

"Slay the Dragon, Get the Girl"

Psalm 132

28 May 2017

Sometimes things don't end well, like in the 1980s movie *Pretty In Pink*. It starts off and has all the marks of a typical 80s movie: a great soundtrack, romance, dancing, neon clothes, a lot of *Aquanet* hairspray, and of course, Molly Ringwald! I mean, any 80s movie with Molly Ringwald is gold. You can't go wrong with Molly Ringwald. In my opinion, *Pretty In Pink* is one of the best 80's movies with one of the best soundtracks. The title track by The Psychedelic Furs is such a classic. And the song by Echo and the Bunnymen, "Bring On the Dancing Horses," has this haunting lyric, which says, "*Bring on the new messiah, wherever he may roam.*" Everything about this movie is perfect... except the ending!

Pretty In Pink does not end the way you expect it to! It has a terrible ending that goes against every 80's romance movie. The guy gets the girl in the end, but it's not the guy who you want to get the girl! You think the best friend in the movie- whose name is Duckie- you think he will, and you want him to end up with Molly Ringwald at the end of the movie, but he doesn't! Who gets the girl? It's the shallow, rich guy who does. Such a tragic ending! Everything about the movie is perfect except for the last 2 minutes. The guy that you want to get the girl doesn't. Poor Duckie!

Sometimes things don't end well. And that's sorta what is happening in Psalm 132. There's this celebration about the Davidic kingdom that will last forever, and yet we know now that David's kingdom did not last forever. It ended. And it did not end well. But by the time you get to the end of Psalm 132, you're left with some hope that another Davidic King was on His way. So Psalm 132 ends and it leaves you with hope that the right guy will get the girl in the end. The last 2 verses of Psalm 132 don't let us down: Jesus will get the girl, His Bride. The eternal plan of God for Jesus was this: Slay the Dragon, get the Girl. And here's why: because-

JESUS SIMPLY CANNOT GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIS PEOPLE.

In Psalm 132 will see David's desire to be near Yahweh, but even more than that, we will see Yahweh's desire to be near His people. Jesus wanted to be with His people so bad, that He came up with a way that would satisfy His justice against man's sin, and yet still allow sinners to get close to Him. Sinners could draw near to Yahweh because He made a way possible. And it all revolved around sacrifice. Psalm 132 is telling us that Jesus can't get close enough to His people! And that's good news for people like us!

Now, the average length of the Ascent Psalms is just under 7 verses, with Psalm 132 providing the most glaring exception with 18 verses. So Psalm 132 is nearly twice as long as all the others. And that should make us wonder why. Why is this song so long? The ancient Israelites who would be singing these psalms as they traveled to Jerusalem to worship surely would have noticed it. All the other songs are short, but then you get this long one. It's like going from singing "Little Deuce Coup" by *The Beach Boys*, which is only 1:41 seconds long to singing "Stairway to Heaven" by *Led Zeppelin*, which comes in at 8:03 seconds. So, why is it so long and is that significant? We'll answer those questions today.

LOOK AT VERSES 1-5...

Remember, O LORD, in David's favor, all the hardships he endured, how he swore to the LORD and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, "I will not enter my house or get into my bed, I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

This is a prayer that Yahweh would remember all that David did. And not just merely remember because the Hebrew word for remember (*zakar*) doesn't just mean to remember, but to remember and act. So they are praying that the Lord would remember what David did and then act and bless and reward him. They are asking the Lord to fulfill his promises to David. And this is helpful for us as it relates to our prayers. Yahweh's promises are driving their prayers. They are taking Yahweh's promises to the bank, if you will. They know what the Lord promised David and they are asking the Lord to go all *Nike* on their prayers and "Just do it!"

And you can do what they are doing here. Christian, you can find a promise in God's word and you can go to Him and say, "*Please do this, Lord! Just do it!*" That's what's happening in Psalm 132. They are asking the Lord to remember and act and bless David for what he did. But what did David do? What do they want Yahweh to remember? Here's what David did: he hired a bunch of movers and helped move Yahweh from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem. David moved the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem.

