

Exodus 40:1–38

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning and welcome to Holy Trinity Church. And Paul and Abigail, I know that I speak for all of us when I throw you greetings from Holy Trinity in Chicago and ask you to put them in your pockets and bring them to our brothers and sisters at home.

God bless you. Well, today we conclude our third consecutive summer that has taken us through the book of Exodus, and I, for one, am going to miss it.

I know we're still in the month of August, but I want to begin the final message in this grand book by asking you to look some four months down the road.

Not this week in which the calendar will turn to the month of September, but to the day that we will welcome January 1st, 2018, into our lives.

Can you do that with me? I know it's tough given the time of season. New Year's Day celebrations, though, are enjoyed in part because they fill us with the hopeful prospect of turning over a new leaf.

[1 : 21] New Year's Days allow us to turn the page on what may have been a difficult month or year or decade or life.

It presents all of us with a new beginning, a clean start. And the final chapter of Exodus presents us with a New Year's Day event in the life of Israel that was unlike any celebration you and I have ever taken part in.

I hope in the midst of the reading you were able to notice the temporal indicators that arrange the material, the markers of time that hold the units of thought.

Verse 1, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, On the first day of the month of the first month. It's New Year's Day on the Jewish calendar.

And that same temporal marker appears in almost identical form in verse 17. In the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month.

[2 : 29] And so the text moves very easily through this moment of time where you have God's final words, verses 1 to 16, given on the first day of the year, which is followed by a recounting of Moses' completed work, also attributed to that very day, and then leading with a culminating grandeur to that last paragraph where you move from God's final words and Moses' completed work to what becomes for Israel God's continued and continuing presence.

And so it's a stunning and beautifully crafted conclusion to the book of Exodus. Now you and I, when we go to New Year's coming up in about four months' time, some of us may watch the ball drop in Times Square.

But on the day recorded here, they actually experience, by the end of the day, God's glory descending from on high. And what's better yet, your New Year's Day and mine is always filled with quickly ruined expectations.

Life always gets in the way of the new year. But this paragraph that concludes, Israel evidently got hold of something on this day that had staying power.

What occurs here in this climactic chapter had the ability to remake them, had the ability to remain with them, had the ability to journey in their presence all their life through.

[4 : 21] I don't know about you, I am too old now to even stay up for the real 12 o'clock in Chicago. I hit 11 o'clock, look at it on TV and go to bed. But this chapter, I'd stay up for this one.

This is something I want to experience for myself. The first day of a new beginning and one that won't end in disappointment.

It's almost like a spiritual rebirth for a nation. It reads like a lasting encounter with God. A lasting encounter with God. It appears on the pages as though it is something that can actually happen. And I've been praying that it will happen for us today. God's final words. 1 to 16.

To get our feet on the ground in the text, it might be good to envision the scene. Evidently, some nine months have now elapsed since Israel first arrived at Mount Sinai.

[5 : 29] Nine months. We know that because of a temporal marker listed way back in chapter 19, verse 1, where they arrived at the mountain some three months after leaving Exodus. And we know that the Passover occurred, again through a temporal marker by the narrator in chapter 12, that it was to be the beginning of a new year, but that the Lamb was to be slain on the 14th day.

So the scene with which we are now confronted in the text is a vast people, perhaps as great as a million in number, still camping out in the shadow of Mount Sinai for what has been the length of an entire academic year.

You think school's long? They've been at the base of the mountain for nine months. It's a long time after being freed by God to actually setting out with God in a way that you're convinced He's going with you.

Evidently, the day opened with a speech from God. Verse 1, The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, and He will speak all the way until the narrator picks up his own voice midway through the chapter.

He speaks, and He speaks in a way that seems to be organizing His material, His sermon for the day, His New Year's message from God to Israel along two lines. First, verses 2 to 8, put things in place, Moses.

[7 : 13] He's told to erect what would be for the first time the tabernacle. And so New Year's Day was spent putting up the tent.

The ark, the screen, I hope you have your Bible open before you, you can see it, the veil, the lampstand, the altar of incense, the screen for the door, the brazen altar of burnt offering, the basin, and now even with water in it.

Even the outer court. Now in weeks past, as we've walked through that material, we have tried, as preachers, to show what we believe are legitimate connections between these things as a meeting place for God and Jesus of Nazareth, who will come along much later, who will actually reference these things in regard to his own body, and he will leave behind him a small band of writing apostles who will co-opt all this material and place it as intended upon him.

so that as a Christian reads the entire scriptures, we have been watching that you go to Jesus to meet with God. And what begins here actually begins with the seven-fold pieces of furniture in all of its fullness, in all of its completeness, in place.

I mean, the showing that the house is ready to be shown. So, interestingly, in those first verses, those first eight verses, there are two closely related Hebrew words that become the synonyms of choice for the writer to talk about putting things in place or setting things in place.

[9 : 05] Putting in verses 1, 3, and 8. Setting, in the Hebrew, in verses 5, 6, and twice in verse 7. Why do I mention that?

