

The tent (2)

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[0 : 00] And there's a little picture of a tabernacle. And here's the wonderful model. And if your mum and dad, whoever is looking after you today, lets you, then there it is.

I think you could just have a careful look at that. We had the priest, we had the people. And this is the text I'd like us to think about. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart.

So that's the text I'd like us to think about in a roundabout way. So, for better or worse, I'm not quite sure whether it is for better or worse, I've linked up with the Facebook group of my old school.

And I'm reminded of all my old teachers. And there they are in black and white photographs of my old school. They didn't live in black and white, but now as you look back on them, the old photographs are pretty much in black and white.

And there's some photographs of my 14-year-old self, which are cringingly embarrassing. But our school had a headmaster. And it was a grammar school, so it had sort of traditions.

[1 : 16] And the headmaster used to wear a cape, a robe, like, not like Batman, but an academic gown. And he, we called him the old man, and that got shortened to, because it was O and M, the on, or the young.

And he was, he'd studied in Oxford, he was a very learned man, and he was good. But he was very stern and remote.

And looking back on the Facebook group, some people didn't like him at all. But I liked him, actually. And he was quite a big figure in my life, really.

Some people thought he was stern and remote, unapproachable. But on one occasion, he invited myself and some of my chums to his house.

And we met some of the pupils from his wife's school. And how different he was in his house. And the, it's actually girls, it was a girls' school that his wife taught at.

[2 : 26] And they said, what a lovely headmaster you have. Isn't he funny? Isn't he friendly? And I said, well, he's not like that in school at all. But we saw a different side of him at home.

And I want us to think about how we approach God. Whether we see him as a stern, unapproachable person who we can't get near. We might respect, but we can't get near.

Or whether we actually, in some sense, are welcomed into his home and into his family. So that's what I want us to think about. There's a picture of the, what was the name of the thing that we're looking at today?

Hands up, somebody. Yeah? Tabernacle. Tabernacle, that's right. And it's really a long word for something which is T something N something. T something N something.

It is actually, I'm thinking of this word here. It is a tabernacle, but what's this bit? There's not a difficult one.

[3 : 32] But your answer was correct, but I was looking for the next word. Yeah? Tent. Yeah. Tent. Yeah. Yeah. Tabernacle means tent. And it's where God dwells with his people.

To dwell is to stay and to be there. And God showed the design to the tabernacle. The design was shown to who?

Yeah? Yeah. Excellent. Yeah. I think a little round of applause. Because that's well done. Yes. And we look back and God wants to live with his people.

He wants to meet his people, which is just such a surprising thing. And in a sense, the tabernacle is where heaven and earth meet. So if you want to get in touch with heaven, you go to the tabernacle and heaven and earth meet.

Some, in other nations, they used to put their equivalents of the tabernacle on mountaintops. Because that's where earth and heaven almost touched each other.

[4 : 35] But it's not easy. One of the things we learn from the tabernacle is it's not easy to meet with God. Because God is holy. And holiness is where God is fair and good and just and pure.

But he is so excellent at those things, so seriously good, so seriously pure, that it's really very unlike us. So intensely pure, that his holiness is not like us because people, us, we are sinful.

And when we come into touch with holiness, it creates a problem. It's a little bit like, well, holiness and sin don't mix. It's a little bit like fire and dried up leaves.

When you get dried up leaves and somebody drops a cigarette end on it or a match, it just goes up in flames, doesn't it? So what, and then we said that the temple is the version of the tabernacle.

It's made with bricks, stone, and there it is on top of a mountain. And we don't have a temple now.

So what we're meeting in now is not a temple, but Jesus is the temple.

[5 : 51] And the place where God lives is in Jesus. And that's where God meets people. And the people who are knighted with Christ form a living temple.

So we thought about this last week, that as we come together as a community, we're sort of a living temple where God lives. And we have access to God by the Holy Spirit.

Not by walking somewhere, but by the Spirit. And then finally, just recapping, at the moment God dwells in heaven. And there's a sense in which God is, his presence here is a bit lumpy.

But his presence is there in heaven. And we have access, Christians have access to God in heaven through Jesus. And that's where we got to sort of last time. So, let's look at some homes.

So, boys and girls, have a good look at this. And tell me what that is. Have a good look at that. Tell me what it is. Yeah? A house. A house. It is a particular sort of house.

