

Exodus 31

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Preacher: TJ Morrisette

[0 : 00] If you're listening today and you're wondering just how this book of Exodus might fit with a piece of your life that might be in turmoil, or you have a specific circumstance that's at the forefront of your brain that maybe you're trying to, you're asking God, okay, I need something for that.

But I want to encourage you this morning. Some of us might even comprehend that God does understand our situation and our circumstance.

We got that conceptually that God gets it. But some of us might be wondering, but does he get me, though? I've been in that position plenty of times, just wondering, Lord, yeah, I know, but do you know how I feel about this?

Or do you care about the details of this situation? Or am I to walk away in a trite understanding of sovereignty, but you don't really care, right?

I have a mom, who you'll meet soon, who will correct me very quick if I jump to sovereignty too quickly.

[1 : 21] Because you have to deal with the situation, you have to deal with the circumstances, lest you come off, again, trite, lest you come off insensitive.

You have to deal with what people are saying. And for the most of us, it's sometimes hard to know that God is actually in the midst of that circumstance.

Billy Graham received a note on his website in 2014 of the same similar substance, and it said something like this. I don't think God really cares what happens to us.

The universe is so huge and we're so small, so why should he worry about us? He's too big to be interested in what happens to us, and we ought to be honest enough to admit that we're on our own.

I can imagine that person writing that in tears. Billy Graham graciously responds, If God were like us, you would be right. He said a little bit more than that, but he said, If he was limited like us, if he was only able to concentrate on a few things, you would be right.

[2 : 36] You say God is too big, huh? To care about us, but that's the point. He is so, he's so great that he knows about even the smallest details of our life.

You see how he just switched up great to the minute? A lot of times that's not the first thing that comes to mind when I think of great. I think he's overarchingly seeing things. No, he's so great he sees the intricate details, the corners of your heart that you hope no one sees sometimes.

And then he ends with the scripture, Hebrews 4, 13. Nothing in all the creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him whom we must give account.

Now, perhaps this is where you are this day where, as we approach these last few verses of our summer series in Exodus, wondering where God is in the intricate details.

If you're looking at Exodus, it's hard to walk away wondering if God is worried about the details.

When he's dealing with Moses in chapter 25 through 30, he's dealing with the details of everything.

[3 : 45] The furniture, how you wear the clothing, what type of wood it is, how it should sit. And he has these details there for his purpose, his reason.

Now, you don't necessarily have to understand every reason why he wants it that way, but understand the one who's telling you to do it that way. God's attention to detail helps us see the character of God himself.

Ending off this summer series in Exodus, we also see an end to Israel's time on the mountain of God. Moses is about to come down. We're about to come down, jump into Hebrews.

We get to this last text today in chapter 31, verse 18. Look at verse 18 real quick, jumping to the end real quick. He says, and he gave to Moses when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of testimony, tablets of stone written with the finger of God.

Written with the finger of God. What you should keep in your heads as I'm talking is while we go through this, the rest of this passage, who is giving the instructions?

[5 : 01] The who. Who is writing the laws? Who is laying groundwork for worship? I like the way Sproul says, consider the source.

Who's undermining everything. Now, understand it's not just limited to who. God's detail layouts for Israel, Israel's next phase when we jump back in next summer, about building this temple.

It's about who. It's about what. And as we'll see today, it's about when. So within verses 1 through 11, we have two movements that I want to just kind of dive into today.

The first thing we want to look at, we want to get a glimpse of, is the gift of the artist. Verse 1 through 11, the gift of the artist.

Look at verse 1 of Exodus 31. The Lord said to Moses, see, I have called by name. Stop. I have called by name.

[6 : 12] I'm not going to say his name yet. But God tells Moses that he has chosen by name. His choosing is what's important in the forefront of this.

I have chose by name. One of the first things we learn about God is God has a unique calling, distinct in and of itself. The very call of God, the very call of God sets Israel apart.

The fact that he's calling just sets them apart. The God of the universe is calling. In the same phrase used in Exodus 3, 4, we get God calling Moses out of the burning bush.

