

Sunday 14th March 2021

2 Samuel 6: Stephen Walker Williams

<https://youtu.be/OsluxvhyPS8?si=BT16OPC9Ae--kdHz>

How Big is Our God? (6) : Uncontainable: A big response to our Big God

In every society around the world, and throughout history, there is evidence of human beings being worshipers. Whether it is in a religious service, ritual, ceremony, music concerts, sports fixture, or the faithful following of a team, individual, or god—it is clear that human beings are worshipers.

We are designed to worship. It is inherent in who we are. Homo sapiens are also *homo adorans*—we are humans who worship.

Whether we worship or not isn't the variable. Who and how we worship is.

Today, as we bring our series *How Big Is Your God?* to a close, we'll be picking up this theme of worship and exploring how we are to worship our great, big God. The title of today's message is *Uncontainable: A Big Response to Our Big God*, and we'll be exploring some of 2 Samuel, chapter 6.

Before we do that, let us pray.

Prayer

Father God of all creation,

Thank you for giving us the Bible—your inspired word to us.

Thank you that we can read it, dwell on it, explore it and explain it, learn from it, and be challenged and encouraged by it.

As we have sung: open our eyes, open our hearts.

Enable us to see, hear, know, and respond to the greatness of who you are as we read from the Bible now.

Uncontainable God. Mighty God. Loving God. Faithful and holy Father.

Enable us to humbly and appropriately respond to you as worshipers today.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

We started this series looking at Psalm 8—a psalm of King David, a song that expressed the greatness and majesty of God. And today we look at this same God, and the same period of time, as David, king of Israel, takes the Ark of God into Jerusalem.

Let's start reading from 2 Samuel. So it's in the Old Testament—it's before the book of Psalms and before the books of Chronicles. I'll just give you a few moments to find it if you're using a paper version. The words will be on the screen so you can follow as well. We're in 2 Samuel chapter 6, starting from verse 12.

Now King David was told, “The Lord had blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the Ark of God.”

So David went to bring up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.

Before we carry on with the rest of the reading, let me just add a little context so we understand what is taking place—and why it's taking place in that way.

The Ark is the symbol of God's presence being with Israel. It contained the Ten Commandments—the first three of which Dave, over the last three weeks, has so helpfully unpacked for us. It had been in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite (that is, from the city of Gath) for three months, after David had attempted to move it from the house of Abinadab in order to bring it to Jerusalem.

Now that first attempt, which we can read about in verses 1 to 11 of 2 Samuel 6, really had not gone well for David—and it really didn't go well for one of the men helping to transport the Ark: a man called Uzzah. As a result of David assuming that he knew what God wanted—and his failure to humbly and openly ask God what He wanted him to do, when He wanted him to do it, and how—there were serious, life-limiting consequences.

As there always are, when we adopt too small a view of God and too big a view of ourselves.

In those preceding verses, we see that David is angry—not at God, but at himself—and humbled, with appropriate fear, at the awesome power and holiness of Almighty God.

We read in the 1 Chronicles 15 account of the same narrative that before the second attempt (which we now read in verse 12 of 2 Samuel 6), David takes time humbly listening to God, seeking His ways—thinking God's way, God's purposes, and God's methods, for *God's* glory—rather than simply thinking that he could do it alone.

So, prior to this procession of worship, taking the Ark into Jerusalem, David has rediscovered the *awesomeness* of God.

As we consider *Uncontainable God: A Big Response to Our Big God*, my prayer is that each of us will have a fresh recognition of who it is we are worshiping—having a bigger view of God: His awesome power, His perfect holiness, His extravagant love, His amazing blessing, His faithfulness, His wisdom. A big view of God, with an appropriately humbled view of ourselves—seeking after Him and His glory.

Let's carry on reading:

When those who were carrying the Ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he (that is, David) sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.

Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the Ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

As the Ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal, daughter of Saul (and the wife, actually, of David), watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

They brought the Ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord.

After he had finished sacrificing the offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty. Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites—both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

Once David's view of God is changed—once he has an *uncontainable* view of God—his worship response becomes uncontained itself. He dons a linen ephod—or, more accurately, removes his other clothes—and leads the procession of the people of Israel with dancing, in worship of God.

Now this is not a performance dance—a rehearsed dance—but a *devoted worship dance* to God. He leads the nation in an appropriately sacrificial and exuberant worshipful response to Almighty God. Not for their eyes, not for their audience, but for God's pleasure—which we see him explain in verse 21 to his wife later on.