David had determined to not get any rest or sleep or take any naps until the ark was brought back into the center of the lives of all those in Israel. And so David sent word throughout all of Israel that they were bringing the ark out of the dusty storage building. Word went out all over Israel that Yahweh was moving. That's what verses 6-7 tell us.

LOOK AT VERSES 6-7...

Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. "Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!"

What are verses 6-7 saying? What is the "it" that this song is referring to? It's the Ark of the Covenant. In 1 Chronicles 13, David sends word throughout Israel to gather all the priests so that they can carry the ark to Jerusalem. This is what verses 6-7 are talking about. David got on social media and put the word out that the priests should come and help carry the ark back home.

**** INSERT PICTURE OF THE ARK

Now, remember what the ark was and what it signified. One, it signified that Yahweh was all powerful. That's why it is called the "ark of His might." When this thing went into battle, things happened. When people touched, they died. So the ark pointed out the fact that Yahweh was all-powerful and rules the universe. But it was also the symbol of God's presence among His people. Of course, every Israelite knew that Yahweh was omnipresent, that He was everywhere, but this little wooden box, which was overlaid with gold, was special. The ark was 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ feet long and 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ feet wide and high. By the way, the full name of the ark is *The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim*.

And it contained a copy of the 10 Commandments, jars full of manna, and later the staff of Aaron's that budded. But somewhere along the way, the manna and Aaron's staff were lost because they are not mentioned as being in the ark when Solomon dedicated the temple in 1 Kings 8:9. But the ark also had a lid with these weird, winged lion creatures on top. But what made it so special was that it emphasized mercy and forgiveness.

So David knew that God was everywhere and not just limited to the ark's presence, and that no human being could escape His presence, but David also knew that what the ark symbolized was the place that we often try to hide from God: *His mercy and forgiveness*. And isn't that we often do? We run from God. We hide from God when we sin. We think that if we can just get some distance between us and our sin, then He will accept us. We think that if we wait a few hours or days after we've really blown it, then that's when we can come. We often try to hide from this very special presence and invitation from God to just barge into His presence after we have sinned.

Listen, Grace: Jesus wants and expects you to come to Him dirty. Hello? You're a sinner! Steve Brown said, *"It's easier to hug a dirty kid than a stiff kid. Stiffness is the worst sin... and we thought that dirt was the problem."* Jesus wants you to come dirty. What He doesn't want is a stiff, self-righteous person. That's what the Pharisees were. And that's why Jesus told them, *"For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Matthew 9:13)

The problem is that we think we're okay without God. And that's why the ark was in a closet for 20 years- because the nation of Israel thought that they were doing just fine without it. But the problem is that we think we're okay without God. And sometimes that's what keeps us away from Jesus. Nate Larkin said, *"What keeps most of us from God is not the sin we KNOW we have, but the righteousness we THINK we have."* For some us, we need to be cleansed from our supposed righteousness.

David knew that the ark was the special presence of God. A symbol of His great love for sinners. A symbol of His heart. The ark was an invitation, a summons from a holy God to dirty sinners that they were welcome in His presence. The ark was where the great sacrifice for sins took place each year on the Day of Atonement. Once a year, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies, where the ark was, and sprinkle blood on the altar for the sins of the nation.

And this is why David wants to get the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. But, where was the ark hiding for those 20 years? If you remember, at one point in Israel's history, the ark had been captured by the Philistines. And they put it in their temple, the temple of Dagon. And then what happened? The statue of Dagon fell and broke into pieces because the ark, because the presence of Yahweh was there. So the Philistines wisely loaded the ark up on a wagon and sent it back to Israel and it sat for 20 years in the home of Abinadab.

Now why would God allow this? Why would Yahweh allow the Philistines to steal the ark and then allow it to sit for 20 years in a closet? Does that contradict our big idea?

