

Monday, August 22, 2022

Read Exodus 1

Shrewd Dealing

“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.” Not knowing Joseph, certainly meant that this king had no respect for the God who enabled Joseph to understand dreams. This king, this pharaoh looked at the people of Israel (Joseph’s descendants) as numerous and therefore dangerous.

So, he declares, “come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” Literally, the king wants to deal “wisely” with the people. Here is clear example of how there is no true wisdom divorced from the source of wisdom.

“Wise” move #1 – make the Israelites work harder under oppressive taskmasters.

Result – The Israelites multiplied.

“Wise” move #2 – ask midwives (who are to welcome life) to kill all Hebrew sons.

Result – Midwives refuse and the people multiply.

“Wise” move #3 – command everyone to throw Hebrew newborn sons into the Nile.

Result – You likely know where this is going, but stay tuned for the rest of Exodus.

The shrewd dealing of Pharaoh turned out to be anything but wise. Instead, he sought to use his power to turn the wisdom of God on its head. Midwives were to assist women in childbirth and welcome life. Pharaoh wanted them to extinguish life. The Lord of all creation had provided the Nile River as a stream of life in a barren desert. Pharaoh wanted to turn it into a vehicle for death to hold on to his power. Such is human “wisdom” divorced from any knowledge of the Life-giver. So quickly, we take the good things that God provides and foolishly seek to use them for self-gain and self-preservation, and we bring destruction.

How different is our God! He thwarts the “shrewd dealings” of those like Pharaoh, and often in surprising ways. Beyond this, he exhibits true wisdom in Christ, the Wisdom of God who brings life through His self-less giving.

Prayer – Dear Jesus, teach me true wisdom in Your Word. Keep those in authority from foolish arrogance, like Pharaoh. Help me not only to know your wisdom, but also to walk in Your wisdom. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Read Exodus 2

Small Beginnings

How often the Bible talks about babies - Moses, Samson, ... Jesus. But babies cannot do anything. Yet God keeps bringing them up, keeps reminding me that God starts things with small, humanly speaking things. In my planning for the future, in my anticipation of what is to come, I keep looking for the big things, the monster waves, the overwhelming brightness, the power displayed. But God in His wisdom keeps pointing out His preference for small beginnings.

I keep remembering, God didn't overwhelm me with faith, with blessings, He came to in trusting, He came to me through words (how small can you get - remember the children's proverb, "Sticks and stone may break my bones but words cannot hurt me"? How wrong I was! Sticks only hurt physically - words, those small things, hurt my heart. It was with words and water that God built my faith. His words are important, though small.

So, God wants me to look to Him trusting the small things, often things that I overlook will grow and come to be important to me. Through those small beginnings He teaches me to trust Him, love Him, and live in His ways.

God showed how He works from small beginnings in the Bible, He builds my faith, and lets me have opportunities to show my faith by trusting Him. And then He fulfills my trust, He shows how glorious His plans are, far surpassing my expectations. Where, God, are You acting now, building my future from what looks small now? Thank you for letting me trust You.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for working Your own way, and not following my foolish ideas. Thank you for building my faith, over and over again. Thank you, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, August 24, 2022

Read Exodus 3

Affliction and Promise

Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:7-8).

Moses hid his face and was afraid to look at God (see v. 6), and rightly so; יהוה—Yahweh, אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה—I AM WHO I AM, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see vv. 14-15), had called to him from a burning bush that was not being consumed by fire.

It is hard to put ourselves in Moses' sandals. If we could, we would also be afraid, and our feet would be bare like Moses. For God said to him, "**Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground**" (v. 5). God brings us His Word to us, and, amazingly, God's Word brings us to turn aside here to His Word and "**see this great sight**" (v. 3). Hard to ignore God when He speaks in flames from a burning bush. Right? Can you picture Moses walking along to Horeb (Sinai), keeping sheep and ignoring this great sight?

Here, God came down to deliver His people and called Moses to speak this message to the children of Israel. Moses seems reluctant to the task, and God said to him, "**But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain**" (v. 12). And we know this is exactly what happened, and this is where God led Israel (see Exodus 19).

God came down from heaven (see John 6:41) to save us from our sins. All humanity, from birth, is plagued with affliction and slavery to sin, death, and the devil. God became flesh in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who spoke to Moses from a burning bush and delivered the Israelites from their affliction and slavery; He also saves us through His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. Through God's promise and gifts of faith and Baptism in Jesus Christ alone, we have the forgiveness of sins and the hope of life eternal in Him.

Prayer –Thank You, Father, for Your great love for us in Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, August 25, 2022
Read Exodus 4

Faith Worth Fighting For

“You can’t please everyone.” Usually, we say this phrase in a specific context: after we’ve tried (and failed) to please everyone. We as humans have an intrinsic desire to be liked. In fact, we often can’t stand the idea of being disliked! Therefore, we sacrifice ideals, adjust our personalities, and sometimes abandon our personal beliefs just to try and get someone’s approval. Sometimes we’re willing to abandon our Christian identity and engage in sin simply to avoid the disapproval of our peers. We abandon God to make friends. We sacrifice faith to fit in. And only after we’ve sacrificed as much of ourselves as we’re willing to do we throw up our hands and say, “You can’t please everyone.” We foolishly believe that pleasing everyone is worth sacrificing for, and we don’t recognize the futility of the effort until the damage to ourselves is already done. You can’t please everyone, and that’s a fact.

But brothers and sisters, we aren’t called to please others. No, we are called to *love* others. These two words are not synonymous, though we often think they are. Love can be tough, hard, and certainly displeasing. Loving our neighbors means sacrificing, not our faith, but our earthly status. We love our neighbors by giving them the gospel, whether it pleases them or not. You can’t please everyone, but you certainly can love them.

The only person we need to please is God. But how do I do this? What can I do to please God? Have faith. There is no action or deed we can complete to please God. Instead, the only way to please Him is to have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ who came to live among us, died for us, and rose again for our redemption. This confession, this *faith* is pleasing to God, and that is the only thing that matters. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, you have been given that faith! Just like Paul, you “have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.”

So don’t sacrifice your faith to foster your status in the world. Instead, sacrifice your status in the world to foster your faith. After all, you can’t please everyone. But God is already pleased with you. May the joy of this reality seep into every aspect of our lives and direct all that we say and do.

Prayer: “Lord God, we thank You that You have taught us what You would have us believe and do. Help us by Your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to hold fast Your Word in hearts that You have cleansed that thereby we may be made strong in faith and perfect in holiness and be comforted in life and death; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

- *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, “Prayer for faithfulness,” pg. 1321.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, August 25, 2022

Read Exodus 4-5

Patience

How quickly trust in God's promises dissolves into accusations of unfaithfulness! As Moses heads back to Egypt, He is carrying a message of salvation. The people receive it with joy, but when the Lord's request is rejected by Pharaoh and the workload of the Israelites is increased, everything changes.

The people groan underneath the increased workload.

Moses complains about the work he has been sent to do.

While Pharaoh imposes suffering, God is accused of evil.

"Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me...you have not delivered your people at all.'" (5:22-23)

We often look at the Biblical virtue of patience as just a nice character trait, but it is so much more. Biblical patience is better described as to "wait on the Lord" (Ps 27:14). Patience is tinged with Biblical hope – trusting in the future promised deliverance of God. Patience carries a heavy dose of faith. We can wait because we trust in our God.

Prayer: Lord, forgive us! We lack patience, for the slightest affliction distracts us from Your promises and Your faithfulness. Help us to endure challenges trusting in the deliverance of Christ and anchored in the hope of life in the Risen Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, August 27, 2022

Read [Exodus 6](#)

“I am the LORD”

When America fights a war, planners, logisticians, and other support personnel are involved all over the world. Each of the components – Land, Air, and Sea – have command centers here in the States, as well as forward bases in the theater, in which literally thousands of people live, train, plan, move, and otherwise enable those doing the fighting. People at every military base around the world are involved at their own level, and in the war zone these same tasks are carried out at the unit level.

If this is what it takes to plan and “run” a war, is it any wonder that Moses, Aaron, and the Children of Israel despaired of leaving Egypt? Not only did they not have all those helpers, they didn’t have an army! And worse still, Bondage – the Egyptians were their masters and they were slaves! They were only in a position to grumble, complain, and pray.

But read the first eight verses of this reading – who is going to make this escape happen? **“The LORD said to Moses,” “I will do to Pharaoh...” “I am the Lord” “I appeared...” “I did not make...” “I established” “I have heard” “I have remembered” “I am the LORD” “I will bring you out” “I will deliver you” “I will redeem you” “I will take you” “I will be your God” “I am the LORD your God” “I will bring you” “I will give it to you” “I. Am. The. LORD.”** (punctuation added).

This chapter marks a new revelation in the meaning of God’s name. **“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty (“El Shaddai”), but by my name the LORD (Yahweh) I did not make myself known to them”** (Verse 3). Prior to this, God’s presence was more as “judge”, or “most powerful being”. As “Yahweh”, God will be their “Redeemer”, or “Deliverer.” He alone will free them from slavery and bring them to the Promised Land.