[6 : 52] If you look at the base of the house. I don't know whether you can see around there.

Something special going on there. Can you see? No. There's wheels there.

Okay. So, it's a special sort of house. What sort of house is that? That has wheels. It's being towed by a car. It's got wheels. What would you call one of those? A moving house is a good answer.

Anybody go further than that? Pardon? A watermill house. A watermill house. It could be. I was thinking, that's not the answer I was looking for, though.

What do you think? A mobile house. I think that's a round of applause for that. I was thinking of a mobile home.

But it's a mobile house. Yes, the wheels show up. Better on my picture than on yours up there. A mobile home. Why would you have a mobile home? Anybody here got a mobile home?

[7 : 54] No? Okay. A house on wheels. Why would you have a house on wheels? Because.

Because. Well. Because. If you want to do it. Because sometimes you can't only stay in the same place.

Of course you. You need to go somewhere else. Thank you. Yeah. You can't stay too long on the same site and you might want to go somewhere else. And that's right. You might want to go touring. You might want to go to France and you'll put the mobile home in one place, enjoy that place and then move on to somewhere else.

Stay there. It's like taking your home with you. Like being a snail, really, isn't it? So you can go somewhere else. So that's a mobile home. Now. What would you say that one was?

The first one was a mobile home. What would you call that? Would you call that anything? It's very obvious. Yeah? Pardon?

A house that stays where it is. Yeah. I hope it stays where it is. Because when we left it, we'd like to go back and find it again. That's our house. A permanent house.

[8 : 58] Why do you have a permanent house? How many people here live in a permanent house?

That's everybody, isn't it? Why do you do that? Why do you live in a permanent house?

Because you like the same place? Because you like the same place? Yeah. You have somewhere to live, don't you? You like where you are. And then you can have friends and you can enjoy the place and you have somewhere to call home.

And in our home, and maybe on your home, you have pictures on the wall. How many people in their house have got pictures on the wall? Okay.

And how many people have got pictures on the wall of them? Or perhaps them when they were babies? Or aunties and uncles or something like that?

Yeah. Okay. There's pictures of us. Actually, that's not us. That's Wallace and Gromit.

[10 : 00] Yeah. So these are all the things about a home. And let's look at a little map of the home.

So that's like looking down on your home.

And the street's out there and we've got some rooms here. So let's do the rooms. Oh, I don't know what happened there. Yeah. A hallway. So there's the hallway. And this house has got a lounge dining room together.

So that's where you sit on a comfy chair. And that's where you have your pictures of your family. And it's got a bedroom. So it's a very simple house.

There's the bedroom there. Probably your house has got more than those. Oh, each of these has got a door. So those are doors. Yeah.

So you can get in and out of them. And in most houses, there'll be something like a kitchen and a bathroom and a toilet. But I don't want to make it too complicated. Right. So I want to talk about access.

[10:59] So who goes in which room? Right. So think about this. Who goes in which room? So number one is a Hermes delivery person.

Okay. Now assuming they found the right house. Where would the Hermes delivery person go? So hands up those people who think the Hermes delivery person would go in the bedroom.

No. Hands up those who think the Hermes delivery person would go in the lounge and sit on one of the comfy chairs. Hands up those who think the Hermes delivery person would come inside the hallway.

Mm-hmm. Possibly. But I think they would actually... They'd just go to the door, wouldn't they?

They wouldn't even go in the door. They'd just knock on the door with a feather. They'd come and just go by the door there.

[12:05] They don't actually go in. So there's a Hermes delivery person. Right. Here's a visitor who comes for cake and coffee. So we'll be allowed to do that soon, to have visitors who come for cake and coffee.

So which room do you think the visitor who comes for cake and coffee would go to? So hands up those who think the bedroom. No. Okay.

Hands up those who think you'd keep them in the hallway. Okay. Hands up those who think you'd take them into the lounge or the dining room and sit them on the comfy chairs. Yes. Okay.

Let's see what I put there. Where would they go? Oh, yes. Now then. I don't know whether you do this in your house, but when somebody's come in from outside, let's imagine it was raining like it is just now.

They come in. What about their feet? Does anything happen to do with their feet? Now, not all houses are the same in this, but in our house, people will tend to do this regarding their feet.

