of the modern advertiser.

Our homes are turned into theaters. Our literature is shallow. Our hymn of the day borders on sacrilege, and scarcely anyone appears to care.

There's no mistaking what he was driving at with language like that. It's David's cart all over again. And then there's another angle to this episode.

There was something personal about carrying the ark on the shoulders of the Levites, but shifting it to a cart lessened the sense of personal responsibility. Today the Lord's work has become impersonal. We let a machine do a lot of it.

Putting our shoulders to the wheel is not the same thing as putting our shoulders under the ark. And too much of our Christian giving has become like feeding nickels in a slot machine in many a church. So much for foreign missions, so much for home missions, so much for this, that, and the other thing.

And we have lost the importance of giving self first before service and substance. A lot of fancy carts, and they may take a load off of some shoulders, but you cannot transfer personal responsibility. It may seem more sophisticated to have a new cart.

Maybe you can travel quicker, but it actually took them longer to get where they were going this way than if they'd carried it right from the beginning. So it's a tragic situation, and I view it. I move from church to church to church.

I'm in local churches all the time, and I know a lot about the headaches and the heartaches and these faithful preachers and the things they have to go through. Oh, there ought to be a special reward in heaven for the ridiculous things that some pastors are expected to do by some church members. What's

wearing preachers out is not the real work of the Lord, but doing a lot of things some folks think they ought to do that God never asked them to do to begin with.

And they wear themselves to a frazzle. They can saddle off some of the oddest jobs on a preacher. You know, he's the one that has to take the blame.

I heard of one some time ago. There was an old boy in that church who, well, he just wasn't all there. And he couldn't sing, but he wanted to sing in the choir.

Now, what are you going to do with a case like that? And they argued it among themselves. Sure enough, saddled it off on the preacher. Now you go and talk to him about it.

And he just loves things like that, you know. So he said, I'm sorry, but we're going to have to ask you not to sing any more in the choir. How come, he said.

Well, you really can't sing. How's that so? Well, he said, I've heard several people say so. How many said so? Well, he said, I've heard seven or eight.

He said, that ain't nothing. I've heard 50 say you can't preach. So preachers get in a terrible fix and are required to do all kinds of perfectly ridiculous things.

I work with these dear men. I love these preachers, and I love the preachers of these little churches who sometimes get low and they say, I don't understand it. I pray just as much as so and so, and I've been through the same schools.

And I love the Lord, but somehow we can't get rolling, and I don't know. And it seems like I've had more problems with some of the children than so and so that has let theirs run far freer than I have mine. And so it all adds up to how come.

And they know that I'm there one day and gone the next, and they can tell me a lot of their troubles. And I appreciate that, but these preachers, big or little, demand a lot of prayer the day they need it. And one of these days at that great date is going to be a big shake-up and a big shake-down about preachers.

And some of the big ones are going to dwindle and get reduced in size considerably, and some of the little ones are going to become quite gigantic as in the sight of God. You see servants on horses and princes walking as servants on the earth. That's a great text.

Some folks never read it much because it's in Ecclesiastes, but you ought to make a great big red ring around it. A lot of folks that are princes in God's sight are afoot. And some who are the other way are riding on horses.

You know what it means. And that runs through all the systems of society, and God isn't much impressed about it after all. So I try to call a convocation wherever I go and preach for old-fashioned revival and try to get God's people to realize one thing, and this is the heart of the message tonight.

God's people, God's work must be done by God's people, God's way. God will accept nothing else, whatever. Now, sanctify yourselves that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord.

The Church of Jesus Christ is not an old Adam improvement society, and people who have never died to sin and risen to walk in newness of life are walking down church aisles rededicating themselves, and they

could do it a thousand times. God cannot use the old Adam no matter how many times he rededicates himself. There are some verses that ought to be hung up in every Sunday school room of every church.

They that are in the flesh cannot please God. No flesh can glory in his presence. They that are born in the Spirit cannot perfect themselves in the flesh.

In Exodus 30, the anointing oil for the priests had three restrictions. Upon man's flesh it should not be poured. You are not to compound anything like it, no imitations, no substitutes, and don't put any of it on a stranger.

The holy unction from above is not produced in any of the apothecaries of this world. Trying to make old Adam into a deacon or a Sunday school teacher or a preacher is an abomination unto the Lord. You can't do it, it just can't be done.