This is Good News for us today! Jesus is our Redeemer and Deliverer. And, not only has He saved us from slavery to sin and death and will bring us to the Promised Land (Heaven), we, just like the Jews in Egypt, do not have any reason to despair over anything in our lives. God hears our grumbling/complaining/prayer and remembers His covenant with us. And, our Almighty Shepherd will carry us through the worst calamities that will come our way.

Prayer: Yahweh, thank You for being my great, Almighty God as well as my Savior and Redeemer. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, August 29, 2022

Read Exodus 7

The Source of Life

The statement is often true – “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The above picture is a satellite image of Egypt. In a vast ocean of sand and life-less miles, the little green ribbon of life is striking. This is the only inhabitable land. The only place that vegetation can grow. Fish in the river have often been a staple of the diet. The Nile is truly the lifeline for Egypt. It has always been this way.

So, when Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh once more to inform Pharaoh that the LORD was commanding him to let the Hebrews go and worship the LORD in the wilderness, the Nile is a terrifying target. And yet, it made sense.

The Egyptian people (in one sense rightly) saw the Nile as the source of life, bringing needed freshwater through their land. But the True Source of Life was being dishonored and disobeyed by Pharaoh. The first of the plagues would strike at the notion that there is any other true source of life than the LORD (Yahweh).

For when the LORD was displaced as the true source of life, the Nile would become a bringer of death. “All the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink from the Nile (Ex 7:20-21).” The lively green ribbon running up the spine of Egypt was turned to dead red for refusing to listen to the Giver of Life.

Yet to the one who hears and listens? Think of the woman who met Jesus at the well in John 4. She went to the well to get water, as she had before, but instead found the True, Life Giving Water of Christ. “Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:13-14).’” He is THE source of life, forever!

Prayer – Dear Jesus, Source of Life Everlasting, quench my thirst by Your mercy, and lead me to receive everything I need for my body this day as a gift from You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason



Tuesday, August 30, 2022

Read Exodus 8

Repeated Rebellion

When I see the stories of how rulers stubbornly defy God, seeming to yield under pressure but rebound in stubbornness as they complete their responses to God, I wonder at their level of foolishness to keep doing wrong, even under God's discipline. And then I wonder about myself.

Are they really any different from me? I too find myself returning to my sin, leaving my Lord, for the dubious pleasures of this life, for the supposed security of acting for myself, selfishly. Even when I just repented, when I truly disliked what I was doing, I find myself doing again. Thanks be to God that He forgives, that even my repeated rebellions are discarded, like they never were. Thank you, Jesus.

My repeated rebellion is no worse than that of others, even that of Pharaoh, hanging on to the Israelites. What is different is my repentance. He was stubborn, only showing a false repentance. Time after time, God gave him a discipline, followed by a new call to repentance. Time after time, Pharaoh said he repented but was shown to be a liar by his actions.

So, who is ahead? Is pharaoh more stubborn or myself? There is no difference between us there. Did his stubbornness get him anywhere useful? No, as he was eventually killed sinning. Did my stubbornness get me anywhere - no, but I repent and turn back to my Savior. That repentance is a gift from God, it didn't come from desires but a gift from God. God's forgiveness is a great gift. Thank You.

Prayer: O God, I know that I don't deserve your kindness, but thank you anyway. Please guard me from the desire to rebel. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Read Exodus 9

Then the LORD said to Moses . . .

“But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth” (Exodus 3:16)

Plagues continued to be carried out by Yahweh through His servant Moses. **“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me’”** (v.1). **“Let my people go”** (see Exod 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13. When Yahweh promised His Word of the deliverance of His people to Moses from the burning bush, He knew that Pharaoh would not let them go. **“I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it”** (Exod 3:19), and to this point, Pharaoh’s heart is hardened after each plague was carried out or subsided.

In the fifth plague, the hand of Yahweh plagued **“all”** Egypt’s livestock, and all their livestock died, but not the livestock of God’s people Israel. (The Egyptians worshiped false gods; Apis and Mnevis, the bull gods; Hathor, the cow god; and Khnum, the ram god). Pharaoh’s heart was still hardened. In the sixth plague, Yahweh plagued the Egyptians with boils from the soot of the kiln. (perhaps the soot from the firing brick furnace). And Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let Yahweh’s people go (see v. 12; 4:21). In the seventh plague, Yahweh sent rain and heavy hail in all the land of Egypt **“as never been in all the land”** (v. 24). And Pharaoh begged for the hail to cease. When it did, Pharaoh again was hardened.

“Thus, Pharaoh (of whom it is written, “I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth” [Rom. 9:17; Exod. 9:16*]) was not destroyed because God did not grant him salvation or because God’s beneficent will was that he should be condemned and lost. For God does “not want any to perish” and “has no pleasure in the death of the sinner but that sinners turn from their ways and live” [2 Peter 3:9*; Ezek. 33:11*]. That God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (so that Pharaoh continued to sin and so that the more he was admonished, the harder of heart he became) was a punishment for his previous sin and his horrible tyranny, which he imposed upon the children of Israel in many, various, and completely inhuman ways, against the indictment of his own heart.” (Article XI Formula, SD:83-85).*

Prayer – Holy Father, thank You for Your love given to us in Your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who takes the plague of sin away from our sinful hearts. Amen

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, September 1, 2022
Read Exodus 10

God's Plan

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.'" (Exodus 10:1-2)

What does it mean that God "hardened" Pharaoh's heart? Have you ever gotten tripped up by these words? I know that I have. However, the meaning behind these words is rather straightforward and simple: God has a plan. And nothing can stand in the way of God's plan.

Now we don't know God's plan most of the time, but in this passage, God makes it abundantly clear what His plan is. He is using Pharaoh to demonstrate to His people what He is capable of. God is capable of devastating destruction. He's capable of turning water into blood, filling the Nile with frogs, dusting the earth with gnats, swarming the land with flies, plaguing animals with sickness, covering skin with boils, bombarding the world with hail, infesting fields and homes with locusts, and enveloping all with a darkness that could be felt. God's power knows no bounds. And God's wrath is more dangerous than anyone could imagine.

Thanks be to God that His wrath is not directed at us, His chosen people! Thanks be to God that His plan for us is not wrath, but salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ! Pharaoh and the Egyptian plagues were a demonstration for the Israelites of God's powerful wrath, and those same events reminded the future generations that the Almighty God was for them and with them. May they show you how powerful God is, and may they remind you that He is for you. Thanks be to God for His beautiful, safe, and loving plan for us!

Prayer: Almighty God, You command all of Creation and bend hearts to Your will. You have promised that Your plan for me includes peaceful streams with You eternally in heaven. Grant Your Holy Spirit that I may always praise You for not looking upon me with the wrath that I deserve, but instead with the love that You graciously shower upon me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, September 2, 2022

Read Exodus 11

The Firstborn

If you've been reading along through the book of Exodus, these words should sound familiar. Oh, I know that the whole story is familiar, but as Moses warns one last time of a coming plague, this warning should sound like something you've heard before.

As Moses was headed down to Egypt, the LORD told Moses that this would be the outcome. Exodus 4:22-23 gives us God speaking to Moses saying, **“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me.’ If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”**

The firstborn son had special rights of inheritance. They were to receive what belonged to the father. In the case of God and Israel, He wished to give a kingdom that would last forever. In the case of Pharaoh and his son, the Pharaoh was viewed as god on the earth, his son would be literally the son of god and rule with divine might and wisdom. But the firstborn of Pharaoh was not the son of god any more than Pharaoh was god on the earth.

The true God seems to ask a simple thing – for His people to be released just long enough to worship Him, but the self-styled god, Pharaoh, could not be seen as subservient to another god. To rescue His firstborn, the Lord would make it clear to Pharaoh that there was one God in Egypt, just as in all the earth – Yahweh.

In His incredible mercy, Yahweh has established a kingdom to last forever, but now at the cost of His firstborn. Jesus – the true Son of God, the true and faithful Israel – would give His life to make us part of His kingdom and sharers of the inheritance that rightly only belongs to Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, Your mercy astounds us. You are completely patient with Pharaoh, even as He stubbornly insists on being the true God that you alone can be, until every plague is exhausted seeking his repentance. Soften our hearts to trust in You and in Your firstborn Son, and keep us from such self-destructive idolatry. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, September 3, 2022

Read [Exodus 12](#)

“Passover”

I like Elvis. I admit it; I have a bunch of his albums – I even have a “Velvet Elvis” hanging in a place of honor in my home. I saw the movie (still in theaters!) that tells his amazing, but tragic life story. That’s the kind of thing we do when one of our heroes dies – we listen to all their albums, binge watch their movies, search the internet for the most arcane trivia about them. We do this because we like them, we miss them, and we wish to relive those memories a little longer.

Here in Exodus, God tells Moses about all the ways in which the people of Israel will remember the Passover lamb. Every year, they’ll do special rites and rituals, they’ll eat bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and they’ll do this for an entire week – every year. To remember what? A lamb? Sure, it would be “without blemish” – a prime, young lamb. But a lamb – what’s the big deal?

