

Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Mark 6:14-29;
Year B

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WHEN TO DANCE
[written in oral form]

Both of today's stories have dancing in them. Even so, the dancing is not the same in each. Moreover, there is much more to these two stories, than just dancing, but the dancing does play a key part.

Both narratives....feature a King..... and each behaved very differently in their situations. The passages show how two dissimilar Kings demonstrate their feelings and power.

One is excited **by** dancing, and the other **dances** because he is exuberantly excited.

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Dancing:

Some Christian cultures have kicked dancing out of the church realm, which makes the secular domain the keepers of dancing.

Other cultures have incorporated dance into their rituals, such as the Aboriginals, the Jews, and so forth. We Mennonites, like numerous other Christian groups, have a long history of being a bit uncomfortable with dancing.

I know when I was growing up,... my mother stressed that dancing was one of those Heathen, hedonistic taboos that good Christians were *supposed* to avoid. That message proved to be counterproductive.

I remember the first time I slow danced. I thought, "Wow, this is wonderful, and if this is bad,.....thenwell.... I want more bad."

We need to be careful what we forbid. Maybe embracing with education is wiser?

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Of course, in those days, art dancing was fine, if done by a trained dancer.

For the rest of us good church folks, if we heard a moving song, we could tap **only one** Foot,..... but moving two feet to the beat..... well... that was too close to dancing..... and never, NEVER..... move the body with the music..... Because that was surely dancing.

*I suppose those were the rules??*

And if dancing is a sin, ..... then all young children are in big trouble.

Isn't it fascinating.... how innocent children.... just naturally dance to music or when they are excited??

*It happens as a natural expression.*

Or course..... we adult Mennonites Never do that ..... Right?

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Okay, let's be honest: How many have gone out dancing? or

How many have danced when you are all alone in the privacy of your own home and listening to music?

How many have had a Tom Cruise moment??? [Risky Business]

[raise your hand if you have]

How many have danced with their spouse??..... in your home...or. away someplace???

Okay,..... how many..... No matter what..... have never danced????

I remember, long ago, my brother took advantage of a promotional offer,something like..... get 5 dancing lessons for the price of one.

After the third lesson, they told him not to bother, and gave him his money back.....saying he didn't have any rhythm. ummm?

Anybody can dance.

Final question:

How many, no matter what,.... will never raise your hand to a question in church ? That was a trick question, sorry.

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I do think all us have a sense of rhythm, to some degree. I don't believe there is a so called "Mennonite gene" that causes clumsy, wooden legs.

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At the end of this service, during the third singing, all of you will be invited to dance out of the sanctuary.

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In the past, we made rules / had expectations that seemed to make sense, back then. Well, we don't live in the past, and....

I don't think my mother would have minded,.... Since we'll do this to a religious song and we're in church.

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Even so, it should be noted that there are many different types of dancing.....

And, mind you, SOME.....make me rather uncomfortable.

Still, what is more important is to take into account the reason.... the motivation.... the purpose for dancing.

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Herod, in the Mark narrative, threw a party for his own birthday,.... and had his wife's daughter dance for him. .... it was dance that enticed and captivated Herod.

This whole scene has a weird and creepy feel to it.

I picture Herod as a large, sleazy, man with gold chains dripping from him, and wearing a robe made of polyester. His cronies would have sat near him, and laughed at everything he said. They had better ....because, Herod could be vicious and unscrupulous.

At that same time this party was going on, John the Baptist was sitting in a cold cell because he didn't placate Herod. John had publically pointed out that Herod's marriage to Herodias was immoral. Herod admired John's boldness and wisdom, yet nonetheless, put him away to keep him quiet.

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Here was Herod, at his party for himself, seeking to have others revere him, and express feelings that he dare not show himself.

I suspect, that he clapped his hands and called for his wife's daughter to come out and dance for him. He sought entertainment/ seduction, and not expression.

Again, this has a weird, incestuous feel to it.

He was thrilled by her performance, and that prompted him to make a brash and showy promise,..... for reward AND for arrogance sake.

It was an ill-thought promise that lead to the death of John the Baptist.

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Yes, there was dancing in this story,.. BUT HEROD DID NOT DANCE, ..... INSTEAD,.... what he did was to STEAL A DANCE.

He was using / abusing dance.

Herod **wasn't** expressing what was within! He was consuming!

He didn't seek to move, He sought to be moved!

He didn't desire to move, He sought to be moved!

And, that is abusing dance.

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In contrast, we have the story of King David in 2nd Samuel.

David had recently become King of both Judah and Israel, and had chosen Jerusalem as the capital of his Kingdom.

The narrative begins with David overseeing the transportation of the Ark of God..... to Jerusalem.

The Ark of God represented the convergence point of God on earth. It was believed that where the Ark was.... God was surely there, too.

It was a very powerful symbol, and more.....

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David's passion to move the Ark to Jerusalem revealed that he wanted This new united Monarchy to be a Nation under God, with God and for God.

And, this also meant that he was not claiming all the power and glory for himself.

This was an act of submission, a bold move for a King. He was, in essence giving up power..... and glorifying God.

