

# Exodus 25

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, just a word before the preaching of the text, what a wonderful thing to see where the congregation who's assembled today is drawn from with a real sense of gravitational center, but also expansive in all directions.

And perhaps you're sitting there and go, wow, I didn't know somebody lived by me. I better go find out what their name is. Or perhaps you're sitting there going, well, evidently nobody lives by me. But one way or the other, over the next few weeks, we're going to be working at what does it mean to live intentionally in community with one another? And how can we intentionally be thinking about our communities?

In a sense, Kenwood and North, Hyde Park and West, Woodlawn and South for the growth of the gospel. What a wonderful thing.

And Bing, thanks for running that. And we look forward to seeing how it plays out in our life together. Well, the reading of the text today, Exodus 25, for the one who came to church today hoping to restart with God might have presented an awkward moment quite early on.

[ 1 : 25 ] Some will come to church in hopes of refreshing a relationship or wondering whether they're missing something.

And today's reading might be a bit difficult, at least in this sense. It took all of one verse for you to be back in church and for the text to be talking about a contribution or a donation.

You might even have looked at verse one and said, oh, my word, the week I begin to think about God again. I read these words. Speak to the people of Israel that they take for me a contribution. All of about three seconds in. And you're thinking we're here to talk about your money. Well, not only does the request of verses one to nine present for us some challenges, the relevance of verses 10 to the end would present some awkwardness for anyone, no matter how long you've been coming to church.

I mean, imagine how are we going to deal with the relevance of a lengthy reading on the Ark of the Covenant in one big bulk, the table which holds the bread of presence in a second movement of the text.

[ 2 : 50 ] And then this lamp stand, which illuminates the light going on behind the curtains in this great tabernacle that is being woven together.

And why would we be in a church that actually thinks it's worth reading these things and yet finding them relevant as well? So today I hope to give hope and help to both sets of people.

If you're here to restart with God and you're wondering about the request of verses one to nine, we'll have something to say. But if you've come and you've wondered, what is the relevance of a reading like this?

I hope by the end we'll have something there for you too. Well, it is true on the first end that religious assemblies have a long history of asking for donations.

It's not a new thing. For Israel, it began right here. You might say it began when they asked the Egyptians for plunder on their way out of Egypt.

[ 3 : 50 ] But this is an actual offering, a donation, something that they are to elevate, to lift up, to bring before God.

No sooner has God saved the people for himself and then spoken to the people concerning himself that he now asks for donations to be collected for himself.

You'll notice the kind of collection that was given. Early on, if your eye falls through the latter half of verse two through eight, it moves from precious metals, raw material pulled from the ground, to fabrics and linens, things that you would then weave into garments and drapes and otherwise.

Then to skins that never needed to be put together, skins of animals which might have their own use. And then finally, precious stones.

Imagine a table before the Lord on that Sunday in Israel and the people brought in gold, silver, placed it out, fabric, linen, wool, heaps of it.

[ 5 : 11 ] Precious stones, precious stones, all there. Two things, observations I'd like to be put forward for you, especially if you're wondering, why is it that every time we go to church we talk about offerings?

First of all, notice, this offering is not imposed against Israel's will. It's never made in imposition to their own will. It's voluntary.

Look at the latter half of verse two. There's a voluntary nature to this, not a compulsory one, although I'm sure that God was hoping he'd have 100% involvement and gratitude to what he's doing.

But nevertheless, he's looking for an internal aptitude to getting on with what God wanted to build in the world.

Not external conformity outside of an internal movement of the heart. That's the way all giving ought to be. But notice, secondly, it's not just imposed against a person's will.

[ 6 : 27 ] It's voluntary. It's not because, also, God is not some megalomaniac in the heavens waiting for you to give something that would rise up to him.

Actually, the nature of this offering is quite different. What a difference between this and idolatry. In idolatry, we begin to try to do things for God, bring things to God, make things on behalf of God that we somehow might be seen before the eyes of God as being worthy of ascending into his presence.