Just the biggest story in the Old Testament. You say, “Bigger than Creation? Bigger than the Flood? It’s just a lamb!” But that Passover lamb, faithfully killed by painstakingly following God’s directions, would bring them out of slavery into freedom. The Promised Land! They would toil under brutal taskmasters no more. They would now be able to properly worship God as they’d dreamed of doing. And their deliverance from Egypt was to be absolutely unbelievable! Slaves would be freed by the greatest ruler in the world, they’d be given gold and silver and take all their flocks and possessions with them, and Pharaoh would beg them to go! That’s a good story – no, a great story – but bigger than Creation?

When we look back at Elvis, or Freddy Mercury, or Princess Diana, who all left us too early, we look back at their accomplishments and lives and wish it hadn’t ended. But we know it’s over. For the Jews in later years, when they looked back at Passover and went through all the motions, remembering God’s accomplishments in the past, they also looked to the future. They knew that because Yahweh had delivered them from Egypt, He’d do it again. He’d deliver them from the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, and all their oppressors through the ages. And they were certain God would do it again.

Living in the New Testament now, and knowing that Jesus became the true Passover Lamb, we remember Him spilling His blood to save us. His blood was painted on the cross for us and He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit for us. The first Passover lambs guaranteed that His people’s lives would be spared from the destroyer in Egypt. In these days, Jesus’ blood guarantees that our lives are spared from death – forever. So, we continue this statute – this Passover remembrance – every week in worship.

Prayer: Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world. Have mercy on me, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, September 5, 2022

Read Exodus 13

Making His Presence Known

In a story of extraordinary signs and wonders, perhaps this one was the most comforting. Certainly, deliverance from the final plague was merciful, but probably scary. The Nile turning to blood or the sun going dark made clear the Lord's power, but, again, the sign was pretty intimidating.

Now to be fair, a giant pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night would be anything but normal, but the message was different. The previous signs were signs of judgment against Egypt. The pillar that changed from cloud to fire and back again each day was a singular sign of mercy.

Moses records that "the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people" (Exodus 13:22). Here was a visible sign of the LORD's presence that could be seen no matter the time – day and night.

As they headed into the wilderness, keep this in mind. "The pillar...did not depart from before the people." In short order, the people will doubt and forget, but every day the LORD would make His presence known. Despite approaching armies, suspect water, or scarce food, the LORD would not abandon His people. He had made His presence known.

We may not have a pillar of cloud and fire always in front of us, but the LORD's presence has been made known among us. This is one reason to remember your baptism. Martin Luther said to do so daily. He did this with the sign of the cross tracing over his head or heart or both that had been marked as redeemed by Christ the crucified, and he would make the remembrance with the words, "I am baptized."

I am baptized. Not I was, as though it is just a past action. I AM baptized. I am forgiven by Christ. I am claimed as a child of God. God's Spirit is with me to give me faith and help me follow. He is with me wherever I go. He has made His presence known to me. These are your words, too, dear child of God.

Prayer – Gracious God, strengthen my heart today in the promise that as I am Your baptized child, You are with me today and everyday. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

Read Exodus 14

Surprising Salvation

There are times, looking at the world, that I wonder how God can possibly win. The opposition feels to me like they have all the tools and the desire to destroy God's people, especially of course, me. It is not that I don't have faith. I know that God can do anything, but my short-sighted feelings are still panicked.

Then God tells me, once again, look at my Word. Trembling at the worldly picture I am seeing, I listen to Him and pick up my Bible. I turn pages, thinking about my panic, and then I read a psalm. Remember how God defeated the Egyptians. So, I turn the pages to Exodus and reading, remember how desperate the Israelites were.

They were not a military people - they were herdsmen. They were women and children. They were walking. Now God had led them to a water barrier - they couldn't run forward (running away from the Egyptians). They could not do anything to save themselves! And then ... God opened the water before them! They walked through on dry ground, seeing the water on either side of them. When their enemies rushed in to catch them, the water returned, clogging their wheels and trapping the whole army. They were saved by God's intervention.

So, for me too, I know that my God can and will bring me through trouble - not with my efforts (although they should be made) but by His actions, in a way I can't expect Him to act. He is certainly a trustworthy God who loves to surprise, proving that trusting Him is certain.

Prayer: Thank you God for surprising the Israelites then and being certain to surprise me as well. Thank you. Build my trust. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, September 7, 2022
Read Exodus 15

Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to Yahweh

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea." Exodus 15:1

The children of God sing this beautiful song of praise to Yahweh for their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Yahweh has *triumphed gloriously*, **"Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble"** (vv. 6-7). How wonderful and appropriate is this hymn to the One True God!

Have you ever dreamed of being chased by an enemy who had let you go through a sea on dry land with walls of water on each side and an army of angry, murderous Egyptians chasing you? Who would or could? Walking through the Red Sea on dry land was not a dream for God's people Israel though, yet a true historical account and part of God's ultimate plan for our deliverance from the enemy of sin, death, and Satan in Jesus Christ, the promised seed of the woman.

God's promise of deliverance from 400 years of slavery is first seen when Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham to his seed the promised land (see Genesis 15; 15:13-21; Acts 7:17), and He sent Moses as a ruler and redeemer to His people. And when the fullness of time came, God sent His only Son, Jesus, the Righteous One who was betrayed and murdered, to free and redeem us from our sins (see Acts 7:52; Gal 4:4, Ephesians 1:3-14).

God has delivered us from the enemy of sin, death, and Satan through Christ Jesus, who has *triumphed gloriously* over all evil through His death and resurrection from the dead. For you! You are forgiven in Jesus Christ's blood, who triumphed gloriously, **"Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble"** (vv. 14-15).

The Son of God; *"has promised that not only his unveiled deity, which to us poor sinners is like a consuming fire on dry stubble, will be with them, but that he, he, the man who has spoken with them, who has tasted every tribulation in his assumed human nature, and who can therefore sympathize with us as with men and his brethren, he wills to be with us in all our troubles also according to that nature by which he is our brother and we are flesh of his flesh"* (Apology, SD, VIII:87).

Prayer – Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. For Jesus' sake and in His Name. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, September 8, 2022
Read Exodus 16

God Hears; God Provides

Yet again, the people of God are grumbling and complaining. Their grumbling seems entirely unreasonable at this point! God had saved them from slavery in Egypt, and God had given them water in the form of the sweetened Marah River! What could they possibly be complaining about now?!

Well, what we see is the Israelites are hungry. Now, this is nothing new. We all know from personal experience that hunger can greatly affect someone's mood. As wisely observed by the Snickers franchise, "You're not you when you're hungry". The Israelites were not themselves! In their hunger, they had become more irrational, angry, and desperate. They began saying, "at least we had food in Egypt! Sure, we were slaves and abused, but at least we could eat! God, please feed us!" They cried out to God in desperation. In response, God sends them manna everyday in the wilderness to eat.

Now there are several things we can learn from this story, and I encourage you to delve into them during your own personal study, but there are two things that I think we need to walk away with: God listens to His people, and God provides for His people.

The Israelites, God's own people, were grumbling against Him because they didn't feel that their needs were being met. They said all sorts of hurtful things and even wished that things could go back to the way they were before He saved them. But God listened to their grumbling. Even though the words were hurtful and irrational, God listened to them. And more than that, God answered them. God provided His people with what they were so desperate for. He provided them with food and, by extension, life with His bread.

We, God's own people, often grumble against God because we feel that our needs are not being met. We sometimes say hurtful things against God because we, like the Israelites, are hungry for earthly satisfaction. And God hears our grumbling. Through Jesus, each of our prayers are heard, and more than that, they have been answered. Jesus has provided His people with what we were so desperate for. He has provided us with the food of His very body and blood and, by extension, life. Therefore, we have all that we need! Thanks be to God, the Provider!

Prayer: Almighty God, You provided Your people in the wilderness with life-giving manna to eat for their restoration. Continue to feed Your people now in the wilderness of this earth with the life-giving food of Jesus' body and blood, so that we may be strengthened to persevere until our reunion with You. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, September 9, 2022

Read Exodus 17

Is the Lord Among Us or Not?

Everyone has had those moments when the Lord seems far off. It may be as your body seemingly betrays you and the doctors search for answers. It may be in a moment when a relationship has crumbled and the quiet is agonizing. Sometimes, the Lord seems far off because joy seems absent and all we can see are 10,000 reasons to complain.

The Israelites had one clear complaint. Exodus 17 opens, “All the congregation...moved...according to the commandment of the LORD...but there was no water for the people to drink.” This is a problem. Water is not exactly an optional nicety. It’s essential. What’s worse – this is where the LORD commanded them to come! So, the complaining and the quarreling commences, but we only find out the heart of their complaint at the end of the story, “(Moses) called the name of the place Massah (testing) and Meribah (quarreling), because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’”

Remember that a large pillar of cloud by day and fire by night provides the visible presence of God. But still they are not sure! So, in a remarkable way (from Moses striking a rock) God provides water, but more importantly, He makes it clear to His people that He is among them.