It's the same phrase. In Exodus 12, 31, God calls Moses and Aaron and says, get up and worship me in the middle of the night, away from the camp. God has been calling some folks.

The phrase continues. See, I have called by name. By name. That God has named the person specifically for a specific purpose.

[7 : 25] I've called by name. If you look down, just drop your eyes down to verse 6. He says, and behold, I have appointed with him.

The word appointed meaning God has caused him to receive. God is the one that caused him to receive. So the first gift we see is given to men to be chosen by God.

The God of the universe calls by name for his name sake. He alone has chosen men for his service. God's elect workmen, Bezalel and Aholiab.

Their chosen name is Bezalel. His name, he's from the tribe of Judah. His name means in the shadow, in the protection of God. That's what his name means.

In the shadow, in the protection of God, Bezalel. And then Aholiab's name, by the way, he's from the tribe of Dan. It means in the father's tent.

[8 : 34] Or in the tent of the father. So you got one in the shadow of the protection of God and one in the tent. I don't think he chose them on accident. The second gift we see, besides God naming the men and calling them, we see that the artisans, that the very name given to them, are allusions to the tabernacle, allusions to worship for Yahweh.

Their very names are the allusions to worship for Yahweh. God's people have the opportunity to worship the Lord under the shadow and protection of God Almighty in his tent, in his dwelling place.

In fact, it's a unique identifier for God's children that you want to worship God in his tent. The fact that if you're listening today and you're wondering just how this book of Exodus might fit with a piece of your life that might be in turmoil, or you have a specific circumstance that's at the forefront of your brain that maybe you're trying to, you're asking God, okay, I need something for that.

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[19 : 05] This isn't all the gifts that these artists have. Verse 3, look at verse 3, he says, and I have filled him with the spirit of God. God endows Bezalel with the spirit of God Almighty.

The spirit of God allows the rest of verse 4 through 5 to take place. Look at verse 4 through 5. He says, well, I'll start at verse 3, and I have filled him with the spirit of God, and out of the spirit of God, this is what he can do, the ability and intelligence with knowledge and all craftsmanship to devise artistic designs to work in gold, silver, bronze, and cutting stones and setting, and the carving of wood to work in every craft.

The ability and the knowledge and the craftsmanship to make designs, gold and silver, all this could be possible because this man is filled with the spirit of God.

Now, we obviously know people that can do that and aren't filled with the spirit of God, right? But I think what the author is trying to get us to see is the only way to do it well in the eyes of God is to be filled with the spirit of God.

Amen? So Bezalel was filled with the spirit of God Almighty and his instructions are laid out. Take this, the wood, the gold, and do your thing.

[20 : 30] Okay? Aholiab, likewise, is endowed with the ability, specifically chosen to assist Bezalel to oversee the designing, to look at what needs to get done and then carve out what it's supposed to look like.

Look at verse 7 through 11. The tent of meeting, the ark of testimony, of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and the furnishings of the tent, the table, and the utensils, and the pure lamp stands with all its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offerings with all its utensils, and the basins as it stands, and the finely worked garments, the holy garments of Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons for their servants as priests, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the holy place.

I mean, for all intents and purposes, it looked like Aholiab has a tad bit more of a job description than Bezalel, but it's all there. And their artistic, enough to follow the design because God has equipped them.

Within these verses, the gift of the artist is pointed out. God will equip his chosen people. God will equip his chosen for whatever God desires.

So if you want to be in the will of God, look for what he desires. The spirit of God has a purpose within his chosen folks. Whatever God calls his children to, he will be the one leading them to fulfill it.

[22 : 11] I mean, there's a scripture that comes to mind right there, right? He that began a good work, I mean, he'll see it through. Paraphrase. But all the furniture, both men have been given the instructions for everything.

This call is a personal call by God, again, by name. The names of both men are recorded a number of times in the scripture. You'll see sometimes when you're reading, you'll see in the Ark of the Covenant made by Bezalel with the assistance of Aholiab.