That's what religion is. Religion is bringing things forward that you might rise. This offering is totally different. It's no idol here. This is an offering where God himself, notice the purpose there in verse 8, let them make me a sanctuary or a tent that I may dwell in their midst.

God says, I want to come down to you. What a wonderful thing then, that this tabernacle, this enlarged tent that was going to travel with Israel through the wilderness was to be a symbol of God's presence.

[ 7 : 47 ] He wanted something that would be a visual representation of him returning to the earth and walking again with his people.

You might want to see how this played out later in Israel's history, this tabernacle. Just turn a few pages to the right to Numbers 2 and you'll see the centrality of this entire tabernacle and its relationship to the people.

In Numbers 2, 1 and 2, we read this. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, The people of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses.

Now remember, there were twelve tribes of Israel. Each tribe then was a house. And it says then that they shall camp facing the tent of meeting.

That's the same sanctuary in which we have in our text on every side. And then Numbers 2 goes out to lay out where all the people were in relationship to the tent.

[ 9 : 01 ] So the tent that we are taking an offering for in Exodus 25 would one day be constructed to be a visual symbol of God dwelling among his people.

And later, the twelve tribes spun out from that hub like spokes, each one facing it. God desiring to be in the midst of his people.

God wanting to have a relationship again and to have his people face him. Why would we need such a thing like this in Exodus?

I mean, we have God on the mountain. We've seen that over the last few weeks. He's actually descended in a cloud. If you look at the verse before our text, Moses has entered into the cloud on the mountain.

And he's been there for some time now. It's going to be forty days and forty nights. But the glory of God has already come. Well, the reason is simple. In Exodus 25, God is quite aware that he doesn't want his people to stay at the mountain.

[ 10 : 07 ] They are to be a people on the move. They are to go. And so the need now for the entire movement of Exodus is to represent that God goes with his people.

In other words, they needed God, in a sense, in a transportable way. That's the visual symbol.

He wanted them to know that he was always with them. That he would never leave them. That he would never forsake them. And so it has this massive, expanding importance in the book of Exodus. Think of it this way. When you think of Exodus, what would you say is the center? Well, for some people, it would be the Passover. That movement back in chapter 11 and 12.

For other people, oh, it would be Exodus 20. Because we're dealing with the law and the Ten Commandments. I would argue that the center of gravity for the book of Exodus is the tabernacle.

[11:12] The tent. What you have entered into today will carry forward by way of material all the way until chapter 40. A book of 40 chapters in length.

Nearly 16 of the 40 chapters are given to this kind of thing. The instructions for it, the construction of it, and the representation of God in the midst of his people because of it.

Have you ever thought of that? You have now arrived at the most important moment in the book of Exodus? And yet the modern reader says, well, there will be nothing relevant here anymore. If I'm going to read through the Bible in a year, I've just gained a few days because I'm skipping all of this. We've already gotten through the good parts. The Passover has come and gone. The Ten Commandments have come and gone. I can race ahead now because I've arrived at the irrelevant material of the tabernacle through some priestly sources for some reason unbeknownst to us decide to give us 16 chapters of worthless material.

Well, when you begin to read like that, you've actually missed the most important foundational thing of the book of Exodus. The book of Exodus is about worship. God making a people for himself that is saving a people for himself and then speaking to that people in light of himself, but then dwelling in the midst of the people.

[12:33] That's the center. So if you've come in here today looking to restart with God and thought that you ran into a request that actually moves you away from God, hopefully you begin to understand immediately that you've arrived at a moment where God is saying, yes, I want to draw near to you.

I want to come to you. I want to face you. I want to be with you. You can't see me, but in the history of Israel, there is a visual representation representation of God demonstrating his heart.

Here is the heart of God. Not just to come down in thunder and flashes and lightning and scary talk, but to settle, but to settle, almost in this sense of hospitality, to dwell, to have a house where people meet with him and he with them.

I've thought this week about the request and there's the center of it.

Verse 8, the purpose behind it, that I may dwell in their midst. I've also thought about the relevance of all the things which follow.