We need such assurance that the LORD remains with us. Oh, He’s promised the fire of His Spirit to dwell in us as His baptized children, but when problems arise, we can not just complain about the difficulty, but also doubt His love, His presence.

To answer us, the LORD sent His Son. The Word became flesh to be among us. Upon His resurrection and ascension, the Son sent the Spirit to dwell with us constantly. Knowing our need for forgiveness and strengthening in His promises, Christ comes giving His Spirit in baptism and also His very presence in the Lord’s Supper. He promises to be present when two or three of His people are gathered, to hear every prayer, and be with us in His Word.

Again and again and again, our Lord answers our fears and complaints by telling us, “I’m right here.”

Prayer: Lord Jesus, comfort me with the knowledge of Your presence. In trials, Lord, instead of doubting and quarreling with You, help me to respond to every difficulty by bringing my fears to You. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, September 10, 2022

Read [Exodus 18](#)

“God’s Family”

Moses and Jethro, his father-in-law, had a marvelous, healthy relationship that is a shining example for us today. Moses’ good character set the stage in a seemingly insignificant way – he defended the sheep of 7 sisters from some competing shepherds. He saw them unjustly pushing the women’s sheep away from the water and took it upon himself to drive the men away, allowing the women’s sheep to drink. Nice of him, right?

That led to the sisters’ father, Jethro, inviting Moses to eat with them, leading to Jethro giving his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses in marriage. Moses kept Jethro’s flocks, and he and Zipporah had two sons. After Moses’ calling at the Burning Bush, Jethro advised Moses to **“Go in Peace”** to Egypt to answer that Godly call. (Jethro was “the priest of Midian” but probably didn’t know Yahweh at this time.)

Moses and his family returned to Egypt, confronting Pharaoh and leading Israel out of Egypt. Sometime before that, though, Moses sent his family back to stay with Jethro, which brings us to our reading. Jethro had **“heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel”** and went to meet Moses at Mt. Sinai, bringing along Moses’ family. Moses told the whole story to his father-in-law, who professed, **“Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.”** Jethro brought burnt offerings and sacrifices to God and ate with the elders of Israel.

The next day, Moses sat down to judge the people of Israel – from dawn to evening. Jethro, gave him his two cents: **“Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.”** In other words, “Son, you’re going to kill yourself if you try to do this noble thing alone! Get some help and save yourself for the big issues.” **“So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.”**

I retell this long story to make the point – treat one another with respect. Do the right thing, even when you’re in the wilds of Midian. Be humble. Listen to others and accept their suggestions. Look how, throughout this story, God blessed Moses, Jethro, Zipporah, Israel, and all of us! Through good deeds, God’s Will is done, and that’s a beautiful thing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for welcoming me into Your family. Help me to be Christ-like to my neighbors. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, September 12, 2022

Read Exodus 19

Promises Kept

Have you ever made promises that you later failed to keep? Maybe you were desperate to complete a project, repay a debt, lose weight, or get out of trouble. It could have been a promise to your spouse, your child, or a friend. We can make promises with the very best of intentions but following through on them can prove to be a lot more difficult.

In Exodus 19, God told the Israelites that if they would obey Him completely, He would treasure them above all nations. Because the Israelites had seen what God had done in Egypt, they responded, “**All that the LORD has spoken, we will do.**” (Exodus 19:8). Now there is a big promise. No doubt, it is offered with the best of intentions, but following through on it will prove a tall task indeed.

The Bible records repeated accounts of Israel’s disobedience, and some of them we will run into before the end of the book of Exodus. Fortunately, God always keeps His promises. Despite the Israelites unfaithfulness, God continued to provide for and protect His people. No matter how tall a task, He has followed through on every promise.

Knowing our shortcomings, God established a new covenant with us through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. Though we may wander far from God, He continues to love us above all things and patiently calls us back to Him. Jesus is gracious and merciful, extending compassion and forgiveness that we do not deserve. For all that the LORD has spoken, He has and will do.

Prayer – Faithful Lord, thank you for keeping every promise to me. Guide me by Your Spirit to follow You faithfully. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

Read Exodus 20

Ten Words

I am so glad that God came to me and made me His own. My life, done in my way, has never been worthwhile. My “great” achievements were really negative, even as I tried to pretend I could do great things. But God came to me and made me His.

But that raised a different question! Now what? My life my way was no good, and now I want to live God’s ways. But how? God remembered me (and all the others like me) and gave me a list of directives on living in Him. The Bible calls the “the Ten Words”, but never gives numbering! However, I want to count them there are the same Words: How to live God’s ways. Great, I thought, now I can really do great things, I have directions from God.

Oops. The more I try, having these commandments, these directions in mind, the more I try, the more I see my failures. Not only are my ideas corrupted, even my attempts to follow God’s ways are corrupted. God gave me the answers and I still can’t follow them!

How glorious it is that Jesus came and lived for me; that Jesus not only died and rose for me but also lived the perfect life, demonstrating that in Him it is possible. Now when He came to me, making me His own, He came to live in me and make my life His. He forgives my failings. He brings joyous surprises of His actions in and around me. Yes, with His love and presence, even those commandments I can’t keep become doable.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for living for and in me. Thank You that your directions for my life become meaningful in You. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, September 14, 2022
Read Exodus 21

Hebrews Slaves, Sabbath, and Death

“Now these are the rules that you shall set before them.” (Exodus 21:1)

The Israelites were recently freed from slavery by Yahweh, who brought them “out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (20:1). Now they are buying and selling themselves as Hebrew slaves for six years to each other. Slaves are to be freed from slavery in the seventh year for nothing, or, if they are given a wife, they can stay with their master, **“But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.** (21:5-6; compare with Deuteronomy 15; see Exod 7-11 for a daughter (female) sold to slavery). What stands out here is Yahweh’s freedom for slaves on the seventh year of rest (sabbath) and His precise regulations about Hebrew slavery and making restoration in this chapter.

The freed men from slavery in the seventh year signify a rest from labor. We may recall these words, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (20:8) in the Ten Words—*הַדְּבָרִים* (commonly known as the Ten Commandments) spoken in Exodus 20 (see 20:1, 8-11) links to the sabbath rest we see in the creation account when God rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3). Perhaps Hebrew voluntary/involuntary slavery was already being practiced among Israel before Yahweh’s regulations seen here in Exodus 21. What is needed and highlighted in God’s Word is rest.

The church Father’s, Jerome and Ambrose, noted, “The true sabbath rest is eternal life” (Jerome). “To belong only to God is to enjoy true freedom” (Ambrose). To which we boldly confess, our “forever” freedom from sin, sabbath rest, and eternal life is in Jesus Christ alone, “For we who have believed enter that rest . . . for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:3, 10; see Hebrews 3-5). In Jesus Christ, through the means of grace, we have eternal freedom and justification from slavery to sin and rest for our souls, for Jesus promised, **“I will give you rest”** (see Matthew 11:25-30).

Prayer – Gracious and eternal Father, Your eternal life, joy, rest, peace, and forgiveness are given to us through faith and Baptism into Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, our Master and King. Thank You for this day and for freeing us from slavery to sin, death, and Satan in Jesus Christ crucified for us and risen from the dead. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, September 15, 2022
Read Exodus 22

God of Compassion

What we have here in Exodus is a continuation of the laws given to the Israelites through Moses. Now, this chapter is rightfully split into two sections: a section containing laws about restitution and a section containing laws about social justice. Within these two sections, we find a lot of laws concerning what one is to do if an injustice is done to them and how such crimes are to be paid for with a few laws concerning idol worship and faithfulness to God sprinkled in throughout. What we need to do with these two sections of laws, as well as anytime we come across law-filled passages of Scripture, is ask ourselves a simple question: What do these laws tell us about God?

In this passage, the answer is rather simple because God Himself tells us. In verse 27, God says, "...if he cries to me, I will hear, for **I am compassionate.**" God is compassionate. So much so, that God is described as gracious and merciful all throughout the Scriptures (Numbers 14:18, Exodus 34:6, Jonah 4:2, Psalm 145:8, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Joel 2:13, and many many more)! God is compassionate towards His creation to the point where He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross so we may be healed and reunited with Him in heaven. That's how compassionate God is towards us!

And He wants us to be compassionate towards each other, as well. He wants us to treat each other fairly. To not steal or cheat, but to honor one another as brothers and sisters. He wants us to love one another as Jesus has loved us – by sacrificing everything to the point of death on a cross for us. Our God is a ruler of unparalleled compassion. How beautiful it is that we can share that same compassion with those around us!

Prayer: "Merciful Father, through Holy Baptism You called us to be Your own possession. Grant that our lives may evidence the working of Your Holy Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, according to the image of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen."

- *LSB*, "Collect for Life as a baptized child of God," pg. 310.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, September 16, 2022

Read Exodus 23

Needed Rest

I was at the doctor for my annual check up last week. He is good about asking me a bunch of questions that I know in my head are important, but in practice I have somewhat mixed results in following through on.