[13:06] If they're going to come in and sit on a comfy chair, what happens? They wipe their feet. They wipe their feet. That would be very nice if they wipe their feet.

So they come in and wipe their feet to get the dirt off. Anything else that people do in some houses? It's not necessarily in everybody's house. They take their shoes off. They might well take their shoes off.

That's right. If you go into a house in Sri Lanka, it's very rude not to take your shoes off. So let's click. There's the shoes. And they would take their shoes off.

And they would come in and they'd sit in a comfy chair and you'd say, do you want tea or coffee? And they'd say, I'd like herbal tea.

Decaffeinated herbal tea. Right. It might be some time. But they come in and they sit down and they look around and they might see the pictures and they might say, Oh, is that your son?

[14:12] Or is that your nephew? They just look around and see the pictures. Now then, let's go to somebody else. So that was the visitor who comes for tea and cake and coffee.

Mummy, daddy, children. So hands up those people who think that mummy, daddy and children never get inside the house. That'd be silly, wouldn't it?

Hands up those who think that mummy and daddy and children only ever stay in the hallway. No.

Hands up those who think that mummy, daddy, children can go into the lounge and sit on the comfy chairs.

And hands up those who think that mummy, daddy and children have a bedroom and they're allowed to go into the bedroom. Yeah, okay.

Because that's a sort of private, special place. Let's see what I think. They can go where? Yes, they can go into their bedroom. And I wanted to think about this morning about God's house, the tabernacle.

[15:10] And it has rooms. And some rooms you can't go in at all. Some rooms some people can't go in. Some people, some rooms some people can go in sometimes.

Some rooms hardly anybody goes into at all. A little bit like those rooms there. And I wanted to ask us whether we think God treats us like the Hermes delivery man.

Whether God says, you can't come in here. Or whether we think God treats us like an occasional visitor or we treat him as occasional visitors.

So we come ever so, not very often, into his presence. Or whether God thinks of us like members of the family.

Like children of the household. And we are welcomed all the way in. And we can go into the most close place to be near God.

[16:17] And I want to say that's what Christians have the privilege of being. Children of the household. Sons and daughters of the living God.

And able to come right into God's presence. And I'll just leave that thought with us for a moment. Because it's such a precious thought, isn't it? That God does not treat us like the delivery man or like an occasional visitor.

We shouldn't treat him as occasional visitors. We should be in his presence. And that's what we're going to continue thinking about. But let's sing something first.

So we're going to sing another version of Psalm 84. Which we sang, I think, twice last week. That it's so appropriate. O Lord of hosts, how lovely is your dwelling place.

I cry aloud, I long for your abode. The joys of earth have left my soul unsatisfied. My heart and flesh desire the living God. Within your walls the sparrow finds a nesting place.

[17:20] That near your altar she may have her young. How happy those who dwell within your house, O Lord. By whom your holy praises are forever sung.

So this is a version of Psalm 84. The nine. And it says this. So boys and girls, have a good listen to this. It says, Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary.

A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table, and the consecrated bread. This was called the holy place.

Behind the second curtain was a room called the most holy place. Which had the golden altar of incense, the gold-covered ark of the covenant. The ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

Above the ark were the cherubim of the glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But he says, We cannot discuss these things in detail now.

[18:34] When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room.

And that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed.

As long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration of the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper.

So let's have a look at the earthly house. So this is the tabernacle. The temples wouldn't be that different, but he does talk about the tabernacle. So let's see if we can spot some of the features of this house.

Now that's not the house, that's the grounds that it sits in. So if you can see this model, there's a big fence around the outside. And that's the fence.

[19:37] And the fence has a door. Okay? The fence has a door. And it has this thing. And it was mentioned in the reading.

And I've done it red because there's blood and death there. Anybody like to guess what that bit of furniture is in the yard outside God's house?

An altar. Well done, I think. Yes, please. Yeah, well done. Yeah. Yeah, an altar. And it also had one of these things. I hope I put it in the right place.

Anybody know what this is? It's sort of what you did, or you might have done, when you came in. I think it's a place for washing.

I think it's a bowl for washing. I hope I got that in the right place. I didn't check. But I think from memory there's a bowl for washing. And then there's the actual tent itself, which has one of those things.

[20 : 39] What's that? A door. Yes, it has a door. And then inside is that room, which is the most holy place.