[14:01] The arc, which takes place in 20 through 22, the table in 23 to 30, and the lampstand in 31 to the end. I want to make a few comments on each of the sections, but realize that most of the comments will be reserved for the first.

We'll have time for the later as we move through. But how do you begin to think that this might be relevant? I've thought of it this way. Notice what happened before we began.

Moses entered the cloud 24-18 and went up on the mountain. One way to think about Exodus 25 is that Moses has taken an elevator to the top floor and he's walked into an office.

And the kind of office he's walked into from 25 to 31, you find yourself in the office of an architect. Moses is now in God's architectural office receiving the drawings.

You can envision a drafting table. You can envision pencils with number two lead. Those of you who are young enough, ask your folks.

[15:16] They might tell you what that was. You envision long tubes with projects that are going on. And God Himself behind the desk drawing out the visible representation, the pattern of what it will look like.

You can see it there in verse 9. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, so shall you make it. That verse, bookended by verse 40, and see that you make them after the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain, places you, if you have trouble seeing the relevance of this thinking of Moses, now in the architect's office, God coming in with long rolls of paper under His arms, sprawling them out on a table, rolling one of them out, using a little masking tape to hold down the corners, and now showing Him the first of three pieces of furniture that are going to be in His house.

And He's excited about it. He didn't find it boring at all. In fact, He says, look, you're going to be on a building project where the material cost is astounding.

I mean, when I'm with you, it's going to be beautiful. I don't know if you noticed on the lampstand alone, that lampstand reading with its calyxes, you know, the knob-like thing that holds the sepals and the petals and then the flowers themselves, that was 70, the equivalent of 75 pounds of gold. Not to mention how much gold we're dealing with on the tabernacle or the bread of presents. Acacia wood coming in. Here's God with the costliest of all materials, with a sense of beauty in His mind, saying, when I'm with you, I want you to know that it would be a beautiful thing.

[17:38] Now, that doesn't fit well for some people who are utilitarian in nature. We've succumbed to the world of Ikea. I understand that, and I've been there myself. But once you raise your five children as I did mine with Ikea furniture, you find out that it falls apart pretty quickly.

But if you use the acacia wood and then you overlay it with gold, you are actually dealing with something that intends to be around for a while. Notice, it even had poles, this ark, that you would run through these ringlets so that the actual box itself, which if you're looking for the measurements on it, would have been no bigger than about three feet nine inches long and two feet four inches wide and two feet four inches high.

It's a box is what it is. And that box would have had poles run through it so that when the people moved, God moved with them. You brought God with you wherever you went.

But you didn't touch Him. Not only is God beautiful, but the text is written in a way that will let you know God's holy.

He's with me, but I don't just kind of take hold in a casual way. Not God. There's a particularity to the design that is intended to show not only is He majestic in beauty, but He is majestic in holiness.

[19:19] And so, with the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark simply being this box made of wood and then overlaid with gold, we see now the very centerpiece of what would be the entire tabernacle.

Have you ever wondered why start with the Ark? Why start with one piece of furniture? Why not start with the outer tent and work your way from the outside in?

Notice, all this material works its way from the inside out. It begins with the most important piece of furniture in the house. He doesn't start with the outside framing.

He doesn't even start with the foundation on the perimeter. He starts with the object that is in the Holy of Holies. A small, square room that is four feet long.

The intimacy, the emphasis, in other words, is the very first architectural drawing put on the table. Represents, in some sense, the Holy of Holies.

[20:32] God's throne, as it were, in the world with this box almost functioning as an ottoman for His feet.

Do you remember in Exodus 24 last week when the priests got halfway up the mountain and they had their meal with God? What did they see of God? The text indicated in Exodus 24 that they saw, as it were, the soles of His shoes.

That's how close they got. Only Moses went up into His very presence and talks to Him face to face. The people themselves got as near as the soles of His shoes.

You see, the throne room as the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwells, has the ark on it. You can envision His feet resting here and this is where He rules His people from.