And that's crazy because the Ark of the Covenant is a big deal. People still searching for it today. And yet, he gets his name written beside it because he's filled with the Spirit of God.

The meaning of their names in the shadow of protection in the Lord's tent both echo a familiar passage, Psalm 91. Listen, he who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God, whom I trust. After the gift of the artist, the second thing you see is the goal of the art.

[23 : 22] So you got the gift of the artist, then you get the goal of the art. If you are an artist in here today, shouldn't be shooting shots in the dark.

There's a goal. It's always fun to go to a museum and see like one dot on a black canvas and everyone's standing around like, yeah. I'm like, man, that's all it took?

Oh, man. Took him years. But if you ask that artist, there's a goal. It's tricky when it comes to art. I'm a rapper.

It's tricky because you have to enjoy the type of art and then you're also enjoying the artist. Most of the time when it comes to the art, the artist doesn't get that much play.

It's like, I don't know who wrote that. I thought that was a good song. I don't know who choreographed this dance. I just like going to the dance. I don't know who is responsible for this play. I don't know, but I know I like it.

[24 : 22] So a lot of times the artist can get skipped over very quick, which is probably the reason why most artists feel alone a lot of times, which is probably the reason why most artists are so talented.

But the uniqueness of the piece created in the mind of the one behind it is the point of the goal of this artist.

The one behind this art is not merely Bezalel and Aholiab. It's God. That's what they're meant to display in their artwork.

Who is really behind it? I like Guy Ritchie movies because he always does a bunch of stuff in the forefront of the movie and then you gotta watch the end and then he'll do this whole little and I'm like, ah, that's what I missed.

Okay. Sixth Sense color red. Okay. Wow, that's crazy. In the text a lot of times when you're, if you just pass over it you don't get a sense of who's actually working, like where things fit a lot of times but then when you start breaking things down you start to see oh snap, okay, so he calls these guys, he puts Moses in the mountain, Moses just gives the instruction but then God supplies these dudes so that they can do what Moses was instructed to do in the fashion that God instructed him to do it in the time that he wants them to do it so that his people can have a place to worship God safely.

[25 : 49] So that the nations would know that this God is God. I mean, God has a plan. It's bigger than a Guy Ritchie movie. It's bigger than what I can think of.

If I can bring it into the debate of who is behind the artwork, where do we see it in the text? Look back at verse one.

He says, verse two, he says, see who has called him? I have called by name. Look at verse three. And he says, I have filled him with the spirit.

Jump down to verse six. I have appointed. Verse six B, I have given to all men ability. God seems to be concerned with the fact that if you don't know who did it, you missed it.

God has his goal in mind. The purpose of what God wants Bezalel and Aholiab to do is to accomplish the commands of God. Verse six C, so that you can see the commands of God.

[26 : 55] And behold, I have appointed with him Aholiab, the son of Ahissam, and the tribe of Dan, from the tribe of Dan, and I have given to all able ability, men, able ability that they may take, that they may make all that I have commanded them.

The point is that all that God has commanded needs to be on the forefront of our minds. God, what have you commanded? Why have you given us this ability this morning? Why am I at this university?

Why am I in this community? Why am I this race? Why am I this gender? Why am I this height?

That was my issue. You know, why? And God seems to say, so that you can fulfill my commands.

Bring glory to me. This is repeated in verse 11b. He says, according to all, I have commanded you.

When we notice that Bezalel and Aholiab are given multiple tasks.

Now, I don't think that Bezalel and Aholiab have built the temple before, so I think that's astonishing in and of itself, that God can just do that. Like, all right, I got you.

[27 : 58] This is what I need y'all to do. But you got to check the way God is specific in his giftings. Bezalel was a metal worker, a stone cutter, wood cutter, a wood worker, a Aholiab, a designer, craftsman, embroiderer.

With these skills, they were called to use it to bring worship to Yahweh. What do you think your abilities today are meant to do?

Bring worship to Yahweh. It's funny because in hip-hop, it's tricky. Because you have to stay relevant, but then you also have to give glory to God.

And those aren't separate, by the way, but it kind of can feel separate when you're trying to be cool, you know? Art is given so that we can triangulate the glories and beauties of God and display it to the world so that they can see them.

As we see our text, God blessed these artists and he also blessed their art. The men were meant to use their creativity to express and carve out what God has laid out.

[29 : 08] In fact, all throughout scripture, we see God using human agents to express their abilities in the confines of what he has commanded them to do.

Right? It's based on the heart. It's based on the heart of the agent that he's using. Now, where do I get that from?

Look back at verse 6. And he says, And behold, I have appointed with him a holy Abin, the son of Ahissamach of the tribe of Dan, and I have given to all able men ability that they may make all that I have commanded them.

If you break the text down into its meaning, it's translated like this. I myself have put in the hearts of all my appointed the skill to make all I have commanded.

it. The word for heart is in that text. God doesn't just give you the skill and say, well, I hope you make it home.

[30 : 12] But God also gives you the heart for it. And I think that's great because I would have been given up if he wasn't the one changing my heart.

The artistry displayed by these men cannot be true if their heart is not invested in it. I was 16 years old and in Houston, Texas, big competition.

I was on BT 2003 and it was supposed to be a Christian competition, but because this competition is hard.

16 year old, my brother and I, we get up to rap and I would say God was gracious to my brother and I because the only reason, kind of falling on my own sword here, the only reason we were kept from some of the evils and the woes that we see in hotel rooms and tours was because our parents were there.

It was because God graced us with godly parents and said, nope, you're in here at seven. Nope, you're not hanging out with them. and we won that competition and I still find it hard because there was pride that swelled up because we won.

[31 : 29] We got the money, we got the deal, and we won. And I remember a friend of mine, Shailen, said something like this. He said, the problem with sin is he'll let you win, get you prideful, and have you fall back into sin.

And I was a victim of that. The point isn't that people who aren't Christians are not talented. The point is that the true heart, the true work that is accepted by God finds God at the driver's seat. He's not an addition, he's not an add-on, he's not bunched up in the rest. No, God kicks all the contenders out, all the competition away. God before us, who can be against us, but being an add-on to your life means that God isn't worth much.

It's not the book of Eli, it's God or nothing. So God has to be the motivation of the heart. Art might not be your thing today, so some of you might not even resonate with the whole artistic talk, but each of us in this room take part in worship, in one manner or the other.

Another dude said, we have no problem in worship, look at how we worship property, how we worship money, how we worship time, rest, and value everything that makes us feel good.

[33 : 03] No, no, no, which side of the spectrum are you on in worship? Unlike Aholiab and Bezalel, Christ ultimately sets the standard for true artistry.

As he comes with the heart of God, a zeal for his father's house, growing up in wisdom and favor, but being made in the likeness of God, he found the likeness of God, equality with God, a thing not to be grasped, but in fact he debased himself, he chose to take upon himself the form of a servant, even to the point of death and death on a cross.

Unless you missed it this morning, Christ is the point of our art because Christ was the very epitome of artistry.

His death on the cross actually displayed something of beauty when he takes upon the sin of the whole world on his shoulders. And he says it is finished, but then it's not finished in the sense he's resurrected affirming that he is the right sacrifice for us.

The plan of God as he demonstrates his own love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, Christ suffers on our behalf, all to bring us under the true beauty, his redemption, the true beauty as we worship together, anticipate his coming, live out righteous lives, walk in step with the spirit, all the things that look like godliness, we get the chance to represent that because of what Christ already laid out for us.

[34 : 45] The last portion of scripture takes a slight turn from us seeing the gift of the artist, the goal of the art, we now arrive at the glory of the rest. The glory of the rest.

It's funny because it's the rest of the passage, right? The glory of the rest, but then when we get to this seemingly distinct half, Exodus 31, where God is speaking to Moses and yet again mentions the fourth commandment, we are speaking of the glory of this rest that God gives his children, that God gives these workers, that God gives every artist, every engineer, every father, every mother. verse 13 says it like this, you are to speak to the people of Israel and say, above all, you should keep the Sabbath, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I the Lord sanctify you.

He reads, above all, first of all, above all, keep the Sabbath. it's a sign. Right here you're seeing a motif of Genesis.

It's pointing back to Genesis. The seventh day God rested from creation. In the garden, even, we're seeing the Lord sanctifying man above all of the rest of creation.

[36 : 18] He's setting them apart, gives them tasks, gives them a role above all of creation. but with that, we also get the motif of the fall.

Verse 14 and 15, check it out. He says, you shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you.

Everyone who profanes it shall be, what?

Put to death. Every, whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be, what? Cut off from among the people. Six days you shall work, six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.

Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. There's this punishment, there's this judgment within there, and we get that even in Genesis when God says, the day you eat from this tree, you will surely die.

the warning of death and being cut off, how man forbade holy communion with the Lord and were cut off from the garden.

[37 : 31] The beauty and the glory of rest in chapter 31 is that God sanctifies his people above all through Sabbath rest.

These artists mentioned above are not excluded from this rest. Chink, chink, you rest too. And I can imagine being really busy.

I myself have a ton of things on my calendar right now and God still calls us to rest. God still calls everybody to rest, to worship, and to rely on him.

Yes, they are called by God. Yes, they are serving God with an important task. That's the most important task of all time in that time. But their sacred calling is not an excuse to dismiss the holy rest.

God's artists are restricted from working on the Sabbath. In other words, God has no need to break any of his laws to accomplish any of his tasks. And a lot of times we'll kind of maneuver around, well, I mean, I didn't have time to, there's so many things, and God's like, hey man, I gave you that house, and you have no time to, I gave you that car, and you have no, like, you're the one that prayed for the job, and now you have no time to give any time back to me.

[38 : 52] A lot of times that's it. one writer said, I have so many things to do in a day, I need at least seven hours to pray, Martin Luther. Art has a tendency to produce eagerness, hastiness, sometimes impatience and frustration out of the artist.

Artists can be particularly tedious, gathering, tunnel vision. My wife can tell you about that. Babe, I just need to focus for a second. All right. It's only in the next chapter that we see the artist making a calf to worship someone other than Yahweh.

I mean, you don't go far outside of the will of God. It's like you're already there. This abrupt command for the rest is not abrupt at all, actually.

In fact, it serves to remind the people that the God they are worshiping rests to establish his rule upon the whole entire earth.

God rests not because he needed to rest. He rests to show that I did it. It's done. If you follow hip-hop in here, there's this thing called the b-boy stance.

[40 : 06] And in the b-boy stance, after you finish doing your rap or your dance or your tagging, you do a pose, kind of like just letting everybody know I did that.

Welcome to God's b-boy stance. B-boy stance. God's in the zone. No, he's not like human beings. He doesn't need to rest.

But you know who needs to rest? Us. And we're resembling God's rule in the earth, but we're also resembling the fact that we need him more and more.

We need him. We need to rest because that is the only way we can actually worship God.

Mankind's rest affirms that they know who really runs it.

Mankind is mankind. They're frail. They're less. And if we're asking if this God cares about the details of our life, we should rejoice in the fact that this rest is God's looking out for your heart, looking out for you, even your physical body.

[41 : 18] There's tons of studies done about burnout. God is saying, look, I got you. I believe most burnout can be pointed back to some sort of pride, maybe even idolatry.

I can do more than I can actually handle. The word Sabbath actually means cease. That doesn't mean cease from worship, it actually enters you into worship.

In fact, worship might take the form of even rejoicing. Man, Lord, you are so good. Artisans are reminded that they themselves are in need of ceasing for worship.

Artisans also are reminded that they're not necessarily needed. Right? That was more for me, not y'all. I'm just more so saying, like, God doesn't need you, but I'm glad he uses us, right?

The glory of this rest is unlike the first Adam. Israel is now an image of this Adam in Genesis.

[42 : 25] They enter into the land of Canaan, that's their resting place for now, the promised land. And this solemn rest becomes a dwelling place of the Most High.

And you might have heard just now that as the story turns out, eventually men like the Pharisees and scribes try to take the whole Sabbath and twist it up and use it for their own oppressing opportunities.

And what a contradiction that is, because rest is supposed to be rest. It's supposed to be worship to God. And then you get in the New Testament these guys saying, did you do this? Now you need to go back, you can't walk this many steps.

It's a Sabbath. You can't wash your hands. No, she's sick, Jesus. You can't heal her. Okay? All right? Luke 13, verse 14 through 15, but the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, there are six days in which work ought to be done.

Come on those days and be healed and not the Sabbath day. Then the Lord answered him, you hypocrites. Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water?

[43 : 44] As he said, these things, all his adversaries were put to shame and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Jesus. Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus rescues us from the legalism of the Sabbath, Sabbath, but brings us in to the truth of the Sabbath.

We get to keep the Sabbath. It's not an obligation, it's a privilege. Welcome to rest if you are in Christ today. Before the Lord finishes speaking to Moses back in chapter 31, he reminds him of the Sabbath.

Take a last look at the passage just one more time. The Sabbath is for your sanctification, verse 13. The Sabbath is for your sanctification.

The Sabbath is meant to be amongst all God's people. That's what's meant in verse 14b. If you're cut off from the people because you didn't keep the Sabbath, imagine what you're supposed to do opposite of that.

You're amongst the people by keeping the Sabbath. Three, the Sabbath is complete. That's what that word solemn means, that solemn rest, the complete rest.

[44 : 55] Anything else? Makeshift. That's not rest. You just found something that kind of looks like it. Devotion to God, that's verse 15 by the way.

Number four, the Sabbath is a reminder of God's covenant, verse 16. Number five, the Sabbath is a sign between God and man, that's verse 17. While the Sabbath equals rest, worship and rejoicing are a direct result of this rest.

rest. Worship the Lord. Where are you resting this morning? Are you facing things that have choked God's word out of your life?

Are you the seed that fell on thorny ground this morning? Is that kind of how it feels might be? Has sin weighed you down? Dave read it, come unto Jesus.

He'll give you rest for your soul. Take his yoke. My prayer is that you see the glory of rest God has for you. Listen to the words of Psalm 92, right after Psalms 91.

[46 : 03] He picks up on this Sabbath with the title of this whole psalm, a song for the Sabbath. Psalm 92. He says, it is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High, to declare the steadfast love in the morning, good morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute, and the harp, to the melody of the lyre, for you, O Lord, have made me glad for your work at the works of your hands.

I sing for joy. How great are your works, O Lord. Moses leaves the mountain with a tablet of testimony. He leaves the mountain with a tablet of stone.

Same, the same thing. He leaves the mountain with this tablet written by the finger of God.

Testimony meaning what displays the will of God for them as they keep those commands.

A tablet of stone which represents their stony hearts, but also that it's permanent, that what God has said it would never go back on. And then a tablet written by the finger of God meaning, as I said before, consider the source of who's writing it.

I love in the Ten Commandments, the old one, how he displays the finger of God writing when Moses is on the mountain. I thought it was a great image there. While Moses had these tablets of stone as significant as they were, in the second half of the story, guys, Christ comes and becomes the sacrifice, the spirit that is able to deal with our details, with the details of our heart, as he writes the laws of God on our heart.

[47 : 49] As he closed, I want to read 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 3. And you know that you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us, written, not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the human hearts.

let's pray. Lord, we are asking you this morning to lead us to your rest. Take us by the hand, take us any way you know how.

Lord, I confess that it's not easy to find rest in you. And Lord, we repent for times we have chosen to find rest in other sources.

But God, this morning, this week, this year, we want to rest in you. We want to see you as beautiful. In Jesus' name, amen.