Doc: How is your diet?

Me: Pretty good.

Doc: How's your vision?

Me: Not really getting better

Doc: Are you still drinking soda?

Me: Yeah

Doc: Have you been to the dentist?

Me: Yes (thankfully he didn't ask about flossing)

Doc: Are you getting enough sleep?

Me: Sometimes

These questions went on for some time, and I recognize that they are part of what it means to be healthy. The last one stuck with me, but not because I'm sleep deprived (although I don't always get in 8 hours of shuteye). I go to thinking about this last one as we are reading through Exodus because the LORD keeps coming back to rest.

The commandment to "remember the Sabbath day" doesn't seem to be sufficient. So, rest is built into farming (six years for sowing and a seventh year of "rest for the field"). Rest is necessary for oxen, donkeys, servants, men, women, everyone and everything.

Why?

Two reasons. First, we are creatures, not machines. God made us to work for six days and rest on the seventh. He built this into creation. We can exhaust ourselves, and lacking sleep and rest, we wear ourselves out. This pattern of rest is clearly part of how God made things. So, there's a need for weekly rest and (as shown with the fields) a need for longer rest periodically as well.

This leads to the second, related, reason for rest. We rest to remember the God who made all things, who made us. We gather for worship then to remember and rest in the peace bringing forgiveness of Christ. We hear God's Word that shaped the creation and gives shape to our lives. We listen and receive from God His blessings in worship as a reminder that all we have is a gift from Him. And so, the Lord gives multiple reminders of this need in the book of Exodus. We need rest, and that is truly given from and found in Him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, lead me to receive true rest regularly in You and Your Word. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, September 17, 2022

Read [Exodus 24](#)

“Covenant”

In Genesis 9, after the waters of the Great Flood had receded and Noah and his family emerged from the Ark, God made a covenant with Noah and all people to come. God promised to never again destroy the world with a universal flood, and He set His rainbow in the sky as a sign. In Genesis 15, God covenanted with Abram, promising to give Abram many offspring and land further than the eye could see. In Genesis 17, God renewed this covenant. Abram and all his male offspring would now be circumcised as a sign of participation in God’s covenant.

Here in Exodus, for the last five chapters, we’ve been reading of God’s decrees to His people and of His promises for them. Chapter 24 now puts all this Covenant into writing and God delivers it to His people. He invites Moses and His priests and seventy of the elders of Israel to come up the mountain. In preparation, Moses had bulls sacrificed to the LORD, their blood spilt and gathered into basins. He read God’s Covenant to the people, who replied, “**All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.**” Moses threw half of the blood on the altar, with the other half he washed the people.

Moses and the elders ascended the mountain and beheld God, and ate and drank. Then, Moses left them to go higher, alone with God. The cloud covered the mountain, God spoke to Moses, and the glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, “**like the appearance of a devouring fire**”.

This event foreshadowed all future Hebrew Temple worship. The masses of people would worship from the outer courts, the priests and elders from the inner courts, and only the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies (and that, only once a year). Blood would be spilt from animals, their flesh burned as offerings or prepared for eating by the priests, and blood dripped onto the Ark of the Covenant, where God would have mercy on His people.

Jesus came to put an end to all that bloodshed – all that death. After all, our sin deserves death, and the people of Israel were only too grateful to substitute animal blood in exchange for their own. But Jesus’ blood was sacrificed one time for all – His blood paid for Adam and Eve’s sin, the sins of Noah, Abraham, and Moses, and yours and mine. He tore down the curtain that separated God from His people, and we now join Him every worship service: “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we only approach You through the blood of Your Son, Jesus. Remind us of this gift every time we gather. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, September 19, 2022

Read Exodus 25

A Joyful Offering?

“Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give.” (Exodus 25:2)

God had big plans for his temporary home among his people. He was going to give his people a very detailed plan for his tent that would sit in the middle of the Israelite camp. In order to build this tabernacle (“Tent of Meeting”), many items were needed: gold, silver, yarn, linen. So, God gives the Israelites an opportunity to give. He invites them to bring him an offering. He doesn’t demand what everyone should bring, or a specific amount, but that each man, each family should bring what their hearts prompted them to give. That is what an offering really is. It isn’t something that is coerced, forced, or demanded. Rather, it is something joyfully given. It is the response of a heart that loves God and is thankful to him.

Often, money and offerings are a touchy subject among believers. Some of the blame lies with pastors and churches who have given a poor example in their encouragement to believers to give offerings. And there is just as much blame to pointed back at us, for we have hearts that are selfish, hearts that wants to keep everything for ourselves, hearts that grip tightly every last penny God has given us. On top of that, our minds come up with countless convenient excuses for not bringing offerings to God: maybe it is that we feel we don’t have enough for ourselves (not putting God first and trusting he will provide), or maybe it is a misconceived notion that all the church wants is our money (it doesn’t).

Our sinful nature makes it so easy to miss the point. Our offerings are not a demand, but an invitation. God doesn’t demand that we give him what is already his, but he gives us the opportunity with our actions and with our offerings to live our faith. We have the opportunity to give a demonstration of our trust that God will continue to provide for our needs, a demonstration that God, not our money or possessions come first in our life; a way for you and me to show our love and thankfulness to God. After all, like the Israelites, we have a God who has delivered us – who has saved us from our selfish, sinful hearts and forgiven our sins.

So, how do you see offerings? Rather than seeing it as a demand, view it instead as an opportunity for you to put your love for God into action. Look at all God has richly given to you, then prompted by love and thankfulness, joyfully give an offering to your Savior God!

Prayer: Dear God, forgive me for looking at the money and possessions you have blessed me with as being mine. Give me a heart that is regularly prompted by love to return a generous portion of what is already yours to you. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

(adapted from a writing by Pastor Ben Kratz)

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Read Exodus 26

The Place of Joy

Our God created a beautiful universe. I can see that in looking at the stars and looking at the ground (consider the “random” designs created by flowing water). I look at life, in itself a marvelous creation, with intricate self-correcting patterns to bodies and marvelous achievements, such as caterpillars into butterflies.! And then I marvel at how He included an understanding of beauty in people. Where does that joy and appreciation come from?

I find that my Savior, Jesus, has given me a better appreciation for beauty along with His spiritual salvation. That which my selfish nature keeps wanting to consider as frills, or expensive waste, now appears to carry a beauty making me happy and glad to be part of the audience. Beauty reminds me of Christ, of the way He took the triviality of sin, took the worthlessness of my selfishness, of the way He demonstrated how meaningless it all was as He showed me that I was worth more to Him than even life itself. He took the sadness of crucifixion and made it glorious by using it to show the love of God and then used that to make me meaningful as His child, a member of heaven.

I rejoice in my Savior, in His love for me, and in His continuing love for others. But I also rejoice in His provision of beauty, making joy in my life here in this evil ridden world. There are places of joy in the midst of evil, showing God’s love wins everywhere.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for beautiful, for the way in which you show that badness cannot triumph even in the things of life. Amen

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, September 21, 2022
Read Exodus 27

The Bronze Altar, Court, and Burning Lamp

“As it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made.” Exodus 27:8

The instructions Yahweh gave Moses on the mountain were very detailed and specific to His tabernacle, also called the **“tent of meeting”** (v. 21). The blueprint of God’s plan was revealed to God’s people in the wilderness, and His tabernacle would be constructed exactly as He said (see Exodus 35-40), fulfilled in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ laid out here in the Scriptures.

The altar (vv. 1-8) with the four horns was to be in the sight of all the people where the blood of the sin offerings was put upon the horns. Today we Christians look to the altar of the cross where Christ’s blood was shed for you, and the horn of salvation for all Israel (see Psalm 18:2; Luke 1:69). **“We have an altar from which those who serve the [σκηνή (skēnē), tent, tabernacle] tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured”** (Hebrews 13:10-13).

“You shall make the court of [מִשְׁכַּן הַ (miškān h) (the)] the tabernacle.” (v.9). This is where the bronze altar was placed in the sight of all the people. The Word of God *tabernacled/tented–lived, settled, took up residence* in the flesh *among us* as we see in John’s account **“And the Word became flesh and [ἐσκήνωσεν (eskēnōsen) tabernacled/tented] dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). Our Lord Jesus Christ was incarnated in the flesh, born of the virgin Mary, Baptized for sinners and taking our sin upon Himself, **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29); who suffered and was crucified, atoned for all our sins on a cross and **“said, ‘It is finished,’”** (John 19:30), died and rose from the dead on the third day.