JESUS SIMPLY CANNOT GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIS PEOPLE.

If God can't get close enough to His people, why was the ark stolen and then sat in some guys closet for 20 years? If Jesus cannot get too close to His people, why was He collecting dust, if you will, for 20 years?

Here's why: Because the Israelites lost the big picture. They thought that they could do life without Yahweh. So Yahweh allowed these things to transpire. I think Ralph Davis explains what happened well:

"The text forces two important implications upon us: Yahweh will suffer shame rather than allow you to carry on a false relationship with him; and Yahweh will allow you to be disappointed with him if it will awaken you to the sort of God he really is." Let me read that again: *"The text forces two important implications upon us: Yahweh will suffer shame rather than allow you to carry on a false relationship with him; and Yahweh will allow you to be disappointed with him if it will awaken you to the sort of God he really is."*

That's sobering, Grace. God suffered public humiliation and shame in the eyes of the Philistines because He did not want the Israelites to carry on a false relationship with Him. And He allowed them to be disappointed with Him in order to wake them up. Very sobering. And it doesn't contradict God's heart to be with His people. He wants to be with us, but He wants our hearts. And He'll let us be disappointed with Him if it will wake us up from our spiritual slumber. That's sobering. Let me ask you: Are you disappointed with God today? Maybe He's trying to get your attention? Listen, Jesus will suffer shame rather than allow you to carry on a false relationship with Him; and Jesus will allow you to be disappointed with Him if it will awaken you to the sort of God He really is.

So for about 20 years, the Ark of the Covenant was just out there somewhere in Israel. And 1 Samuel 7:2 says that the nation of Israel lamented after the Lord. They missed His presence and reassurance for those 20 years, but they didn't seem to do anything about it because David says in 1 Chronicles 13 that the nation of Israel did not seek "the ark" (Hebrew: him) during the days of Saul. So it was out there collecting dust until David determined to bring it home to Jerusalem. And David's passion in Psalm 132 was to get the ark back where it belonged, back into the center of the people's lives. They seemed to have forgotten this special presence of Yahweh, symbolized by the ark, and so for about 20 years it was sitting in someone's basement, collecting dust.

Now, lest we throw them under the bus for losing the ark and not knowing that it was sitting in some pawnshop in the backwoods of Israel, we do the same thing. Sometimes disciples and churches just slowly drift from the Gospel and they don't even know it. And they wake up 20 years later and they're like, *"Where's Jesus? Where did God go? Did somebody put him in storage?"* And it can happen in our individual lives as well. We just slowly drift from Jesus and we wake up and we have drifted 20 miles out to sea.

And that's why we need to hear the Gospel every Sunday here in this pulpit. Carl Trueman says, *"The task of the preacher, therefore, is to take the Bible and to do two things in every sermon: destroy self-righteousness and point hearers toward the alien, external righteousness of Christ."* That's what we need every week. We need to hear over and over again about God's special love for sinners. We need to hear about His heart for His people, the church. We need to hear again and again about this special place where mercy is offered to the unrighteous, to sinners, namely at the cross.

And let me give you proof that your heart needs to hear the Gospel every week: What are the songs that we sing that really pull on our heartstrings? What songs do we sing that everyone feels deep down in their souls? In my experience, it's the songs that talk about God's great love for us as demonstrated on the cross, His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness. Those are the songs we *really sing*. Songs like "How He Loves" and "The Power of the Cross" and "It is Well." Why do those songs resonate more than others? Because it's all Gospel! We love those songs because they assure us that Jesus does love us and we are forgiven!

And that's why we need to hear the good news preached here every week because 1) we *forget it* every week and 2) we *need it* every week and 3) we *love it* every week! I don't know about you, but I love to be told that I am forgiven. That never gets old to me. I love to hear sermons and songs that remind me of who I am in Christ, that I am justified by faith, that I am in union with Christ, that I am clean. That never gets old to me. Ever! And I need it often because I forget it often, and I have a hunch that many of you are just like me.

