

10th Sunday of Pentecost, July 25-26, 2021

Exodus 24:3-11

Pastor Arndt

³ When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do." ⁴ Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey."

⁸ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

In Christ Jesus,

Nikki Austin is a mother who loves her children very much. Her motherly heart was broken when her son Matthew contracted cancer. Matthew died at the age of eleven. Parents grieve in many ways. One way that Nikki tried to assuage her sadness was by keeping Matthew's room untouched. I came across her story in an article "*The Rooms That Remain*". In it she says:

"I find comfort in going into his room. I did from day one. I would spend time, go in there to meditate or just to have that stillness. I just like being surrounded by his things. Not to say that makes me closer to him. But it's just comforting,"

I was reminded of her words when I walked into Bible study last week. We were discussing the struggles that we face when a loved one dies. There was a word that we were wrestling with. The word was "void". A void is *more than emptiness*. A void is an empty space where something is *meant to be*, but it is *missing*.

I. God's Creation - A World Without Voids

The word "void" is one of the first words that we find in the Bible. When God creates the world, it is "*formless and void*". So, what does God do? He fills the void and brings things together just as they should be. The sky is filled with stars. The land is filled with plants and animals. Adam is united with Eve. Only when the voids have been filled and everything brought into fellowship with God does God declare that his creation is "*good*".

We can only imagine the sadness in God's heart as he watches sin enter the world. Sin pulls things apart and creates voids. Life continues. But it is a shell of a life, like a child's empty room.

The book of Exodus is the history of God rescuing the Israelites from Egypt to bring them to the promised land of Canaan. But, of course, it's more than that. God's ultimate plan was to bring the

Children of Israel into fellowship with Him. He is restoring us to one another and Himself. He is giving us life that is “full”.

II. A Personal Meeting

The Book of Exodus is filled with incredible miracles. The Israelites had seen numerous examples of what God does. But now, something different is going to take place. The curtain is going to be pulled back and the Israelites are going to see God Himself.

Sadly, everything about this meeting was uncomfortable. Each of the commandments that God spoke was a look into the beautiful mirror of God’s will. But what do you see as you step before that mirror? Here you cannot hide behind comparisons to other people or the childish standards of what the world sees as “good”. Last week we heard about the rich young ruler who thought that he had kept all the commandments. When these people stand before God they have a slightly different reaction, don’t they!

“[the people] ...said to Moses, ‘*Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.*’”

Exodus 21: 18 - 19

III. A Way to Meet Him

But the Israelites don’t need to be afraid. God provides them with *the way to meet Him*.

Moses builds an altar. Young Israelite men prepare a sacrifice of young bulls. The book of the covenant (the ten commandments and the commands that follow them) is read to which the people respond, “*We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.*” The blood from the bulls is sprinkled on the people.

God showed Moses every detail that had to be followed for the people to approach him. Every detail was spelled out. These activities were not ornamental or empty ceremonies. Every action pointed the eyes of faith to Jesus. He is the endgame of every single sacrifice. His blood pays the price for sin. His life saves us, even from death. He brings us into fellowship with our Father. That’s what Jesus means when he says, “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

IV. “They saw God, and they ate and drank.”

What happens next is beyond description. This is not God in a burning bush or pillar of fire. Sprinkled with the blood of God’s promise, 74 people experience fellowship with God!

At this point, it’s worth noting what takes place in this fellowship. “*They saw God, and they ate and drank.*” God joins the people as they carry out the most common and simple tasks of life. Certainly, there were more important things that they could have done? “*Not so fast!*” says a mother named Nikki Austin!

A pile of Legos isn’t so special. What’s special is the fellowship with the loved one sitting across the table. God desires to reach into every corner of your life and restore the joy of living in His fellowship.

God reaches into our marriages. We cringe as we watch Adam and Eve being torn apart from God and each other. Voids form everywhere. But we rejoice as we see God restoring the first husband and wife to fellowship with God and each other through the promise of the Savior. Has a void crept into your marriage? God brings you into his fellowship just as he did Adam and Eve.

God reaches into our families, our friendships, and our Church. The sinful world around us teaches us to look at our neighbor and think “us” versus “them”. God, however, sprinkles us with the blood of Christ. In his fellowship we are not in competition with one another. St. Paul reminds us, *“There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.”*

God delights in filling voids. The tomb is empty. Our lives, as a result, are full!

-Amen

Foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

God is everywhere. Yet here, God was providing the Israelites with a definite place where He would meet with them and dwell with them. To appoint the means by which they could approach him. And the manner in which he would manifest himself to them.