The **“tent of meeting”** is where Yahweh tabernacled among His people Israel in the wilderness. This was a foreshadow of Jesus Christ, who tabernacled in the flesh among His people and is the mediator between God and man, the true mercy seat and the everlasting altar of sacrifice for sins (see Hebrews 9-10). Jesus is the light of the world, the everlasting burning lamp and the new covenant that will burn gloriously forever here and now and in the new heavens and new earth.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, You are our everlasting life and salvation, the light of the world. Thank you for dying my sins, in You alone are my sins forgiven. You are the Son of the living God, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, September 22, 2022
Read Exodus 28

The Beauty of Worship

In this chapter we are again confronted with many laws, this time concerning the garments of Aaron and the priests. There are laws stating that priests must wear particular breastplates, ephods, robes, coats, turbans, and sashes, all of which have their own rules and regulations about what they should look like, what they should be made out of, and what they should symbolize. And one could take a deep dive into every fabric, color, ornament, and symbol and discover rich theological meanings in everything written in this chapter. But one could also look at the surface of what is commanded and find rich theology there, too. I won't bore you with my research into the nitty-gritty, and instead we'll focus on the latter, the big picture.

As we do with all long stretches of Old Testament law, we ask ourselves, "What do these laws tell us about God?" I think that this chapter tells us something simple about God: God is beautiful and worshiping Him is beautiful, too.

Take a moment and imagine or draw the image formed by all of the laws in this chapter. What do you see? Something beautiful! The image is glowing with gold, bright colors, and gemstones! It seems odd for us to think, but the priests, Aaron and his sons, were definitely the flashiest people in town! God wanted His priests to look good. Or, better yet, God wanted the people in charge of worshiping Him to look good. Based on this chapter, during the ancient days, (though certainly not meant to be a "show") worshiping God was a big and beautiful event. It was truly something to behold! For the Israelites, worshiping God was the main event and it was beautiful.

And so it still is today. Even though pastors don't dress like Aaron did, the essence of worship is still the same, and it is beautiful because the God who we worship is beautiful. Worship is still the main event because that's when we publicly celebrate Christ's death and resurrection.

So I encourage you to worship like it's the big and beautiful event that God has established it to be. Come to worship prepared to witness the beauty of God. Because there is certainly nothing and no one more beautiful.

Prayer: "Almighty, everlasting God, You gave Your only Son to be a High Priest of good things to come. Grant unto us, Your unworthy servants, to have our share in the company of the blessed for all eternity; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, "Prayer for Blessedness of heaven," pg. 1322

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, September 23, 2022

Read Exodus 29

Full Hands

Everyone knows what it is to have your hands full. A young mother trying to get out of the house with two kids under the age of five? She knows what it is to have her hands full. The manager who is trying to hold things together while running a business three employees short. He knows too.

But it is something slightly different to have someone else fill your hands. Aaron and his sons are having their hands filled, not just by someone, but by the LORD. **“You shall bring his sons and put coats on them, and you shall gird Aaron and his sons with sashes and bind caps on them. And the priesthood shall be theirs by a statute forever. Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29:8-9).”** Maybe you missed it, but the Lord is filling the hands of Aaron and his sons. You see, that’s literally what ordain means – “to fill the hand.”

With a sin offering (v 10-14), the priests lay hands and their sins on sacrificial animals in order for those hands to be filled with the work of the Lord. And it won’t just be their hands. **“Tip of the right ear... thumb of their right hand... big toe of their right foot”** (v 19-20). These consecrated priests were stained with the blood of sacrifice. Their ears were to be filled with the Word of God. The work of their hands would handle the holy things of God. Their feet would walk on holy ground in the presence of the LORD.

Our pastors today are ordained to similarly have the LORD fill their hands with the work of the Lord. Pastors are ordained to have ears filled with the Word of God (in order to speak that word). They are ordained to have hands set aside to handle the Word and Sacraments that deliver the grace of God. They are ordained to walk in service for and alongside God’s people.

And your hands are filled too! You have been washed with water (see v. 4) by being baptized into Christ. You are part of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:4-5). Your ears are to be filled with the Word of God, your hands set aside to serve God in your various vocations, your feet set aside to carry the burdens of those around you. In all of it, your hands (and heart and ears and feet!) have been cleansed by Christ, THE sacrifice. So now cleansed, you too, have your hands full with opportunities to serve your Lord. As Paul says in Romans 12, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies (hands, ears, feet!) as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”**

Prayer: Dear Lord, in view of Your mercy toward me, consecrate my hands, ears, feet, and my whole life to serve as You desire. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, September 24, 2022

Read [Exodus 30 \(especially 1-10\)](#)

“Incense”

God told Moses, “**You shall make an altar on which to burn incense.**” It was to be a cubit wide by a cubit deep, two cubits tall, and covered in gold. It would have rings in which to put two poles with which to carry it; also covered with gold. Even the particular kind of wood was specified by God. Why? Why would this be so important?

One of the ingredients used to make the incense, Frankincense, was also used to prepare a grain offering. It was mixed with the grain, then some burned (probably making an amazing smell!) and some used to prepare the Bread of the Presence. That bread was placed on a table on one side of the holy place, across from the lampstand. The altar where the sacrifices occurred was outside; these special items were inside where the priests prayed and offered the sacrifices. Incense was burned as an offering twice a day; near dawn when the lamb was sacrificed and again at dusk. While this took place, the people would offer their prayers. Why?

The table of incense was the only thing that stood between the priest and the Holy of Holies, in which stood the Ark of the Covenant. The veil separated them, but as he prayed, the priest’s prayers would pass through the smoke of the incense, reaching God’s mercy seat. And God declared, “**It is most holy to the LORD.**” Why would He say that?

Saving His people from their sins is “most holy to the LORD.” Nothing is more near and dear to His heart. And, in Moses’ time, God gave His people this system of animal sacrifice and rites, rules about clothing, cleaning, and practices, and taught them how to worship Him. For 15 centuries, this was how they approached God, and He met them and forgave their sins. Until Jesus.

When John the Baptist declared, “**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!**”, the news was that that repetitious, bloody, and strange system had been replaced by the Real Thing. Jesus’ blood was shed for our sins on the cross. He offered His body to His Father as the final sacrifice for all time. And He breathed His last and died on the cross, tearing in two that veil that had separated God and Man.

In the Old Testament, the prayers of the people passed through a priest and the incense to reach God’s merciful ear. Today, the Lamb stands on the throne in heaven and hears our prayers directly (through “**golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints**”). His blood makes us holy to approach Him. He is the priest that offers Himself as our sacrifice. And His Father, full of mercy, forgives us.

Prayer: Gracious Father, hear us as our prayer wafts like incense to Your mercy seat in heaven. In Your Son’s Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, September 26, 2022

Read Exodus 31

Varied Callings

Yesterday someone asked me about the complicated box that houses the safe at church. The large wooden box is heavy on its own, but is held in place by a long iron bar that is padlocked to stay in place, and if this is not enough, the padlock is behind a door that is deadbolted and inside a locked room. This system took craftsmanship and ingenuity. The question was about who built this multi-step security system. My understanding is that it was built by Gene Blase, who used his carpentry skills to construct quite a few items around the church property over the years.

This conversation quickly came to my mind in reading about Oholiab and Bezalel. These are probably not names with which you would be familiar, if you weren't reading through the book of Exodus with us. While the names are unique, they don't stand out as nearly as memorable as Moses or Aaron or Miriam. Yet their names are remembered here because of their unique callings. They had been **"filled...with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft"** (Ex. 31:3-4).

We may all find some points at which we can relate to Moses, but so much of his life as a prince, a messenger before the king of Egypt, and leader of millions, seems very different than our own. But we can relate to Oholiab and Bezalel. Perhaps you have the same artistic deficiencies that I have, but you have God-given callings and opportunities to serve in them and in God's church. You may be given the knowledge and ability to make tables or move tables. You may be given gifts to lead a committee or diligence to pray tirelessly for others.

These two men highlight two important realities: first, God is the giver of every good gift. So, we should use them and as we do, give glory to Him who has gifted us and made us His through the greater gift of salvation. Second, we should recognize God provides all that is needed for His people. Through pastors and teachers and parents and trustees and ushers and through people with minds abilities to make a safe even safer. Thanks be to God for the many ways He allows us to share in His work!

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for all of your servants. Help each of your people to use the gifts you give, and in so doing, to give glory to You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Read Exodus 26

The Place of Joy

The Israelites sinned greatly against God. They didn't trust Him - as soon as they didn't perceive Him present they ran from Him creating their own ideas, abandoning God in the process. They fell into sin because they didn't trust Him, they wanted to be in control and "force" Him to do what they wanted!

I look at them and think, "How foolish of them! How could they forget the God that got them out of Egypt?". But, as usual, my thoughts turn out to be the ranting of a fool. I am not much, if any, better. I don't build a golden calf - but I find myself wanting to keep my money, I don't share it with others, especially those who I can't control, I make money my god (thinking that I can save it better than the Real God!). How foolish.

I am so thankful that He forgives. He forgave the Israelites, those who didn't hang on stubbornly to their sin. He forgives me in my sin as well. He made me His and hasn't left me ever. Even when I try to leave Him, I find that He was always there bringing me back. He forgives! How could the Israelites have forgotten that God saved them, that they couldn't see Him in Egypt yet He saved them. Even when I can't see Him, He is saving me as well.