And that's why Martin Luther said, *"Every week I preach justification by faith to my people, because every week they forget it."* We need the Gospel coming forth from this pulpit every week, just like David and Co. did. David wanted the ark back because he wanted to be reminded of the Gospel, to be reminded that God loves him, to be reminded that he was forgiven.

Tim Keller said, *"Because the gospel is endlessly rich, it can handle the burden of being the one 'main thing' of a church."* The Gospel can be the main thing in a church. It can handle the weight. We don't need lasers and lights during worship or fog machines. We just need songs about Jesus. We don't need all the glitz and the glamour. We just need the Gospel.

And when you get news that you don't want to hear, news of cancer or some disease or a phone call that rocks your world and tells you that a loved one died, what do you need? You good news. You need the Gospel. You need to hear about how great Jesus is. Trust me, when you get cancer, sermons that gave you "7 Tips to Being a Better Husband" will not help you. When you land in the hospital and you're close to death, sermons that gave you tips and to do lists will not help you. What are you gonna do? Call the worship team and have them set up a fog machine and lasers and lead you in worship?

No. You need Jesus. You need a church community that gathers around you and tells over and over again what they have heard about Jesus week in and week out: The Gospel. That you are forgiven. That Jesus loves you. That you will be resurrected. That God is sovereign. That He is working this out for your good and His glory. You need someone who knows their Bible and can tell you about the Triune God. What you don't need to be told in that moment is, *"I'm sorry, Helen. The worship team could not get here and the fog machine and lasers aren't working, but I have my sermon notes from last week and I can give you 4 steps to a healthy outlook on life."*

Makes me want to vomit. But that's why I love this church! I'm gonna miss y'all while I'm on sabbatical. I think we're the greatest church in town. I really do. I love Grace! I love Grace because I think the DNA here now after about 5 years is pure Gospel. I think that if you cut us, we bleed Gospel. Do we have areas where we can grow and improve? Absolutely. Every church does, every person does, every marriage does, etc. We can improve in several areas. But, man, do we get the Gospel here. I love that about Grace.

But for David and Co., it had been 20 years and they seemed to have forgotten about the ark. There was no yearly sacrifice for their sins on the Day of Atonement because the ark was MIA. And they didn't even seem to notice! It just goes to show that we are so sinful that we can carry on with life, we can carry on with church life, without even bringing Jesus into the picture. That's sad. We can do church without even mentioning Jesus. It seems impossible, but Psalm 132 is telling you that it can happen. And all you have to do is visit a few churches or their websites or listen to their sermons and you might not even find a trace of Jesus. What a scary place to be! God have mercy on us all. Bring revival, Jesus!

And revival is what these Israelites were praying for in Psalm 132.

LOOK AT VERSES 8-10...

Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your saints shout for joy. For the sake of your servant David, do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

Now they are praying that the ark would make it to Jerusalem where Yahweh could be where He wanted to be: near His people. Please understand that restoring the ark was not restoring a religious icon, but restoring Yahweh's presence among His people. The whole sacrificial system was set up so that sinners could draw near to God. So that priests could minister God's grace to His people so that the people would rejoice and be glad.

And somewhere along the way the church has messed this up. We think Christianity is about an angry, cranky God, who can't stand how disobedient His children are, so He's always in a bad mood. And because He's always cranky and irritated with us, we are supposed to walk around on pins and needles and be miserable all the time and eat liver and drink prune juice for fun. We think we're supposed to be the most miserable people on the planet.

And yet the Biblical story is night and day different from that! The ark was God telling His people, *"I can't get close enough to you! I want to be near you! I want you to be full of joy in My presence!"* And the ark is proof of that. And so is the tabernacle, and the temple, and the incarnation of Jesus! When Jesus was born, it was a declaration to sinners what the ark had been screaming for years: *"I can't get close enough to you! I want to be near you! I want you to be full of joy in My presence!"*

Of course, these worshippers in Psalm 132 know that they are sinners. They know that their commitment stinks. They know that David's commitment stinks. Yes, they are highlighting David's passion and commitment to move the ark, but they know that our commitment stinks. After all, the ark was in a closet collecting dust for 20 years! So much for religious enthusiasm and commitment, right!? So much for their commitment to Yahweh!