There was music, and shouting, and dancing, and leaping, and sacrifices, and baking, and blessing, and eating—all involved in the worship of God that day. This was an expression of what I want to call *technicolor worship*—a phrase God has been speaking to me about over the past year.

Technicolor worship—not one single method of worship, but an unlimited creative range of worship—that our unlimited, creative God both desires and deserves.

Already we can see, in verse 5, in that first attempt at bringing the Ark up to Jerusalem, that there's a range of instruments accessible for use in worship. Yet the worship that day, as they bring the Ark to Jerusalem, went beyond music. Movement was involved. Dancing was involved. Sacrifice was involved. Baking, eating, blessing others—all were involved.

Technicolor worship broadens our understanding of how we can respond to our awesome, holy, majestic, powerful, extravagantly loving God. It's not about limiting how we worship God to one method—often singing and musical instruments—though God loves that (and so do we!).

What I'm saying is: if we have a more monochromatic understanding of worship—if we think of worship as just one single dominant method—we may struggle not to have a similarly monochromatic and limited view of God, of encountering Him, and of expressing ourselves to Him.

If we have a single channel of worship, we may end up with a single view of God—of how He works, what He wants, or how we're meant to reach our community.

On the 1st of June last year, my wife Nikki was at the first night of a group set up by Yinka Oyekan, President of the Baptist Union. That night, God gave two significant words about our church at Gold Hill.

One was a direct vision to Nikki. Simultaneously, while she was praying, a picture was given to Yinka in prayer, which he then explained.

As Nikki asked God what He wanted for our church, she had a sudden vision of a tidal wave bursting out of our current building—like a torrent washing down the Common and High Streets, over the buildings and roads. As the vision happened, God spoke: that He wanted a

tidal wave of creativity to wash over our community with His truth and love, mercy and grace—to every age, to every person. “Be bold. Do not be afraid.” The instructions were:

“Bring out the dancers.
Bring out the potters and sculptors.
Bring out the artists.
Bring out the worshippers.”

After Nikki shared what God had shown her, Yinka followed with what he had seen during that same prayer time. He saw an afternoon tea set, full of colour—bright ceramic teapots. The cake stand was, in his words, *“absolutely full of so much richness and colour and choice that you could really gorge on it and eat too much.”*

Yinka felt God say that we’re to gather the creatives together. That the church will be filled with laughter, healing, and hope as we do so. And the hallmark will be **freedom**, flowing out into the community.

It was around the same period that God was also speaking to me privately about technicolor worship—and about releasing it in our church. A broader view of worship to a big God.

God is big. He is creative. He is uncontainable.
And He deserves big, creative, uncontainable—technicolor—worship.

We see in this passage that David *got that*. He understood it. He was prepared to be vulnerable in every way to worship God with all that he had. His love and devotion were literally made visible to all. He made God bigger, and himself lower.

As we grow a bigger view of God, we grow a bigger view of worship—and of the kind of worship that God desires and deserves.

Let me be clear: I am not in any way undermining sung or musical worship. Anyone who knows me knows how much I value and love to sing and worship God through music. I love it—and so does God.

Do not be under any assumption that this is a diminishing of that. Rather, it’s a call to more. To something even richer, even broader—just as God sets the template for in the Bible.

Everything that we have can be expressed and given back to God in a way that honours Him and declares His greatness.

Just doing a search through the Bible, we see worship can include:

- Musical instruments
- Movement and dancing
- Specific physical posture (bowing, kneeling, standing, lying face down, hands lifted, etc.)
- Voice (speaking, shouting, whispering, breathing, singing, being still)
- Prayer

- Giving
- Serving
- Working
- Creating, crafting, and artistry
- Holiness

God cannot be contained by a building or a box. Our worship of Him should also not be containable—to a building, a service, or one single style or strand.

Our **whole lives** are to be a response of worship to our uncontainable God.

And as we do so—as we respond to Him and broaden our view of who He is and what He’s like—will we, as individuals and as a church, be willing to expand how we respond to Him?

Will we step out with David’s heart—to worship with an uncontainable response to our holy and powerful God?

In doing so, I believe we will see some of that tidal wave into our community that God spoke to Nikki about—and the release and freedom that Yinka shared.

There’s a second example in this passage of the serious consequences of having a contained or small view of God—as we see from Michal, David’s wife.

Adopting or holding onto a contained view of God, and a contained response to Him, impacts our relationships, our community, and our personal life. It limits life.

The narrative continues:

When David returned home to bless his household,
Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said (note the sarcasm):
“How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today,
going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants,
as any vulgar fellow would!”