And I've coloured it that way for a reason. Anybody like to say what the reason was? Because it was in the reading. I didn't catch that.

Light? Gold. Gold. There's lots of gold things in there. If you actually went in there and you could see, you'd go, wow!

Gold. Wow. Outside is, the next compartment outside is silver, and the next compartment outside that is something else. I didn't look up what it was.

But as you go further in, it gets more and more rich and precious. And the thing is about entering. That also has a door.

[21 : 39] Anybody tell us what sort of door that is? It's a little bit of a different sort of door between that space and that space. Anybody know? Somebody who's older than 16?

Well, that's most of us. Come on. A curtain. Yeah, have a curtain. Curtain separating that very, very special place. A little bit like, you know, the lounge and the bedroom.

And this guy is a priest. And as you go in, there are ways of removing dirt. Just like in your house, you'd wash it. You'd, what do you call it?

Tum. What do you do there? Wipe your feet. That's the word I was looking for. Or you might even take your shoes off. Now then, boys and girls, can you, looking at this diagram, how is dirt removed when you go into God's house?

What makes people clean? What makes people clean? Anybody over 16 like to tell us?

[22 : 52] What are the cleaning mechanisms to go into God's house? There's the washing facilities. There's the washing. Yeah. And of course there's the altar, isn't it?

Because the altar is the place of sacrifice and blood cleanses. In the Old Testament, blood cleansed things.

It's surprising. Because for us, blood makes things dirty, doesn't it? But blood was a cleansing thing. So, you couldn't go into God's house without being clean.

There's the water and there's the blood. And here's some people. And I wonder how far they're going to get into God's house. And the answer is not very far.

They can't go in there. And they certainly can't go in there. They're more like the Hermes delivery people in the Old Testament. It's just sad.

[23 : 50] A bit sad, isn't it? That they could never actually get in there. And they couldn't get in there. God's presence was there. And the psalmist could say, I love being close to you.

But it couldn't actually physically get very close. Because the doors and barriers kept people out. This guy could go in. He could go into this bit.

And once a year, somebody could go into that bit. But the people got left outside. It's very different, isn't it? For us as Christians.

Where Christians were welcomed into the presence of God. By a new and living way. Through the blood of Jesus. They had no way in.

Let's go a little bit further into the house. We're going to think about this room. But we won't get as far as this room. Because it will take too long. Now, can anybody remember what that room contains?

[24 : 52] So this room here. Can anybody remember from the reading what it contains? It did tell us. So grown-ups can cheat by having a look. And so they can ready to answer if nobody else does. What did the room have?

Okay, grown-ups. What is it? Do you want to have a go, Peter? A lamp. It had a lamp, yes. Anybody know how many flames the lamp had? It had seven, didn't it?

Seven branch, candlestick, a menorah. In fact, actually I've drawn it. But I think I've probably drawn it wrong. Because I think I've drawn it with six. Yeah, it contains a lamp.

And it contains something else. It said... Consecrated bread. Consecrated bread. That's right. And do you know what the consecrating bread was sitting on? Correct.

A table. Just like our house, we have tables with bread on. And this was a table with bread on. Is that me feeding back? There's the lamp stand on.

[25 : 59] I did draw it wrong. I should have put the stalk up the middle as well to make seven. What did I just do? Oh yeah, that's where it goes. Click. And there... Oh dear, my clicking's gone wrong.

Let me click it back and see if I can get it right. No. That's where the priest can go.

That's the lamp stand. And that goes in there. That's the table. And that goes in there. And it's a sort of welcome, isn't it? And I'm just trying to think what sort of welcome the priest had when he went into that first room.

What happened there? So if somebody came into your house and they'd look on the pictures on the wall or they'd look at the decoration, if the priest goes into that house, just tell us again what he sees.

Because we've said it already. So just tell us again. What furniture is there in there? There's a lamp and a table. Is that what you've said? Yeah. Now let's just think about the lamp.

[27 : 14] It's decorated. Again, I didn't do all the research on this, but if I remember correctly, it's decorated like an almond tree, isn't it? It's sort of a little bit like a tree with lamps on it.

And the tree sort of reminds us of the world that we live in. Trees are part of our world. And you go in there and you think this is, in some ways this is part of our world.

It's got a tree in it, a rather special tree. But it's also on the way to heaven. So it makes you think of that. And then the other thing you said was a table with some bread on it. Now the question is, who was the bread for?