Listen, if you get this, then the Bible will make a lot more sense: *It's not our commitment to God that gets the emphasis in Scripture. It's God's commitment to His people and His promises that does.* That's what Psalm 132 is telling us. The reality is that the Bible is one big story of how fickle we are and how faithful God is. If you can swallow that, then the Bible becomes a book that you want to read because you keep hearing over and over again how good Jesus is.

And these worshippers in Psalm 132 know that the Lord is good because they pray that He would not turn away from the face of David, Yahweh's anointed. Now, what is interesting is that the word for *anointed* in verse 10 is *messiah* in Hebrew. "Messiah" just means, "anointed one." And David was the anointed king of Israel, but we see now that even though David did fail, God did in fact keep his promise to David because Jesus, the real Messiah, came many years later.

LOOK AT VERSES 11-18...

The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne." For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: "This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine."

We know from 2 Samuel 7 that Yahweh made a promise to David that he would always have a son on the throne. But we also know the rest of the Bible and how from Solomon and onward, the Davidic kings failed miserably. Yes, there were a few good ones, but mostly they all walked away from the Lord until He finally sent the nation into exile in Babylon. But the good news of the Gospel is that the sad tale of David and Solomon and all the other kings leads us to King Jesus, the Davidic King *par excellence*, whom all of these Scriptures were pointing to and anticipating.

Yes, it got dark for a while in Israel. They went into captivity. They went into exile. And it seemed like, for a season, that Yahweh's promises to David had expired. But listen: With God, it never gets too dark. It's never too dark for Yahweh. In fact, it's in the dark that His grace and mercy shine the most! It's in the middle of the darkness of our rebellion and sin that His promises shine the brightest!

So Psalm 132 is this massive, sturdy reminder that no matter how dark and hopeless it seems, God's plans and promises will never fail. And King Jesus is all the proof that you need. No matter how dark and hopeless it seems, God's plans and promises will never fail for His people. And-

JESUS SIMPLY CANNOT GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIS PEOPLE.

And we see this in verse 13. The Hebrew word for "desire" is this enthusiastic fervor that Yahweh has, this overwhelming desire to be with and bless His people. His desire is for His people. It's not that Yahweh has a desire for Zion in particular, like it's hot real estate and He knows it. It's that Yahweh has this strong desire to be with His people as they worship Him in Jerusalem. It's not the city that holds His heart, it's His people, the church, the redeemed. His desire is for His elect. Let me ask you: Is that how you think of Him? Or, do you see Him as cranky? Yahweh has this enthusiastic fervor to be with His people. He longs to bless us! He longs to be good to us! Jesus is not a cosmic curmudgeon! He wants to be with us and bless our socks off!

So Psalm 132 is really a promise of the coming Redeemer that was promised in Genesis 3, the Messiah, *the real King David*, the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 132 is echoing the promise that the Great Snake-crusher, the Great Dragon-slayer was coming for His Bride. Psalm 132 is really a cry, after the fact, of Israel's desire for the Messiah, the anointed One to come. Psalm 132 became a cry of, "*Bring on the new Messiah.*" Psalm 132 captures David's desire to see the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, but it also captures

We are all like David and we just want to know that we can be forgiven. We want to know that we are clean. We want to know that shame and guilt and sin do not have the last word and they don't have the last word because of the last words of Psalm 132:

LOOK AT VERSES 17-18...

There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine."

God gets the last word in Psalm 132, not the failures of Israel. God promises to raise up a horn, which is a symbol of conquering strength. He promises to raise up His anointed, the Messiah. God's enemies will be conquered. His throne will endure forever.