David said to Michal:

“It was before the Lord,
who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house
when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel—
I will celebrate before the Lord.
I will become even more undignified than this,
and I will be humiliated in my own eyes.
But by these slave girls you spoke of,
I will be held in honour.”

And Michal, daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death.

Verse 16 has already told us that Michal was *watching from a window*—rather than part of the procession. This clearly wasn't because of her gender, as verse 15 and verse 19 make it clear that *all* Israel—both men and women—were present.

So why was she not part of the worship response? Why was she just watching from a window, while all Israel was with David?

Had she already made a decision? Had she adopted a *contained* rather than *uncontained* view of God?

Was her heart already lukewarm or cold towards God?

Did she have a *small* view of Him and a *big* view of herself?

She clearly wasn't passionate enough to join in the celebration—but preferred to be a prideful, critical observer. Michal didn't understand that honouring God, putting Him first, was the right response. She was more concerned about *dignity* and *what others would think* of her (or of David), than about worshipping God.

And she makes her disdain of David's uncontained response very clear.

Personally, I know from experience how a simple comment—a joke, a little throwaway remark—can affect how open we feel we can be in our response to God. A comment of negativity, or a limited understanding of worship and how things “should be done,” can constrict a person's desire to express worship fully—and to offer God what He *desires* and *deserves*.

It can act as a stopper to the creative and free release of worship to our great, big God.

These kinds of comments no longer have a place within our church family.

We want to release *everyone* to be uncontained worshipers of Jesus.

Everyone worshipping God in technicolor.

Expressing to Him how great He is, and giving thanks to Him with everything we are and have.

Not limiting ourselves to one method or mode of worshipful response.

But with our **whole lives**, with our **whole creativity**, responding to God.

Not just when we gather—but in the week as well.

Positioning ourselves openly and humbly.

Taking ourselves lightly, like David did in verse 22.

And taking God, in all His awesomeness, very seriously.

Our big God deserves our highest praise.

So—how will **you** respond today?

Maybe you're watching, and you're not a follower of Jesus yet. But during this service—or over the series—you've realized that God is mighty. He's majestic. He's holy. He's faithful. He's extravagant in love and grace and kindness.

And rather than worshipping the things you've been going after, you've decided today (or over the last few weeks) to become a worshiper of the living God. To turn to Him and away from those other things.

If that's you, please pray with me now:

Prayer

Mighty God,

I want to be a worshiper and follower of You, first and foremost.

I recognize that You didn't merely shout what You're like from heaven—
but You showed what You're like through Jesus,

perfectly showing us Your greatness and uncontained, mighty love and power.

Thank You for dying for me on the cross and rising,
so that I can have life and live a life of thankfulness and worship to You.

I choose this day to turn from all the other things I've gone after and worshiped,
and I choose You.

Give me Your Holy Spirit to help me to follow You.
Amen.

If you've just prayed that prayer, please get in touch with us so we can support you as a worshiper of God. We'd love to connect with you, encourage you, and continue to pray with you.

Let me also pray for each of us—whether we just prayed that prayer, are thinking about it, or prayed it years ago:

Closing Prayer

Father God,

We don't want to be observers or critics.

We want to be part of a community of worshipers who know You as huge, incredible, and uncontainable—
who worship You freely.

Father, create in us—not just as individuals but as a church—
the same passion and devotion that caused David to dance.

Show us where we've diminished You,
where we've adopted a small view of You that's impacted our response.

Forgive us.
Restore our view of You—
to a *right* view, a *big* view.

And in doing so, help us to have a right view of ourselves:
You first. You big. Us suitably lower.

Give us a bigger experience of You,
and release in us a greater freedom to respond in worship.

Teach us to use our posture, our movement, our voices, our hands—
to raise You up.

To creatively worship You.

To see a tidal wave of Your goodness in our community.

Give us boldness, even now in our homes,
to take a step toward a bigger, broader response.

Increase our passion.
Move in our hearts and our thinking as a church.

For *Your* glory—not ours.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Over the next few moments, we will have some time and space to respond to what God is saying and calling us to. We've brought the sermon sooner in the service to allow more time to respond together.

There'll be some songs played—including a version of *The Blessing*, which was widely circulated around the world in May and June 2020. In this version, people of all ages and ethnicities have come together and recorded their devoted worship to our amazing God through movement.

Allow God to use it to speak to you—above your own voice, judgments, and thoughts.

Let us be pursuers of His glory—our uncontainable and extravagantly loving God.