

Sermon for Christ Church, Spotsylvania, VA  
Proper 10, Year B, July 15, 2018  
The Rev. Bill Queen, "Show Your Joy"  
2nd Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Ephesians 1:3-14

what is the earliest thing you can remember about going to church? for me, when I was very young, I most remember being told "Shhh!," to be quiet and sit still in church; which was hard to do, because I couldn't see over the pew, I couldn't read, so I couldn't follow anything in the bulletin or the prayer book or the Hymnal, and not much that was spoken by the preacher and other adults made much sense to me; it wasn't much fun and I don't remember taking much away from it; all of that being told to be quiet, sit still, and pay attention made church feel like a school classroom, or a library, or a museum; but church isn't really like any of those other places; church isn't meant to be like a classroom, or a library, or a museum

church is about getting together with other people and doing worship; and when I say "doing" worship, I mean to emphasize that worship is something we are all doing together; it is most definitely not something that I and the other worship leaders are doing while the rest of you sit and watch; all worship is meant to be participatory; and we can't really do our part in worship if we sit too still or stay too quiet; that's partly why we have what some people like to call "Episcopal aerobics," the changing opportunities to stand, to sit, to kneel, and to come forward as the different parts of our worship invite our participation in different kinds of ways, keeping us focused and engaged; we get up and sing; we state our shared beliefs out loud in the Creed; we speak our shared and our personal prayers; we pass the peace with each other; we invite each others' participation in ministries and activities during the announcements; we reach into our purses and wallets and place our money into the offering plates; we say the great "AMEN" (all four letters capitalized) at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer (yes, that is meant to be like email or text message shouting - that's why it's all in caps); and we get up and go to the altar to receive communion; so there's a lot more to church than just sitting quietly; and it's not only important what we do in worship; it's also important how we do our worship

our first Bible reading today tells us something about what worship was like in ancient Israel, in the time of King David; they hadn't yet built the Temple in Jerusalem; what they had was the Ark, which was like a treasure chest, a wooden box, covered in gold, with sculptures of two angels on top of it; 2nd Samuel tells us that when they moved the Ark of the Covenant David leaped and danced in front of it, and all the people sang, played music, shouted, and blew trumpets; why did they do this?; they did all of this out of sheer joy for what God had done for them; they'd been saved from their enemies; they had survived droughts and famines; God had given them the Torah, instructions on how to live; they knew God was powerfully present with them, so they wanted to show how joyful they were; and the Ark was the focal point of their communication to and from God, the focal point of their relationship with God, and so it was the focal point of their joy

our second Bible reading today tells us something about what worship was like in the days of the early church; Paul does not use the word "joy" in this particular passage as he addresses the Ephesians, but he uses it over twenty times throughout the rest of his epistles; notice that there is joy behind all of these phrases he is using in this letter/sermon of encouragement to them and to us; he talks of "spiritual blessing," "the good pleasure of [Christ's] will," "the praise of [Christ's] glorious grace," "the riches of [Christ's] grace that he has lavished on us," "our hope on Christ [that we] might live to the praise of his glory," "the pledge of our inheritance ... as God's own people," and "the praise of [God's] glory;" you can feel in these phrases the joy that is driving Paul, and the joy he wants to stir up in his fellow believers

what is joy? joy is something stronger than happiness; joy is when you are overwhelmed with all of the good things God has done for you; joy is when you feel so good about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit that you can't keep quiet; joy is when you feel so good about God that you can't help but show it; joy is when you feel so good about God that you can't help but talk about God; do you ever feel like this? when? what is it that most puts you into a joyful recognition of God's power, and presence, and love? I feel joyful when I see how God has answered my prayers; I feel joyful when I see how God is working through me and through other people in this parish and in the larger church; I feel joyful when I see how beautiful God has made the natural world around us

sometimes we might forget to be joyful in church; we might be tired from the day before; we might be distracted by something we're looking forward to later in the day; maybe we haven't taken the time to remember what God really has done for us; so what might help us to remember to show our joy in worship and to carry that joy out into the world?

maybe you recall the simple song that goes "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands" - let's sing it now; "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands (2X), if you're happy and you know it then your life should surely show it, if you're happy and you know it clap your hands;" [don't know the song? you can listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5015skRvqs8> ]; but remember we've been talking about joy, which is more than happiness, so what if we changed the words to "if you're joyful and you know it ... then your life should surely show it?" if you're joyful and you know it, let your words and actions show it in every way, every day

I hope this slightly altered song might stick with us and help us remember that showing our joy is not just something to do in church: we can share a smile, or lend a hand, or just remind someone that God is responsible for our lives, our health, our food, and so much more, wherever we are; my prayer is that each of us, and Christ Church as a whole, becomes more and more joyful, in our worship, in the ways we spread our joy out into the surrounding community, and in the way we lead our lives, no matter what activity we happen to be doing; be joyful in ways that other people see how joyful you are, and make sure that people know why you are joyful: because of God; spread that joy far and wide