Away with golden calves, whether statues or idols or bank accounts. When God forgave me, I left those attractions.

Prayer: Thank you God, for forgiving my selfish foolish attempts at running my life, Thank you for forgiving and please, help me now to stay in You. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

Read Exodus 33

Yahweh Spoke to Moses

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give it.’” Exodus 33:1

The people mourned at this Word of God because Yahweh desired to consume them, **“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst because you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you on the way”** (v.3). Making idols was the problem here for the people of Israel. They were plagued for sinning against God in worshiping the golden calf. Now God used to speak **“face to face”** (v. 11) with Moses at the tent of meeting in the pillar of cloud, **“And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door”** (v. 11).

The first and most important “things” that come to us at this moment may include our family, jobs, Facebook posts, school, appointments, politics, or Jesus(?). If Jesus was the first thing you thought, Amen. But what usually consumes our time is sensibly, presently, and visibly in front of us. Whatever it may be, idols and sin consume our hearts and time among the things we consider most important. God justly punishes our sin, and we deserve nothing but His wrath.

“This inherited sin has caused such a deep, evil corruption of nature that reason does not comprehend it; rather, it must be believed on the basis of the revelation in the Scriptures (Ps. 51[:5] and Rom. 5[:12]; Exod. 33[:20]; Gen. 3[:6ff.])” (Luther, *The Smalcald Articles*: III:l, 3).

“What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses . . . ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live” (Romans 9:14; Exodus 33:19-20; compare Romans 9:15). Yahweh’s full glory would consume us lest we were covered by His Mighty hand in the cleft of the rock. (see vv. 21-23). Jesus is the Rock of our salvation, the eternal Son of God, who was incarnate in the flesh, born of the virgin Mary, crucified for our sin, and risen from the dead on the third day for our justification.

Prayer – Lord Jesus. You are alive and living and among us Your Word and Sacraments. You give us life, salvation, and forgiveness of sins. You will visibly return in Your full glory and power on the Last Day to restore all things bringing us into Your eternal Kingdom. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, September 29, 2022
Read Exodus 34

Faithfulness to Unfaithful Children

Being blatantly disregarded or ignored is possibly one of the most frustrating things one can experience. In my experience, this happens noticeably more often when working with children. Let's take playing on the playground as an example. I worked for a summer day-care a few years back, and the playground outside had a very rickety and loose set of monkey bars. I knew that if a child attempted to climb his or her way across the monkey bars, the bars would spin and send the child crashing to the woodchips. I relayed this danger to the children under my care and then proceeded to watch them play. Not long after, I look towards the monkey bars and see a kid hanging, then spinning, then slipping, and then falling all the way to the ground. No one was injured, but needless to say, the kid spent the rest of the play-time sitting with me on the curb. I felt horrible, not only because a child under my care experienced something painful, but also because I was ignored. My advice was disregarded, and this led to a very unpleasant experience for the one who disregarded it.

The Israelites were God's children. He raised them, brought them out of Egypt, and was taking care of them as a loving and patient father. He even gave the Israelites advice regarding what to do and what not to do. Nevertheless, God's children ignored God, disregarded His advice and ended up separated from Him because of it. Much like my experience on the playground, the Israelites actively disregarded God's directions and broke the trust that had formed between them. This separation from God has eternal consequences. Nothing could be worse!

But God doesn't abandon His children. Back to my story, after the child fell on the monkey bars, he sat with me and we talked about what had happened. After he assured me that he was not planning on doing it again, he was thrilled to get back out onto the playground again the next day, and I was happy to let him. In our chapter for today, God forgives His children and allows them to get back onto the "playground" of His covenant too. He reestablished His covenant with His children, Israel, and continues to forgive His children, you and I, today. We remain members of that same covenant with God. But now, it has been completed through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for His undeterred forgiveness, love, and faithfulness for His unfaithful children!

Prayer: "Lord God, heavenly Father, from Your hand we receive all good gifts and by Your grace we are guarded from all evil. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that, acknowledging with our whole heart Your boundless goodness, we may now and evermore thank and praise You for Your loving-kindness and tender mercy; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

- *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, "Prayer of thanksgiving to God," pg. 3120.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, September 30, 2022

Read Exodus 35

A Generous Heart, A Grateful Heart

After the debacle of the golden calf and the renewal of the covenant, Exodus 35 has the people getting to work building the tabernacle that the LORD had described and commanded a number of chapters earlier. But to build such a structure would take gold and silver, fine linens woven from purple, blue, and scarlet yarn, and much, much more.

God could have commanded that the people hand over what was needed, but He doesn't. Having shown a generous, gracious heart towards His people, He invites them to respond in generous gratitude. He commands only that a collection be taken, but what and how much? **"Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution..."** (Exodus 35:5)." This is precisely what happens. **"Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments** (Exodus 35:20-21)."

What stirred the hearts of the people? The generosity of their God! Think about it. They had been unfaithful in a colossal manner. Not only does God not wipe them off the face of the earth (which our sin always deserves), nor did He banish them from His presence, but in fact His mercy is so great that the tabernacle will still be built. He still will live in the midst of the people, and through the tabernacle, provide the sacrificial system that allows an unholy people to be forgiven and cleansed in order to be in the presence of THE holy God. No wonder their hearts were moved! With just a little reflection, they were reminded that their freedom, their possessions, their very lives were all gifts from the generous, gracious God. How could they not be generous in gratitude!

What stirs our hearts toward generosity? The generosity of our God! We have been unfaithful in one colossal manner after another, and not only does God refuse to wipe us off the earth or banish us from His presence, but in the words of John 1, Jesus came and literally "tabernacled" among us (John 1:14). He has been the great sacrifice to forgive and cleanse us, unholy people, to be in the presence of THE holy God. He continues to come and be present in His Word and in His Supper. Again and again, having shown a gracious, generous heart toward us, He invites us to respond in generous gratitude.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, in view of Your generous, gracious heart toward me, give me a generous and grateful heart toward You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, October 1, 2022

Read [Exodus 36](#)

“Tabernacle”

After graduating from the seminary in 2001, we packed up the family for a trip to Orlando, FL. Yes, we went to Disney World, but we also visited a theme park called “The Holy Land Experience”. Instead of a funny mouse, we saw staff in the full garb of Hebrew priests, carpenters, merchants, and homemakers. We ate Middle Eastern food and saw recreations of Biblical sights. There was a scale model of ancient Jerusalem, and “priests” explained the trappings and rites that took place in a full-size mockup of the Tabernacle. Sadly, the park closed in 2020.

The last portion of chapter 35 and all this chapter tell about how the tabernacle was built. When you read its description, you can imagine a theme park designer getting excited about rebuilding an exact copy of the Tabernacle, because it goes to that extreme level of detail. This was no flimsy tent that could blow away in a light breeze; it contained literally tons of gold, silver, bronze, wood, leather, and fabrics of many kinds. God had described it, and filled with the Holy Spirit, His people built it.

Where and how we worship God has always been a balance between competing considerations. In Moses’ day, God actually lived with Israel in the Tabernacle. It was a serious place – sacrifices for people’s sins were made there, and God Himself spoke. If a wrong person touched certain items, they would die. As such, it was beautiful, expensive, and the most important focal point for the nation.

But that Old Testament tent was replaced by a permanent Temple, which was destroyed and replaced a couple times, and then – Jesus. The Son of God tore down the Temple on the Cross and rebuilt it in His resurrected body. So now, God lives in our hearts and He makes His home within every Christian. We no longer need a Temple, right?

Well, we no longer need a place to sacrifice animals – that’s over and done. But God continues to come to us and speak to us today in our physical church buildings. He still uses these places for us to gather and be truly present with Him, hearing Him speak to us and feed us every week. As such, we care for and invest in making our buildings “fit for a King”, balanced with our King’s command to care for our neighbors.

We can enjoy and learn from details of things like the Ark, the Tabernacle, and the Temples; but that knowledge is only in the Bible to point us to our true Savior, Jesus.

Prayer: Holy Father, You chose to “tabernacle” with Your people in the desert, and now make Your home in our hearts. By Your Spirit, sanctify us and the church buildings You use to carry out Your work. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, October 3, 2022

Read Exodus 37

Repeated for a Reason

Hopefully, everything that you read today sounded really familiar. Chapter 37 is almost word for word a following of the instructions that the LORD gave to Moses back in Exodus 25-26. I realize that this might make it feel like a waste of time to read the nearly identical words. Yet these words are repeated for a reason, actually I think two things are worth considering...

First, a lot has happened since those instructions were given. But not only does God remain present among His people, but in His grace, He doesn't change a thing about how He plans to dwell in their midst and provide a place of sacrifice. If we were sinned against in so great a manner, we might pull out or change our plans, but not one thing is changed. Where we are so often unfaithful, He remains faithful.

Second, seen on the larger scale, this is precisely what God always does. His plan of salvation is constant, despite the wandering of us sinners. Indeed, as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)." We are often enamored with change, and some of it is certainly good. Yet the constant mercy of our God to see through His plan of salvation is our foundation of comfort in this endlessly changing world.