And the good news of the Gospel is that we will never be clothed with shame. Sin and guilt and shame will not have the last word in our lives. They will for the unbeliever. The unbeliever will be clothed with shame forever. And how awful that will be? They will wear shame and guilt like a garment for eternity! Haven't you seen how children are when they are ashamed? They are devastated. It's awful. It's not natural. I saw

it with one of our kids this week. They were paralyzed. And we just scooped her up and hugged her and told her that there was no shame. We told her that she was forgiven, that she was clean. And she was free.

How awful it will be to bear shame for eternity! But for those in union with Christ, we will be clothed in His righteousness forever! We will shout for joy forever! We rest forever! We will be satisfied forever! Provided for forever! Clothed with salvation forever! Why? Because King Jesus will be wearing a crown that will shine forth His glory and we will bask in that warm light forever! That's proof that-

JESUS SIMPLY CANNOT GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIS PEOPLE.

At the end of the book of Exodus, where is God's tent? Right smack dab in the middle of His people! It was a testimony to His deep desire to be with His people! Where is God at the end of Psalm 132? Making a promise that He would raise up His Son, the Messiah, and will crown Him with a crown that will shine forever on His people. And what does Jesus say in the Gospel? I am coming back to get you so that you can be with me forever. And how does the bible end? Jesus says, *"Surely, I am coming soon."* He just simply cannot get close enough to us!

This story ends well, Grace. No matter how dark it seems right now, this story ends well. The guy gets the Girl in the end and they will live happily ever after. Jesus comes to kill the Dragon and get the girl. And everything sad will come untrue.

So you are cordially invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where we will celebrate the King's love for His Bride and how He slayed the Dragon, while we party like we've never partied before!

Jack Miller said, *"To be near God and to have God near us is the whole purpose of human life. But without repentance there can be no face-to-face fellowship with the Father... the Lord cannot resist the broken heart that has experienced true repentance. He will not, He cannot, stay away from repentant sinners.... This holy Father sees humanity in all its nastiness and yet is given to strange, tender excesses. His love explodes into joyous action whenever a convicted sinner turns toward home."* {Repentance: A Daring Call to Surrender, p.12-13}

Will you come home today? Jesus will have you back. Jesus wants you back. He'll have you. Come home and rest in His arms.

"Slay the Dragon, Get the Girl"

Psalm 132

Sermon Study Questions

1. Why do we run from God? Explain how, for some people, it's 1) their righteousness or 2) their sin that keeps them from God.
2. How does Psalm 132 prepare our hearts for Jesus? How does Jesus fulfill this psalm?
3. Discuss this sobering quote and describe a time in your life when it may have been true for you:

"The text forces two important implications upon us: Yahweh will suffer shame rather than allow you to carry on a false relationship with him; and Yahweh will allow you to be disappointed with him if it will awaken you to the sort of God he really is." Ralph Davis

4. Does the Bible place the emphasis more on our commitment to God or His commitment to us? Explain how your answer to that question will shape your life.

Quotes from the sermon:

Steve Brown

"It's easier to hug a dirty kid than a stiff kid. Stiffness is the worst sin... and we thought that dirt was the problem."

Carl Trueman

"The task of the preacher, therefore, is to take the Bible and to do two things in every sermon: destroy self-righteousness and point hearers toward the alien, external righteousness of Christ."

Martin Luther

"Every week I preach justification by faith to my people, because every week they forget it."

Tim Keller

"Because the gospel is endlessly rich, it can handle the burden of being the one 'main thing' of a church."

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"To be near God and to have God near us is the whole purpose of human life. But without repentance there can be no face-to-face fellowship with the Father... the Lord cannot resist the broken heart that has experienced true repentance. He will not, He cannot, stay away from repentant sinners.... This holy Father sees humanity in all its nastiness and yet is given to strange, tender excesses. His love explodes into joyous action whenever a convicted sinner turns toward home."