I'm not making it up. Just take a look. Psalm, I'm going to show you three places where you get this imagery, this image to go with the language we have here.

[21:50] Look at Psalm 99, verse 5. He's writing here a psalm about going into where God is enthroned, verse 1, upon cherubim in Zion.

But when you arrive at verse 5, it says, Exalt the Lord our God. Worship at His footstool. Holy is He. Take a look at the way this imagery is carried forward in Psalm 32.

A song of ascents in verse 5 where He is looking to build a dwelling place for the mighty one of Jacob. David wanting to move beyond the tabernacle to a fixed temple-like structure.

An improvement on their nomadic dwelling. But in verses 7 and 8 it puts it this way, let us go to His dwelling place.

Let us worship at His footstool. Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. So the ark is the very resting place of God.

[23:05] God. It's where you come to bow down. It's where you kneel at His feet.

The chronicler, 1 Chronicles 28, alludes to the same kind of imagery when, again, David is rising to His feet in verse 2 to indicate in his heart a desire to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God.

I think if you look at those verses, you begin now to see that what you have in the ark of the covenant is a visual representation of the song that we already sang this morning.

You are Lord of creation, Lord of my life, King of all kings you will be. And how does the refrain go? We bow down.

We bow down. We bow down. When Israel had the ark at the center of its community and all of the people being drawn near to it and facing it, it was constantly an image of coming to the very footstool of God and into His presence.

[ 24 : 36 ] That He was not only King of the people of Israel, but He was indeed King of the earth and He was the King of the heavens who had given us a pattern here which conformed to the very likeness of what was already true in heaven.

Now we can't pull back the veil on heaven, but that's the way it is. When we get there we'll see it for ourselves. A throne room, a footstool, a sovereign ruler who wants to be in your presence.

God will rule. How does He rule? According to our text, this language on the ark, verse 16, you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you.

You'll see it again in verse 21, you shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. These will become the tablets of the material that we just went through, the ten commandments, possibly the rules themselves, I'm not sure, but the very word of God is the way in which God rules over His people.

So when you come to God and bow down, you are by nature attentive to His word. What is worship? Worship then is falling at the foot of God and listening to His word and then rising to live in light of all that which you have heard.

[ 26 : 11 ] That's worship. And it's all emblematically put forward here. Notice how the ark divides almost into two sections.

Verse 10 to 16 what we've already talked about with the box itself but then verses 17 to 22 this emphasis on something that William Tyndale finally gives us in English language the mercy seat. This cover that went over the box. And notice the cover is of pure gold. It was to sit on top of the box. The word of God being within the box.

And notice the ornamentation that comes with it. Verse 19 make a cherubim on the one end and one cherubim on the other end. And with one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends.

Look at verse 20. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings and their faces toward one another. Toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.

[ 27 : 15 ] So what you have is the ark itself and a tabletop made for it of pure gold and ornamental angelic like creatures with wings abroad facing the center eyes down upon the middle facing one another.

The very place where we would meet with God. This is where the blood would be shed. This is the place of mediation where mercy would be found.

Angels as it were echoing the two angels that guarded the entrance back to the Garden of Eden and separating humanity from the Tree of Life now fixed on a place where God will meet with us. It's worth asking how is this this motif this ark motif developed in the Bible? Well in one sense God was with us in the Garden of Eden but that fellowship was lost but it emerged again at the mountain so the mountain Mount Sinai where God comes down upon it almost is a new representation of the garden but it's very limited in its access and then we move to the next phase in the scriptures where you have this traveling tent the center of which is this ark and the cherubim there where God actually dwells and then that tabernacle will be replaced elevated as it were by the temple built by Solomon a fixed structure but then that temple itself is destroyed until the New Testament comes and it speaks about all of a sudden a personification of the presence of God