Now I'm going to take the view that bread wasn't for God at all, because God doesn't need bread. I think it was to say to the priest, when you come into my presence, there's bread here.

A little bit like when somebody comes into your house, you say, tea or coffee, cake or biscuit?

Because you make somebody welcome and you know that people need food and drink.

[28 : 18] And this is what I'm thinking, and you can tell me I've got it wrong, but I think what this is saying as the priest comes in, that God says, here we are. You're not in my most inner room, but here is something that you recognise.

Here's a tree. And here's some bread. And I think God is saying, I know you need things. I know you need bread.

And I'm just reminding you of that with this bread here. It's on the table. You're welcome in my presence. And we have a prayer of that, don't we?

We say, give us this day our daily bread. And I would like to suggest that this is saying to us that God knows the things we need. And when we come into his presence, he sort of makes us welcome, says this is familiar territory.

Here's a tree, here's bread. Those are the sort of things you guys need, isn't it? And he makes us welcome. Or at least he made the priest welcome in that sense. So furniture and decor, it's a bit alike.

[29 : 20] And I think there's hospitality there. I think God is welcoming the priest in. There's some loads of bread. And we say, give us today our daily bread.

And so that's that room there. Let's just think a little bit about that final room there, the very inner room. We won't go into it in detail.

We'll come back to it in a couple of weeks' time. So that's this gold room. It's a cube. So it's a square this way and a square that way.

There it is. Look at that next time. But in the old system, only one person could go into that room and only once a year with huge precautions, blood and really done very, very, very carefully.

No access to ordinary people. As far as the old covenant is concerned, we're the Hermes delivery driver.

[30 : 25] But now, but now, but now, we have boldness to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus.

God doesn't say, oh, stay out, or like my headmaster, too busy, don't come in. But he says, welcome.

Welcome into the most holy place. You're children. You're my family. I'm not keeping you out. I'm bringing you as close as I can. And the people go into the holy place. And I want to finish where we started with this thought.

Lord, therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near, this is chapter 10, verse 19, with a sincere heart, with bodies sprinkled, and so on, and so on, and so on.

[31 : 44] But let's draw near. And he says, let's draw near and pray. Come into the most holy place and pray.

We come into the most holy place and offer our sacrifice of praise. And we come in for fellowship with God.

God says, I want, I want you to be near me. So let us enter with confidence the most holy place by the blood of Jesus.

Let us draw near to God for prayer and for praise and for fellowship with the living God.

Amen. Amen. We're going to sing Psalm 100a which says this and I chose it because even as an old covenant song it says enter his courts with praise.

[33 : 04] Oh enter then his gates with praise and in his courts his love proclaim. Give thanks and bless him all your days let every tongue confess his name.

And if that was true in the old covenant how much more is it true now? All people that on earth do dwell sing to the Lord with cheerful voice serve him with joy his praises tell come now before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed he formed us all without our aid we are the flock he loves to feed the sheep who by his hand are made oh enter then his gates with praise and in his courts his love proclaim give thanks and bless him all your days let every tongue confess his name the Lord our mighty God is good his mercy is forever sure his truth at all times firmly stood and shall from age to age endure so let's enter his courts with praise as we sing this song to his praise and glory and if you remain standing when we've finished I'll say a prayer to conclude then if you'd like to sit and just reflect and pray for a little while and then just do a little bit of music and I would again ask you to overcome your natural instinct to talk to everybody and give them all a hug but just make our way conveniently outside and hopefully we can chat around out there that's what we're supposed to be doing okay we have access into the holy place the most holy place through the blood of Jesus thank you that you don't treat us as strangers or as unwanted interferers but you draw us in to your holy presence through the blood of Jesus forgive us Lord that we have taken this lightly forgive us sometimes we haven't even bothered to turn up but draw us we pray into the presence of the living God may we be people who are found often in your courts teach us again what it is to be people who pray and are in the holy place in prayer and are in the holy place in praise and are in the holy place receiving and giving to you in fellowship and we pray that this may be increasingly part of our experience as Christian people and those who might not yet be Christians we pray that we might really want to have that and be not be content until we've found it from you so we pray these prayers we ask that grace and mercy and peace might be with each one of us from God who is Father Son and Holy Spirit now and forevermore Amen Amen Amen