

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

July 12, 2015

“Dance Like Nobody’s Watching”



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
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Ginny Sherwood: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Ephesians 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

2 Samuel 6:1-5;

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

“Dance Like Nobody’s Watching”

Comedian Steven Wright has a playful sense of humor. Steven Wright says things like, “One time I went to a drive-in in a taxi cab. The movie cost me \$95.” Apparently speaking in L.A. Steven Wright said, “My watch is three hours fast, and I can’t fix it. So I’m going to move to New York.” And then there’s this, “When I die, I’m leaving my body to science fiction.” Steven Wright is quite playful.

Do you ever feel playful sometimes? It’s okay to feel playful sometimes. And it’s okay to be playful sometimes. Maybe we can’t be playful sometimes because we’re too self-conscious. Maybe we can’t be playful sometimes because of the Protestant Work Ethic. And maybe we can’t be playful sometimes because we hear the voice of a parent in the back of our heads saying: “Stop playing around, get serious.” I believe God wants us to ignore that voice every now and then. I believe God wants us to be playful every now and then. And I believe God wants us to not take ourselves too seriously every now and then.

I like to sing in the car along with the radio. (Unfortunately for Kathleen, she's often in the car with me when I sing.) I sing along with everybody. Stevie Wonder. Katy Perry. Frank Sinatra. (Actually, I think Frank Sinatra sounds a little better when I sing along with him. Ha!) One time I was in the car, stopped at a red light, singing at the top of my lungs, when I looked at the car next to me, and a kid was in the back seat, mocking me. In spite of that, or maybe because of it, I kept right on singing.

I believe God wants us to sing as much as possible. I believe God doesn't care whether we sing sacred songs or secular songs. I believe God just wants us to sing, even if we make fools of ourselves. It's like people say: Sing like nobody's listening. And: Dance like nobody's watching.

David and thirty thousand others carried the ark of God to the city of David: Jerusalem. When they carried it part-way, David and all the house of Israel were very excited. They danced before the Lord with all their might, with songs and many instruments. What must David and all the others have looked like, dancing with all their might? Perhaps, pretty playful. And that's okay.

Ecclesiastes proclaims, there's "a time to mourn, and a time to dance." When is a good time to dance? Maybe at the dawn of each new day, when you get out of bed, if your body is able, you could dance a little jig, and thank God for another day of life. Maybe at the end of a day at the beach, you and your friends could do a conga line around a campfire. And maybe you and your beloved could shake a leg at a nightclub when the spirit moves you.

Kathleen and I took dance lessons a few years ago. It was a ballroom dance class. We learned the waltz, the box step, and some other dances. But we weren't exactly Fred and Ginger. More like Fred and Ethel. Still, like David, we danced with all our might.

Some fundamentalist churches oppose dancing, which they have every right to do. They just should remember that you can't spell fundamentalist without fun. In all seriousness, though, when we

dance with all our might, like David did, then I believe, as Ephesians says, we will experience “every spiritual blessing.” Because being able to have fun is a spiritual blessing.

Jesus supports fun. Remember how Jesus wanted the little children, who personify fun, to come to him, because heaven belongs to them? I say it every Sunday before Children’s Time. “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.’”

Jesus knows that life has its share of sorrow, like when his cousin, John the Baptist, was beheaded. Jesus knows we should savor moments of happiness, playfulness, and joy. I suspect that you also know that life has its share of sorrow. And that you also know to savor moments of happiness, playfulness, and joy.

Jesus opposes worrying. Worrying may be the opposite of playfulness. You can’t be playful if you worry. And what good does worrying do anyway? As Jesus said, “I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” The other thing about birds, they often seem so playful, flying through the air.

Jesus shows us that life can be quite often playful and not always serious. Jesus had to be playful to be 12 years old and elude his parents for a few days. Jesus had to be playful to attend a wedding and party afterward, even apparently turning water into wine. And Jesus had to be playful to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. Have you ever ridden on a donkey? I have, and you certainly can’t take yourself too seriously when you ride on a donkey.

The disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in heaven. Jesus told them, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” I believe Jesus wanted his disciples to practice

playfulness. I believe Jesus wanted his disciples not to take themselves too seriously. And I believe Jesus wants us to practice playfulness and not take ourselves too seriously, either.

Kathleen's grandsons, especially when they were about 7 and 9 years old, could play with anything, like many children can. Sure they like to play with trains and Legos. But give them an empty box, and they'll play for hours.

Michael Jordan was probably playful as a kid. Before anybody paid him a dime, he could probably play with a basketball for hours. And even as an adult, when basketball was his career and he was making millions of dollars a year, he still looked like he was having fun, being playful.

When we know how important it is to practice playfulness and when we respond joyfully to life, as Jesus did (refusing to live in a state of boredom, dullness, or routine), we are emulating a major part of Jesus' life - the joyful part. And we are following in the footsteps of other Christians, like Mother Teresa, who said, "A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love." We're also following in the footsteps of people of other faiths, like the Dalai Lama, a Buddhist, who said, "The purpose of our lives is to be happy."

Bobby McFerrin had a hit song years ago about happiness. The song was entitled, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Bobby McFerrin sings, "In every life we have some trouble. But when you worry you make it double. Don't worry. Be happy." Whatever it is that makes you happy, do that.

Jay Leno brought happiness, playfulness, and joy to people for decades as host of The Tonight Show. Jay Leno said once: Men think The Three Stooges are funny; women think they're idiots. Whatever you find funny, go with that, whether it's a situation comedy on TV, a funny movie, a book of humor, or a comic strip. (Oh, how I miss "Calvin and Hobbes.")

It doesn't really matter how we escape from the seriousness of life, if only temporarily - whether we sing like nobody's listening, or dance like nobody's watching - when we practice

playfulness, we bring happiness to our hearts. And maybe we also bring joy to the world.

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us to practice playfulness.
Help us to hang on to happiness.
And help us to sing like nobody's listening
and to dance like nobody's watching.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*





*Menifee
United Church of Christ*



*Whoever you are,
Wherever you are on life's journey
You are welcome here!*

*Jesus didn't reject people
Neither do we*



THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*
Judaism

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*
Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*
Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*
Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*
Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*
Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*
Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*
Humanism