

**Worship Material**  
**Extravagant worship**  
**Material from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 14th July**

**Begin with opening prayer**

Lord of all, we come to offer all that we have and all that we are –  
body, mind and spirit.

We come to offer you our joys and struggles.

We come to celebrate your extravagant love and abundant gifts,  
and to give thanks for your unending promises to us.

Lord of all, teach us to hold nothing back  
and to give our all as we serve you in the world.

**Amen.**

**Read 2 Samuel 6:1-5,12b-19**

**Bible notes**

The Ark of the Covenant was the holiest object that Israel possessed. It contained the tablets of the law, written by God and given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:1). It travelled with the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings and, when Samuel was a boy, it was kept at the old temple in Shiloh (1 Samuel 3:3). The Israelite elders took it into battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:4), believing that victory would be certain with the Lord among them; but the Philistines defeated them and captured the Ark (1 Samuel 4:11). Yet they found the Ark a dangerous guest: it made them sick and knocked their idols over (1 Samuel 5:3,6). They returned it to Israel and it was kept for many years in an ordinary house (1 Samuel 7:1).

After all David's struggles, the Ark became the crowning glory of his new city, built to be the home of the whole people. The Ark embodied the presence of the Lord of hosts who fought alongside Israel with the fire-angel cherubim (Ezekiel 10). David was bringing the Ark to its new home, where it would remain until the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 586 BCE. God was the cornerstone of David's new city, the divine presence manifested by this precious object. No wonder they danced and sang and played their instruments! Their extravagant worship spoke of their joy at the hope of peace after so many years of struggles with their enemies.

Yet God's presence brought threat as well as joy. There are two disturbing threads woven into this narrative. The Ark remained a dangerous object, filled with the power of God. The verses omitted (vv.6-11) describe the death of Uzzah, who touched the Ark without observing the necessary purification rites. Living in God's holy presence brings risk alongside reward. And we hear the echo of Michal's sadness. The daughter of Saul was married to David (1 Samuel 18:27), but this ended while David was in hiding and she was given to another husband. When David returned, he reclaimed Michal, who returned, followed by her weeping husband (2 Samuel 3:13-16). This woman, used as a pawn in dynastic marriage, finds her voice here; her story is not forgotten.

The celebrations were filled with joy, extravagant expressions of Israel's delight. David marked the moment with dance and song and shouting as the Ark came home. His rich sacrifices to God were balanced by gifts to all the people, so that no one went hungry – the prophets criticised those who offered sacrifice without attending to the needs of the poor. David honours God through offerings and generosity; this is, perhaps, the crowning moment of his monarchy.

### **Prayer**

We praise you, Almighty God,  
with hands and hearts raised in thankfulness.  
We worship you with praise and thanksgiving,  
for voices to sing with joy and instruments to proclaim your glory.  
We are grateful for the many ways in which we can worship you –  
with our whole bodies  
or in the quiet contemplation of overflowing hearts.  
Thank you, O Lord, for your house,  
a place of prayer, and joy, and worship without limits.  
**Amen.**

### **A prayer to conclude**

God of all, send us out into the world you have made.  
Help us to be the people you want us to be;  
help us to live in ways that show your love for us and for all people.  
Keep us dancing, keep us singing and keep us walking in your ways.  
Keep us open, keep us generous and keep us ready to give our all for you,  
as you have given everything for us.  
**Amen.**