In addition, it was an act of thanksgiving... David's dreams were coming true, and he was excited about it. **VERY EXCITED!**

So much so, that he couldn't contain himself, and neither could those who were helping in the move –

**They danced..... they all danced!**

They made music and danced!

What an expression of Joy and thankfulness!

They were so thrilled that.... after they took only 6 steps, they paused to give thanks to God.....and then they continued to dance.

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Do we ever get that excited about God and what God has done for us?

Do we dance when prayers are answered?
 Would we dance in the streets if all of the streets were free of construction?
 Would we dance with joy if ALL the governments of the world said, "NO more war?"
 Would we dance in the streets? Would we dance in the church?

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 The Bible states that, "David danced before the Lord with all his might!"

Life was good.

He was really into it. He just totally let himself go,... and danced with everything he had..... With abandonment he danced.

So much so, that he must have forgotten what he was wearing.

The scripture called it ephod..... It is like an apron, and aprons are NOT real secure.

It is fascinating to observe that some people become rather uncomfortable when they witness demonstrative exuberance! Instead of joining in, they get angry and find reasons for rejection.

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 For example: verse 16, tells us that as the Ark of the Lord came into the city, David's estranged wife was watching from the window, and she observed her husband, the King, "leaping and dancing." I'm not sure what her issues were, but the text relates that after witnessing David dancing in streets, she "despised him in her heart."

Whatever her reason, she was not very pleased with David dancing.

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 David was not acting very dignified, nor was he being very modest, either. He certainly was Not acting like a traditional Mennonite.... or...a King. After all, he was the leader of a great nation,... and his behaviour was pretty radical. ....Maybe too honest and authentic?

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*Can you imagine our nation's leader acting that way--out in the street, publically dancing with joy...
 Oh never mind, erase that image..... Bad example..... anyway, you get the point.*

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 I suppose David should have shown a little more discretion, but he was... just **so jubilant**..... he forgot that he was a King.!

But, this isn't the end of the story!

To show the authenticity of his expressive joy / his jubilant RESPONSE TO GOD – after the Ark was set in its place, David again paused and gave thanks to God, AND....

he Blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, AND....then. He DISTRIBUTED.... FOOD... To ALL the people.

When a response from God is exciting thankfulness, it tends to prompt giving / generosity-- Social justice!

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 David danced with all his might, and it was NOT a selfish dance.....
 He was Not seeking to receive as Herod was.

David's dance was a joyous outpouring,.. a demonstration, a response that Gives..... And it was confirmed by His Thanks to God..... and his generous Benevolence.

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 If it is okay for David to dance,..... then I think it must be okay for all of us to dance, ... especially as a response,.. as a celebration.

And, we have much to celebrate ! God is Good, and God dwells with us.

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 We no longer have the visual presentation of the Ark, but we do have the awareness that God is here,... and connects with us at our deepest level.

And, ...I truly believe that music weaves with the divine; both can move our souls.

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 Moreover, know that there are many ways to dance..... it doesn't have to be "swing" dancing, lindy hop or the two step.

Dancing is more than that. Dancing is an honest response, a demonstration of joy, and.....it is a way of openly responding to God in our life.

There are many ways of dancing

Dancing is being outwardly excited and authentic!  
 It is a way of living. It is moving to a rejoicing cadence.

It is okay to be excited – outwardly excited?

You've often heard that it is okay to cry and show sorrow, WELL ... then it is also okay to show jubilation,..... AND WE DO HAVE A LOT TO CELEBRATE.

Let's celebrate the obvious: births and birthdays, anniversaries.... and any joyful benchmark in life, but let's also get excited about the other many blessings we have.

\* Rejoice that you are married or were married ... Or you can rejoice that you are not!

\* Rejoice for the innocence and wonder in children.

\*Rejoice in the reality that love prevails and goodness / justice will overcome evil.

Rejoice in the summer weather.

Rejoice that you have food to eat and money to share.

Rejoice in the fact that you are able to be here today.

Rejoice that there is much more to your life..... Or that you have so many fine memories Or... both.

Rejoice that we have music that moves our feet so we can show our excitement for life and all our blessings.

Rejoice that God is patient, gracious and wants to bless us.

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The list could go on and on.... because there is much to be thankful for and get excited about,if we look AND allow ourselves to see and respond.

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I'll close by clarifying the Obvious: the two stories were not really about dancing, but about a way of living.

Herod was a thief; he sought to receive, to consume to satisfy himself, and the end result was destruction!

And, Herod's way, **even on a dance floor, IS NOT DANCING!**

It was greed and lust.....all based on fear and insecurity.

\*Beware when lust is the motivation.

On the other hand, perhaps we can learn from King David's demonstration ...by Sensing and responding to the presence of God.

God IS HERE WITH US, NOW!!

AND perhaps, We could learn to Live with a little less inhibition, to Live as a Dance – Responding / keeping step to the Rhythm of life that reverberates in our soul..... – that reminds us that God is ever present!

Real living radiates in honest demonstrative responses, be it crying or dancing for joy.  
God is a real God,... and salvation makes us real!

And it's okay to respond, as David did, "with all you might.