Because there's evidently some indication here that with a seven-fold reference to putting it done, there's an indication this is full, this is complete, this is up, this is ready.

And then, only after that, after everything's in place, does Yahweh move in his message on New Year's Day to talk about a ceremony that's to take place. So, the building of the temple gives way in the midst of the day to a ceremony.

Verses 9 and following. Notice the ceremony. Again, in two parts. There's the anointing of the pieces of furniture.

Verses 9 to 11. And then, the anointing of a family of priests who will oversee all the work conducted in that house. Verses 12 through 15.

[10 : 08] Anoint. Anointed. Anointed. Truth be told, seven times over.

Anointed. Or anoint them. The visual image of the ceremony that would have taken place in verse 12 where Aaron comes forward and is anointed both with water and then blood upon those newly constructed gorgeous garments for the very first time spilling blood upon him that he might mediate an effective work that people would have hope in God that he loves them.

That must have been majestic because when you read about what that was to look like, you just go back to Exodus 29, it would have been a stunning thing to see. unlike almost any convocation entrance we see of all the professors or the dons entering and finding their seat.

Imagine Aaron, the high priest standing in all that new garb holy to the Lord across him. Precious stones representing the people. shoulders bearing the names of Israel and water being washed that he would be clean to perform his service because the people need God.

And then blood itself sprinkled upon him and then his sons in their caps and gowns even blood upon the ear marking these imperfect men apart as mediating presences of the Lord.

[11:40] Seven times over. And over the weeks we have tried to show how this too, the priesthood, points to Jesus. This unlikely candidate.

Remember, the priests needed the holy garb because they were not holy. Jesus, a loincloth only for he is holy.

And yet his own death powerful enough to cover and dress and clothe and hide and protect all who would come to him.

The priests here were anointed with water and blood. Jesus was baptized with water and shed his blood. But Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is what consecrated Jesus apart. He was already holy. He didn't even be consecrated. He was holy, but the Spirit descends on him at the baptism in water and consecrates him to his work.

[12:47] This is my son with whom I am well pleased. Even on transfiguration we are to listen to him. And then you have that verse 16 which I really believe is a concluding verse of verses 1 through 16 rather than the way our editors have kind of joined it independently to all that follows.

It reads this Moses did according to all that the Lord had commanded him. We know that it's going with the material that preceded it because we watched how chapter 39 ended.

After all the things that were done this phrase concludes a unit of thought in verse 43 that the people had done it as the Lord commanded so they had done it and now Moses did it as the Lord had commanded him to do it.

So there it is. New Year's Day. The words the final words of the Lord the tabernacle is up the consecration of those who are prepared to minister it are complete.

And then it gives way doesn't it? Verse 17 It moves. The temporal marker tells you it's moving. A return to the first month in the second year on the first day and we move from God's final words to what all the way through verse 33 are an indication merely meant to say and Moses had a completed work.

[14:20] I mean we don't have to spend much time all the way through to verse 33. It's enough to know two things that the text moved from an instruction for the New Year's Day celebration to the actual implementation and the finishing of it by Moses from injunction to execution what God said Moses did.

In fact even here there's a seven fold fullness fascinating to me third time now in the chapter seven fold repetition on the second day of this phrase as the Lord commanded Moses verse 19 and again in 21 and 23 and 25 and 27 and 29 and 32 seven times over after the temporal marker fullness completeness settled the writer wants you to know that Moses was absolutely faithful as a servant in God's house just as we believe Jesus was faithful not as a servant but as a son that he fully completed all that he had done and there's an emphasis here then that that you should see that this text about Moses finishing the work there do you see how it ends in verse 33 so Moses finished the work it's almost like it's a forerunner to what Jesus does remember in John 19 30 Jesus is on the cross and he says what it is finished that's his last words he goes out under this faithful word of having completed all that God had asked him to do to mediate his presence it's beautiful it's exquisite it's the text of the scriptures are glorious in every respect if you're not a Christian or you're wondering whether you ought to remain one it's texts like this that capture my imagination in my heart again to consider Jesus as the fulfillment of the story that's really getting started in the book of Exodus there's also an allusion not only forward to the cross here but I think back to creation let me just say this by way of inference the language in this latter section here about Moses completing it and finishing the work or even in verse 16 all that he had said so he did this is all material that has an echo of the creation account like the seven days of creation in all of its completeness and then God finishes the work and he blesses the work and his glory is present and that's just what's going to happen on the heels of this in Exodus 1 you remember that the whole book opened with what they call in grammar a consecutive vav big deal for the word and in other words

Exodus opens by offering itself as a continuation of Genesis Exodus is not so much than the second book of the Bible as it is appealing to itself to be the second chapter of a larger book which I believe finds its crescendo all the way later in the personal work of Christ what a story and in Exodus 1 three times over we had language that echoed the Genesis account you remember when

they were in Egypt they were told or they were indicated by God to be those who were being fruitful and multiply fruitful and multiply fruitful and multiply Exodus 1 opened with this echo of the creation account and now it's closing on the same seven full days in Exodus 25 when we were given the instructions on the tabernacle which we have now seen put up six times it said and God spoke to Moses and the seventh time in Exodus 25 he spoke to him concerning the Sabbath which is again an echo of all of the creation material so what you find when you're reading the book of Exodus is that in the conclusion of it you are hearkened back to whatever