Prayer: O Lord, thank you for Your changeless love. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

Read Exodus 38

The Source of Beauty

Beauty comes from God. Where you find beauty you find God at work, thus I see God in nature, the small animals and plants and in the large elements of the universe, from nebulae to sunset clouds. Yes, God is glorified in any beautiful display.

Now I am God's child. As I live wanting to live with God and in God's ways, I want to be part of God's beauty. Part of living that way lies in my life, how I share belongings, time, and presence with others, to their benefit. But another part lies in how I create and admire beauty in sound and sight.

God had the Israelites build their tabernacle, their place to meet with God, their place to build community and life in God. So, under God's direction, they built beauty into their tabernacle. They used beautiful materials, they used embroidery, they even set up singers in their services.

When I see that God is the source of beauty, when I see that He approves of beauty in worship centers, then I find myself wanting beauty in places I worship in as well. So, I pray for guidance, so I look for areas in my life to show my appreciation for what He has done showing beauty. I can't draw or paint - but I can sing, I can dress to honor Him, I can be gracious and hardworking both before Him in church but also among His people - and even among those who don't love Him. He makes it possible and enables me to part of His glory!

Prayer: Thank you God for beauty - and for making your glory visible in a small way in the world. Thank you for making me part of it. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, October 5, 2022

Read Exodus 39

The Completed Tabernacle

“Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished, and the people of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did.”

Exodus 39:32

The holy garments were made as commanded by Yahweh, and so was the tabernacle (dwelling place of Yahweh) of the tent of meeting by the people of Israel. Moses saw this and blessed them.

“According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the people of Israel had done all he work. And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it. Then Moses blessed them (vv. 42-43). The garments and tabernacle told of God’s story and plan. Every detail was done as Yahweh commanded. Just as God proclaimed His creation good, blessing His work (see Genesis 2:3) as Moses blessed the people. The completion of the tabernacle was good as it was built as God commanded, as God’s creation was declared good.

- The garments were for ministering in the Holy Place for Aaron and his sons for service as priests. These were amazingly detailed with gold and precious stones (see vv. 1-31). Stones engraved with the sons of Israel set on the shoulder pieces and twelve stones engraved on the breastpiece for the twelve tribes of Israel. The holy crown of pure gold with the inscription, **“Holy to the LORD”** (v. 30).
- The tabernacle and contents were all finished (see vv. 32-41). The covering was made from ram skins and goatskins. Everything was complete, the bars, hooks, utensils, pillars, bases, the ark of the testimony with poles and mercy seat, the veil of the screen, the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, the golden altar, the bronze altar, and all the hangings of the court.

Just as God’s plan is good and blessed by Him and His creation good as His commands completed for the tabernacle, the work of God for salvation from sin, death, and Satan is complete in Christ. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, completed God’s plan and work of salvation for all mankind to be received as a gift. This is good and blessed by God because it is God who made us holy in Jesus Christ, the sacrificial Lamb, who tabernacled in the flesh among His people, was crucified for us and rose from the dead, and through means of grace in Holy Baptism and faith, we are His children and chosen people. Now, as God’s people, and as His people, we are clothed in Christ’s righteousness with holy garments as a holy and royal priesthood, **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9).

Prayer: Bless me, O Savior, and consecrate me for service in Your kingdom. Amen. (Prayer from *LSB*)

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, October 6, 2022
Read Exodus 40

God Among His People

In this chapter, we finally see the end product of the last five chapters of Exodus: the tabernacle is complete. With its completion, God is now physically among His people in a very present, tangible, and consistent way, and He's there to stay. From that point on, whether in the form of a cloud or fire, God was with His people. For the Israelites, the tabernacle was the location of God's presence and a sign that He was with them.

Well, as we know, having the full story of Scripture, this tabernacle eventually gets taken. For the Israelites, this was more than simply ransacking a valuable relic. This was the removal of God physically from their presence! We can only imagine how alone, exposed, and helpless the Israelites must have felt during this time. It seemed that God was no longer physically among them! They could no longer see Him! And this sad, dark reality is how things stayed for some time.

Until Jesus.

John 1:14 states, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, or, to more accurately translate the Greek, Jesus *tabernacled* among us. Just as with the Israelites, God is present among His people through His tabernacle, but that tabernacle looks a little different now. Now, God's tabernacle is God Himself made flesh, Jesus Christ.

Mary saw the truth of God's presence in her Son, Immanuel, a name which means God with us. We taste God's grace every Sunday when He feeds us His body and blood at communion. We witness His glory on the cross, while He died for our redemption. God is among His people. And we see Him. Jesus promised to tabernacle among us always until the end of the earth. We do not live in sadness or darkness. We are never alone, exposed, or helpless because God is with us.

Our reality is the same as the Israelites from our reading. The tabernacle is complete. God is physically among His people. And He's here to stay. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: "Almighty God, You gave Your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Himself. Grant that we, Your adopted children by grace, may daily be renewed by Your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, "Prayer for Spiritual Renewal," pg. 1320.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, September 30, 2022

Read Exodus 35

A Generous Heart, A Grateful Heart

After the debacle of the golden calf and the renewal of the covenant, Exodus 35 has the people getting to work building the tabernacle that the LORD had described and commanded a number of chapters earlier. But to build such a structure would take gold and silver, fine linens woven from purple, blue, and scarlet yarn, and much, much more.

God could have commanded that the people hand over what was needed, but He doesn't. Having shown a generous, gracious heart towards His people, He invites them to respond in generous gratitude. He commands only that a collection be taken, but what and how much? **"Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution..."** (Exodus 35:5)." This is precisely what happens. **"Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments** (Exodus 35:20-21)."

What stirred the hearts of the people? The generosity of their God! Think about it. They had been unfaithful in a colossal manner. Not only does God not wipe them off the face of the earth (which our sin always deserves), nor did He banish them from His presence, but in fact His mercy is so great that the tabernacle will still be built. He still will live in the midst of the people, and through the tabernacle, provide the sacrificial system that allows an unholy people to be forgiven and cleansed in order to be in the presence of THE holy God. No wonder their hearts were moved! With just a little reflection, they were reminded that their freedom, their possessions, their very lives were all gifts from the generous, gracious God. How could they not be generous in gratitude!

What stirs our hearts toward generosity? The generosity of our God! We have been unfaithful in one colossal manner after another, and not only does God refuse to wipe us off the earth or banish us from His presence, but in the words of John 1, Jesus came and literally "tabernacled" among us (John 1:14). He has been the great sacrifice to forgive and cleanse us, unholy people, to be in the presence of THE holy God. He continues to come and be present in His Word and in His Supper. Again and again, having shown a gracious, generous heart toward us, He invites us to respond in generous gratitude.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, in view of Your generous, gracious heart toward me, give me a generous and grateful heart toward You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday, October 1, 2022

Read [Exodus 30 \(especially 1-10\)](#)

“Incense”

God told Moses, “**You shall make an altar on which to burn incense.**” It was to be a cubit wide by a cubit deep, two cubits tall, and covered in gold. It would have rings in which to put two poles with which to carry it; also covered with gold. Even the particular kind of wood was specified by God. Why? Why would this be so important?

One of the ingredients used to make the incense, Frankincense, was also used to prepare a grain offering. It was mixed with the grain, then some burned (probably making an amazing smell!) and some used to prepare the Bread of the Presence. That bread was placed on a table on one side of the holy place, across from the lampstand. The altar where the sacrifices occurred was outside; these special items were inside where the priests prayed and offered the sacrifices. Incense was burned as an offering twice a day; near dawn when the lamb was sacrificed and again at dusk. While this took place, the people would offer their prayers. Why?

The table of incense was the only thing that stood between the priest and the Holy of Holies, in which stood the Ark of the Covenant. The veil separated them, but as he prayed, the priest’s prayers would pass through the smoke of the incense, reaching God’s mercy seat. And God declared, “**It is most holy to the LORD.**” Why would He say that?

Saving His people from their sins is “most holy to the LORD.” Nothing is more near and dear to His heart. And, in Moses’ time, God gave His people this system of animal sacrifice and rites, rules about clothing, cleaning, and practices, and taught them how to worship Him. For 15 centuries, this was how they approached God, and He met them and forgave their sins. Until Jesus.

When John the Baptist declared, “**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!**”, the news was that that repetitious, bloody, and strange system had been replaced by the Real Thing. Jesus’ blood was shed for our sins on the cross. He offered His body to His Father as the final sacrifice for all time. And He breathed His last and died on the cross, tearing in two that veil that had separated God and Man.

In the Old Testament, the prayers of the people passed through a priest and the incense to reach God’s merciful ear. Today, the Lamb stands on the throne in heaven and hears our prayers directly (through “**golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints**”). His blood makes us holy to approach Him. He is the priest that offers Himself as our sacrifice. And His Father, full of mercy, forgives us.

Prayer: Gracious Father, hear us as our prayer wafts like incense to Your mercy seat in heaven. In Your Son’s Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson