

# Exodus 30

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Preacher: David Helm

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. I want to extend my own welcome to you, especially those of you who are finding your way to Chicago and the great neighborhood of Hyde Park.

We are glad that you've come. If you've been traveling through the summer or if you're just here as for the first time, you will not be aware that our congregation has been spending the summer months in the book of Exodus.

In particular, the section between chapter 19 and what we'll conclude next week in chapter 31. In other words, we've been spending our summer on the mountain, even though we live here by the lake.

One thing has become clear to us through our weeks together that the expectation of Israel was that God was coming down.

That was announced to us early in the summer in chapter 19. He was going to come down on the mountain. He intended to be in the world, present, accounted for among the people.

[ 1 : 09 ] And then, if you look at the way we've worked our way through chapter 29, he intended to dwell with them even after they set out from the mountain. He was with them on the mountain.

But look at the way chapter 29 closes. There was a tent of meeting. Verse 43. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory.

This tent of meeting. Verse 35, 45. I will dwell among the people. The expectation of Israel during their wandering beginnings, shortly after having been released from Egypt, was this.

They were going to go forward with the presence of God. For five chapters now, we have seen them making preparations for what would be required for God to come down.

Getting ready, as it were, to host Him in their midst. We saw this ornate, beautiful construction of an ark overlaid in gold with the glory of cherubim and a mercy seat.

[ 2 : 26 ] Preparation for God's arrival. We saw a table for bread. Lamp stands. Seventy-five pounds in weight of gold.

Curtains for a tent. An altar. Bronze. Large for sacrifice. An outer court. And then these gorgeous priestly garments.

All made in preparation for God to arrive. I've thought about why it is we're supposed to love God this summer.

In one sense, we're to love Him. For He is beautiful. Just a few weeks ago, I traveled to Atlanta to celebrate with the rest of my family my mother's 80th birthday.

And I was asked to share a few words. And as representing one of seven children, I began to think, not only why have I come to look my mother in the eye and tell her I love her, but also to explain to her the reasons why I love her.

[ 3 : 36 ] And if I had to boil down for her, and I did, and reveal to you, and I will, the one thing that my mother has taught me, it's simply this.

We're to love God because God is beautiful. She's fascinated with these long readings in the Old Testament. She loves the gold fillets and the rings and the ornate nature of the artistry.

She's aware that God is powerful and we ought to worship Him because He is powerful. She's aware that God is holy and we ought to worship Him because He's holy. She's aware that God is particular and you don't come to Him in any old way.

But my mother has taught me over the years this. We worship God because He is beautiful and worthy of our praise.

For five chapters, we have been seeing preparations made for the arrival of the Most High. And the emblems have been displaying the glory, the wonder, the richness, and the beauty of God.

[ 4 : 57 ] With chapter 30, though, there's a directional shift. Today, we find what God expected to be coming up while He was on His way down.

As He descends to us, He was to be intercepted by what could rightly be called this sweet, pleasing, fragrant aroma of incense.

I know that it's difficult to hear an entire chapter like that read aloud. It's difficult to see the organization of it. But let me just demonstrate it for you simply and cleanly.

It opens with the making of an altar for the purpose of burning incense. The reality of incense rising as God is descending.

And notice how the chapter ended. It's not just the reality of incense that would be burning and rising before God in a fragrant way. There's actually the recipe given.

[ 6 : 14 ] That's the way the chapter closes in 34 and following. With the collection of those sweet spices. And the incense blend.

Seasoned with salt. Pure and holy. In other words, the entire chapter is enveloped by the fragrant aroma that is to rise before God.

God. You can see it there. Take a look at verse 7. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it every morning.

When he dresses the lamps, he shall burn it. And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it. A regular incense offering before the Lord throughout your generations.

Again, at the close of verse 10. Throughout your generations. Now, to the modern ear, there is a strangeness to Israel's worship.

[ 7 : 26 ] When the reading finished and we said, this is the word of the Lord, you may have said thanks be to God for a number of reasons. For to our modern ear, all of this seems rather archaic.

It's certainly outdated. This is an odd way to relate to God. What are we to do with it? I want to mention at the outset that it's good to remember that this incense was a concrete expression of praise.

And it served as kind of a sensory sign. A symbol, as it were. Of the internal expression of Israel's heart.

These are external signs that speak of internal realities. That the incense itself stands for something pleasant, rising before God.

I think in one sense, you'll find in the scriptures that the rising of incense into the presence of God is in one sense to be taken metaphorically for us as equivalent to our prayers and our praises.

[ 8 : 47 ] So that which Israel did in a concrete way, we conceptually, nevertheless, are called upon to do. You'll find an expression like this.

This parallel between the incense and prayers and praises in Psalm 41. The Psalm of David. It opens this way. O Lord, I call upon you.

Hasten to me. Give ear to my voice when I call to you. Let my prayer be counted as incense before you. And the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

So here's David reflecting on the morning and the evening sacrifices. And when he comes into the presence of God, he says, May my prayers be as that daily offering.

The readiness for your arrival that I would be speaking to you, communing with you, calling to you, praising you. Psalm 141 isn't the only place.

[ 9 : 53 ] You think of Luke in chapter 1 when the priest would be going into the temple. Luke again connects the relationship between the burning of incense and the prayers of the people being offered.

You might remember it when the father of John the Baptist had been appointed to go into the Holy of Holies one day a year in allusion to the text in which we just read today.

And beginning at verse 6, we read, Now while he was serving as priest before God, when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Next verse. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. So the prayers are a visible, the incense is a visible symbol rising in the cultic worship of Israel's history that is to be equated with the internal characteristics of the heart of every Israelite.

That as God is coming down to commune with us, our hearts are wanting and desiring to give praise and prayers to Him. In one sense, what is asked of the people of Israel in chapter 30 to do is ultimately fulfilled by Jesus as our mediator and priest.

[ 11 : 37 ] It is accomplished by Christ. In Hebrews 7, verse 25, it speaks of Jesus continually offering intercession in the presence of the Father.

Here is one who communed with God. But I also want to say it's the calling of every Christian. It's the calling of every individual, Christian or not, to give praise to God as the Lord of heaven and earth.

Take a look if you have your Bibles, chapter 13 in Hebrews, a book that we will return to and finish this fall. Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 15, we find these words.

through Him then, that is through Jesus, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

[ 12 : 55 ] This is your purpose in life. This is the reason for which you were born to give your life as an offering that would be sweet and pleasant before the presence of God.

Let me put it this way. It would be to, the word hallelujah means praise the Lord. It would be to live your life in a way where you are, you are a walking man or woman or child who is singing your hallelujahs to God.

Not just through the fruit of your lips, but through the distribution of all that you have to share, through the way in which you operate and control your own life.

You willingly, joyfully, come into the presence of God on His terms for He is beautiful and as He comes down, you are to rise up and to stand before Him in that way.

That's the emphasis of the text. So I ask you, have you ever considered that this is what God desires to see from us as He condescends?

[ 14 : 11 ] That in Christ Christ, you would offer your life in praise to God. Let me put it this way, our lives are to be a perpetual morning and evening.

The room, the room of our life is never to be void of the lingering aroma of a morning and evening sacrifice that is offering praises to God.

That is what is most holy to the Lord. From the rising of the sun to the setting of the same, let Him be praised.

And it's to be throughout generations. There are to be sweet spices blended in your life, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.

And these are not external sacrifices, at least for Israel, that gained their relationship to God for He had already saved them.

[ 15 : 23 ] They were external actions representative of an internal gratitude that wanted to give God praise.

Pure lives lives in response to God having taken up residence in our midst. Holy living as our joyful obligation to God for His acts of kindness toward us.

Let me get it on the bottom shelf. How do you smell? what is the aroma?

What are the fruits of your lips? What are the offerings of your life? What are the obligations for self-control that you've undertaken?

Ephesians 5, 1 and 2 puts it clearly. Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[ 16 : 57 ] Wow, what would happen? What would happen? Is if God, if you're praying that God would take up residence in your life, if there was to be this expunging of the old you and a groaning appropriation of something new?

What happens if the spices of your life were sweet and fragrant mixtures rather than embittered and envious and angry exclamations?

What happens if a perfume began to emerge rather than that which you know to be nothing other than the putrefying odors of an old way of walking through the world?

What happens if God said, I'm coming down to be with you and your heart legitimately said, this is the most beautiful thing to ever occur in the world?

How might I live for you? might I live for you? How might I live for How live for God?

[ 18 : 21 ] I believe then that the three directives that God gives Israel in chapter 30, take a look, the three paragraphs as it were, that set off particulars that are all embedded in the incense of praise, are three ways, provisions by God, ongoing reminders that would help Israel self-correct along the way.

Take a look, 11 to 16 deals particularly with all the people. When you take a census of the people, the people collectively through verse 16 were given some way of an annual reminder that would evoke their mind and heart of the cost of their salvation.

In 17 to 21, you move from not the people and a remembrance of the great cost, but you look at the priesthood itself and that three-fold repetition of washings all the time as they did their work.

It was a reminder for the priesthood that they were daily to be coming clean before God. And then you move from the people in 11 to 16 and the priesthood itself in 17 to 20 to the place, the actual tabernacle.

Look at the content of 22 through 25. There is a mixture of oil for the tabernacle itself to be consecrated, set apart.

[ 20 : 21 ] And so these three distinct activities are given enveloped in the incense of praise and prayer that would help the people of God self correct along the way.

The people to remember the cost. The priest a daily reminder to be clean. The place itself was to be entirely consecrated. That's the order of the text with incense swirling around it from beginning to end.

And so a few comments on each. The people to remember the cost. Three observations from those verses in 11 to 16.

At the time of a census the counting of the people there was to be an atonement tax verses 11 and 12. When you take the census of the people of Israel then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them that there may be no plague among them when you number them. Second observation that the monetary tax was! small. Thank God! Look how small it was.

[ 21 : 37 ] Verse 11 Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary the shekel is twenty geras half a shekel as an offering to the Lord.

Now half a shekel from what I understand is somewhat the equivalent of about eight grams of silver. I looked up the present day closing price of silver a little over nineteen dollars eight grams would have been about six bucks that's a good country to live in but at any rate that was supposed to be a joke not in a statement on our political situation but you're either all really with me or you're wondering if you have permission to laugh there was an atonement tax the monetary tax was small and notice it was a flat tax everybody paid the same amount verse fifteen the rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than the half shekel when you give the lord's offering to make atonement for your lives now this is significant the fact that it was a small amount kept the poor in Israel from feeling as if they could not make any contribution to remembering what the lord had done for them the fact that it was a small amount also kept the rich from having any sense of pride that they would be placed in distinction from the poor because you know how the rich like it oh just six bucks nah let me give you twenty and I don't need any change back see the rich like to think that they can do more than is necessary and in fact they make distinctions among themselves for the poor God says that's not going to happen the atonement that the price of your salvation was the same no matter how much you make or what you're worth and so he says it's going to be the same and so the poor man comes into the assembly and says I belong and the rich man says the cost is the same for me a wonderful leveling this was to be a reminder if your lives are to be an offering a fragrant aroma and you've kind of lost track along the way to remember the cost of your salvation will help you self correct

God had done something great for Israel and in Christ he has done something great for the world you want your life to be a pleasing aroma you're not sure how to get there find a way to remember the cost notice the very end of that it was to be in service of the tent of meeting in other words it would support the upkeep of the temple the generosity of the people actually supported the work that wanted to increase and expand the awareness for other people of what God is doing in the world it was that simple secondly not only were the people to remember the cost but the priests were daily to be reminded to come clean that's the section there on the bronze basin this is a different this is a different altar or basin than the one that we saw earlier in the text there was a large bronze basin with a grate on it actually where sacrifices were made and so when you were going to come into the outer court you would bring your sacrifices and those would go up to the heavens and then you would walk around that and you would begin to walk through and this this bronze basin this place for washing is much closer to the actual holy of holies just on the other side and so when the priest would come into the presence of God anytime anytime he was to wash his hands and feet verse 19 or verse 20 they shall wash with water so that they may not die verse 21

they shall wash their hands and their feet so they may not die the priests were daily reminded that it takes clean hands to serve the living

God now we know this was only external what God really wants is a clean heart put it differently we all got dirty hands the priests knew they had dirty hands that's why they had to go in there every day and wash the continual washing was a recognition that I'm not clean what God wants is a clean hand pure hearts in other words he wants those who are serving God's people to recognize that by their position they are never in a different state than the people it's a constant reminder of the need to be washed revelation seven speaks of the saints preparing again for the arrival of the second coming of Christ as those who are busily at work washing their robes you want your life to be a fragrant offering start washing your robes start asking

[ 27 : 50 ] God by the power of the spirit to not be held captive by the things you know are not pleasing to him start asking for his strength so that when he is sitting in your living room and by the way he is always where you are sees it all knows it all discerns the thoughts and intentions of our heart we need the strength of Christ to be clean and yet we need to be actively daily being reminded of our need for Jesus so the people were to remember the cost the priests were to remember to be clean and the place itself verses 22 through 25 was to be entirely consecrated with oil take a look beginning at 25 and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer it shall be a holy anointing oil with it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony and the table and all its and the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering with all of its utensils and the basin and its stand you shall consecrate them that they may be most holy the people were to know the cost the priests were reminded of the need to be clean and the place and the place in which both priests and people dwelt was itself to be set apart consecrated as I read the way the bible unfolds and if you haven't read all of the bible through you might be interested to know that when

Jesus of Nazareth comes on the scene he actually is self referential in terms of being the tabernacle or the temple or the place of God it's as if in one person he representatively stands as the fullness of the people of God but as the priests of God's people and he is set apart as the very place for he says destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up again and he was speaking of his own body so that the way the scriptures emerge is the things which God has given to Israel here people priesthood and place coalesce in one person Jesus who is the one who walks right into the presence of

God as a pleasing sacrifice and then those who begin to preach about him take it one more step and say and you are living stones of that very temple or put it differently take a look at first Peter wonderful little text chapter chapter two a phrase here in verse five you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house but notice not just a place to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ or look at verse nine but you are a chosen race that's a people a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light once you were not a people but now you are

God's people once you had not received mercy but now you have received! mercy beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul here's the phrase I wanted you to see keep your conduct among the gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation that is the calling of every man and woman in the!

they are to give their that you would become a place for the dwelling of God and that he having mediated for you would allow you then to go forward with reckless abandoned joyful praise in all that you do giving glory and honor to him your conduct should be a matter of your personal concern let me conclude was simply this evidently in Exodus 30 the writer didn't want us to miss this subtle quiet understated soft point hey and by the way there are consequences for your indifference you see that in verse 33 whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people you see it in verse 20 regarding the priests they are to wash with water so that they may not die verse 21 they're to wash their hands and feet so that they may not die you see it in verse 12 when it comes to the people remembering the cost as a ransom for his life to the

[ 34 : 07 ] Lord when you number them that there being no plague among them when you number them or the very final phrase in 16 so as to make atonement for your lives you also see it in verse 6 and you shall put it in front of the veil that is above where I will meet with you as a fragrant incense

every morning errands to do this with that little note there in 9 you shall not offer unauthorized incense on it which is exactly what Nadab and Abihu will later do at the cost of their own life there are consequences if you will not give your life as a fragrant offering to God there are consequences if you have given your life to Christ and yet are indifferent to the ongoing work and self correcting of reminding yourself of the cost of coming clean every day of consecrating yourself as a holy temple to the

Lord there's the idea here of premature death in the New Testament arrived on the scene with Ananias and Sapphira they were immediately struck they died before their time it's not to indicate that everybody who dies young does so as a result of the punishment of God but there is an indication that it can happen that you and I can go before our time our natural time because we live indifferently to the call of Christ and he finally says enough I came to be with you I came to dwell with you I came to live with you and you just continued on indifferently let me put it this way you come to Christ as you are but you never stay the same not only premature death but there's an aspect here of purifying discipline he disciplines those whom he loves this idea of being cut off from your people had occurred earlier in exodus at the Passover whereas if you ate with leavened bread then you were to be cut off Paul in 1st Corinthians 5 and 6 picks up on the Passover incident of being cut off from your people and he applies it as a metaphor for exercising discipline on a man in the congregation that continues to be sexually immoral Paul takes the cut off language of exodus and applies it not merely to someone who would be prematurely!

dying but to the discipline that ought to be taking place in local congregations so that we would be self correcting for all discipline is difficult for a time but its purpose is to restore you to train you toward godliness let me close with this God is coming down no God has come down he expects a place in your life to dwell and that means that a fragrant offering from you needs to be going up a life that is an hallelujah!

for the Lord the God of all is before us our heavenly father as we finish out today with these ancient and in some ways archaic texts we are finding our hearts thrilled by the way in which they are seamlessly put together to remind us of who we're to be and how we can get back on track toward that end may each one here live their life this week as a sweet offering to you help us to treasure the cost of our salvation help us morning and evening to recognize our need of being clean help us by the power of your spirit to set ourselves apart as holy for the welfare of our own soul for the putting back together of our own families for the strengthening of our own church for the generosity that it might bring to our own community we give ourselves to you in

[ 39 : 14 ] Christ's name Amen