God said he was going to do when he created the world and he was going to be with us he still intends to get it done and Moses is but a moment in that story of how he accomplishes it it doesn't stop there after God's final words after Moses's completed work the most astounding thing of all happens you need to look at the final paragraph greater than all the confetti dropped in Times Square over all the years combined God's final words Moses finished work give way to an indication of God's continual presence God's glory comes down what a ribbon cutting ceremony it would have been rather than a host of dignitaries standing before a group of people ready now to open the doors to the tent and let everyone see the new digs no there's no people up front all of a sudden all eyes are up above and down just as the cloud came upon Mount

[19:54] Sinai indicating that mountain as the presence of God just as God one day dwelt with his people in Eden as the place where he was now God has finally finally after all this build up come down his glory descends it says and it filled the tabernacle to the extent notice that even Moses couldn't get in that's the most astounding and humorous line of all I mean he came down so that we would dwell with him and he with us and yet when he showed up he was too big he took every seat in the house and Moses alone had to wait for what he would do next note this well in these final verses you come at last to the culmination not only of the final chapter but I think it's the climax and the pinnacle of the entire book Matthew Poole the 17th century student of the

Bible and a long sufferer for the gospel put the significance of this event more eloquently than I ever could I read this this week and I fell in love with his line here it is and I quote the glorious presence of God which having been forfeited and lost was now returned to them and took its habitation among them that's what I want experience that's what we all need to experience that's what a new year's for oh oh the glory would come down having been forfeited and lost it would be returned and take up its habitation among us notice the benefits of this in verses 36 through 38 we are now moving to the end and me to my seat the presence of

God that came stayed notice throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle the people of Israel would set out but if the cloud was not taken up then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up for the glory of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day and fire was in it by night in the sight of all those of the house of Israel throughout all their journeys the first day of the new year God's final words the first day of the new year Moses's completed work and it gives way to now every day for what will be a generation of years his presence among his people my hallelujah belongs to you praise the

Lord does that sound like something you want to experience for yourself the first day of a new beginning that won't end in disappointment a spiritual rebirth a lasting encounter with God and with grace it can happen it happened for Israel it can happen for you the question is how do you how do you access this how do you access this well you have to keep reading you have to come back in two weeks time we're going to start the book of Acts why Acts because Exodus ends with the glory of God descending and Moses unable to have access but Acts opens with Jesus ascending and the spirit coming and democratizing his presence into the hearts of people all over the world the fulfillment of the

Exodus dilemma is the arrival of Pentecost power you need the spirit you and I need the spirit that said you don't have to wait two weeks to access it I don't want you to leave today without knowing that if you simply ask the Lord to descend he enters in and some of us you know we've done that once and yet it's always good and refreshing to say Lord have more of me get hold of me I want you to be with me all my journeys through think of the families that are leaving our context today what a great promise to go out on throughout all their journeys the presence of the Lord was with them imagine it simply ask the Lord to take up residence to give you his spirit the presence of his indwelling power and that he would give direction to your life that you would begin to look to follow the cloud and the pillar which is none other than

[25 : 31] Jesus himself I was talking to my wife Lisa earlier this week about it she said well I think God knew what he was doing when he asked me to live now rather than then because I would have had trouble I'm the kind of person that likes to plan and prepare and the idea that you don't move out until the cloud moves she said that would have been a nightmare for me I'd be waking up every day going did it move I think I think it's moving last time it moved it did that trying to figure out how do I go on with God I thank God for his grace I want to walk with him in grace I want to be transformed by his grace but how do I keep my eye on him long enough and the answer is simply keep your eye on Jesus to the best of your ability give your life to the word of Christ and he will go with you in all your journeys wow that's a good day isn't it it's a good day as my friend

John Chapman used to say that's a good day isn't it you came to church needing a word from God and then you found out that he actually had something to say that's a good day that's a good day isn't it when there's all things and kinds of things in your life that are never finished and always incomplete and you read the Bible and something did get done that's a good day that's a good day when you're wondering how you get on in life from here you read the scriptures and you learn that God will journey with you through faith in Christ that's a good day you walk in not a believer and you walk out a believer what a day what a day what a new day what a happy new year day well that's that exodus is over we'll stand and sing next week

I want to give a message on some things that have been on my heart not in accord with any long series then the week after we find our road to Pentecost to glory come down to the spread of God's word through the world let me pray our Heavenly Father we're grateful for having come today we've been we have encountered many experiences this morning children in our midst making progress through life friends from another continent loving you well musical traditions that are as diverse as your family and the simple raw exposure to your word in a language that we can understand help us then to give our hearts to you encourage those who have come in downtrodden and needing to know that you and your presence might continue with them we give ourselves to you and the joy of giving ourselves to one another in Jesus name amen to the Lord
Thank you.