David finally came to his senses, and in 1 Chronicles 15 he recognized that the ark should have been carried only by the Levites, as Deuteronomy 10, 8 and 31 said. Today we need to learn that lesson in the church. In Acts 7, men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom were chosen for serious responsibilities in the church.

Just because a lawyer talks all week does not necessarily qualify him to teach the Bible class unless he's been filled with the Holy Spirit. It's all right to talk all week, but that won't do it. And just because a banker handles money all week does not of itself qualify him to be the church treasurer.

And just because some lady has got a diploma from a music conservatory and can sing so high that Lily Ponds couldn't have sung bass to it does not qualify her for singing to the glory of God unless she's been filled with the Holy Spirit. You just can't run a church like a department store. It would be comical if it weren't so tragic the way we plunge in all directions today trying to popularize the gospel.

The Ichabod Memorial Church calls in a folk musical. And the church at Ephesus has a TV celebrity. And Pergamos has somebody who can play a fiddle and beat drums and play a harmonica all at the same time.

And the church at Sardis, not to be outdone, says we're going to have Aunt Dinah's quilting party. Everybody dressed like you did a hundred years ago and we'll all see Nellie Holm. And so here they come.

And over at Laodicea they have a talking horse. You've heard me tell in times past about when they had train, how many commandments and he stomped ten times, how many apostles stamped twelve, and some smart aleck in the crowd said, how many hypocrites in this church and he went into a dance on all fours. And they say we need a new lingo in the church today.

Used to be a problem, now it's a hang-up. Used to be a blessing and now it's a meaningful experience, whatever that is. Used to be a lot of things that it isn't anymore.

We must be relevant and communicate with the now and steady the spectrum and find fulfillment and involvement and get down to the nitty-gritty. I've always wondered what is the nitty-gritty. And we've got new names for it.

It doesn't help. They used to call it itch and now they call it allergy, but you scratch just the same. New names won't do it.

That isn't going to help the situation. Every time the world comes along with something new, here comes a church trotting along after trying to get some ideas. We think we have to have something new all the time.

We need something so old it would be new if anybody tried it in the church of the living God today. I'm glad I represent some things that are mighty old. Why, the sun is old, but no substitute has been found.

Air is old, no substitute. Water is old-fashioned, no substitute. And Jesus spoke of things you have to have, bread and water and salt and life, the common necessities of life.

He used them as figures. And you've read about Ezekiel's vision of the bones, the valley of dry bones, bones, body and breath. I make a good outline for any sermon.

Every sermon ought to have bones, body and breath. It ought to have an outline. It ought to have body to it, but unless the breath of God blows across it, you still don't have a message.

And every church ought to have the bones of organization. That has its place. I have body of membership, but unless the breath of God blows across it, you don't have anything after all.

Sardis had an aim to be alive. Don't ever get that church wrong. They had an aim to be a live, wired church.

And Jesus said, I've got another name for you. Now, morticians can dress up a corpse till it looks better than it ever looked while they were living. And you can do that sometimes with the church, but you can't fool God.

Daniel Webster said, and I can change one word in it and take it out of what he was talking about and make it read this way, you may look on a church and see all the external appearance of Christianity and yet find nothing of its essence, just as you may contemplate an embalmed body where art has preserved proportion and form amid nerves without action and veins without blood. God does not anoint corpses, no matter how well some theological mortician may have embalmed them. We are ministers, we are not mummies, and the pulpit is no place for a king Turk.

So musicians were added here. David added some new music, and the church has fallen into something of the same trap. Let the world sing its own songs.

We have a better song to sing. The gospel singing ought to start from the heart. There's a place for art indeed, but making melody in your hearts unto the Lord.

Today they say we're stupid if we're not acquainted with the top 40. I'd hate to hear the bottom 40 today. Finally everything was in order and David started again.

It was a time of great rejoicing. It always is when God's people get right. But there was one person who didn't enjoy this event, and it was David's wife, Michael.

She had bad blood in her veins. She despised him, met him with satire and scorn, and suffered the shame of barrenness for the rest of her life. I want to ask you tonight as you go back to your churches and you say you've had a blessing up here.

Now you're going back, I hope, to a local church because you work in a local church and that's the way it ought to be. And if you go back to it, go back in a true spirit, I pray, not as a super saint. You don't have to

wear a great big button that says I'm a Christian, carry a Bible as big as a Sears and Roebuck catalog in order to impress anybody.

If you've got it, the word will get around. This concludes side one. Please turn the tape over at this point and continue listening on side two.

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