Emmanuel God with us again but not in a temporal way through a word which is the Son John 1 14 he even comes and makes his tent among us he tabernacles among us Hebrews 8 verse 5 picks up upon the mediating work of Jesus as a fulfillment of this very pattern so that the writer of the Hebrews says when you read Exodus 25 you should be seeing what Jesus did for you not here but in the very presence of God on your behalf you should actually go to a place called the cross

imagine it now imagine walking forward to the cross here's Jesus elevated you standing at his feet God with us place of mediation presence a way made where you can come to know [ 30 : 20 ] God let me show you one text just by way of analogical significance more so than to my knowledge exegetical intention but look at John 20 and verse 11 and 12 this is a passage where Mary stands at the tomb and let me read these words I find them awe inspiring but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb here's the verse I want to pick up on analogically and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain here's the phrasing one at the head and one at the feet that the very resurrection narrative of an empty tomb and a resurrected

Christ whose blood had been shed has an angel at one end of the slab and at another end and they're asking why are you weeping he has risen just as he said now look if you've come today and you're wondering what is the relevance of a reading on an ancient ark that temporally had significance for the people of Israel I'm trying to explain that you're walking into a major motif in the scriptures you're walking into a language that begins to talk about how is it that you meet God let me put it differently right where you can get it where are you going to go today to meet God I think you go to Jesus no other place to go no other temple to build other than the church do you understand the significance of what I am saying do you understand that in accordance with this text as it is developed in the scriptures angels and saints with their voices bending are calling you to consider

Jesus and his death and resurrection as the gravitational center the actual fulfillment of how God establishes a relationship with us in other words this is what God was building for thousands of years he was building all of this so that when it came to Jesus you would recognize him as the fulfillment of something I've said this to you before but I'll say it again have you ever asked yourself why Seth was not the redeemer why the third born son of Eve didn't die on a cross why wasn't Seth one way back in Genesis if God wanted to build something in the world and he wanted a relationship with us why didn't he just get it done the way we get it done do me something Ikea fashion immediately you could have been there in Genesis chapter 4 I'll tell you why because if Seth had died on a cross all you would be able to know is Seth died on a cross you would not have any interpretive reason to know that he died on a cross for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and what

God has done in the hard and happy history of Israel is right into their people this protracted way of deliverance so that when you see Jesus you know he's it this is the fulfillment this is the one person in the one time for all time where I go to meet with God well it's it becomes all of a sudden a beautiful story let me close just by alluding to the second two pieces of furniture the table for bread it seems like this table as verse 30 says you shall set the bread of presence on the table before me regularly just outside the holy of holies was to be a table just beyond the veil of the ark and there was to be bread set on it and if you read Leviticus chapter 24 you would notice that every week they were to place 12 loaves of bread on the table into two piles six and six and at the end of the week the priests were to eat from that it was their sustenance and then it would be replaced again perpetually by 12 more loaves of bread the bread of presence was an indication that whatever this ark was whatever this mediating presence of

God this is where you find your provision this is where you find your sustenance it's open to you in other words the lampstand if we had time to go into its cups and almond blossoms and flowers and calyxes you would see something that almost began to resemble in and of itself this beautiful tree blossoming some have made allusion to the lampstand as a tree of life here is something that was to enlighten all those who performed priestly mediating service on behalf of God's people in the presence of God I think of the book of Revelation!

[ 36 : 35 ] where the tree of life of course comes back but I think earlier in chapter seven of people from every tribe and nation being drawn to look at the lamb and God who sits on the throne imagine it that the work of God in Christ is to draw people from every people group to it just as Israel faced the ark the international community in which we exist with dozens and dozens and dozens of nationalities people groups languages and tongues is to be gathered around the lamb where you will be enlightened nourished and your sins will be mediated for what you have in chapter 25 is a beautiful depiction of the presence of

God the question then is what will you bring him what do you bring him he doesn't need your money he just wants you all of you took him thousands of years to make it plain for the eye to see how

tragic it would be if we didn't begin to align our life and our life together around his glory and his word our heavenly father we commit our day to you now as we get ready to walk from this place thankful for creating us into an intentional community for you and we ask lord that that you yourself would be with us that we would see in these ancient Jewish texts the beginning seeds and blossoms of the fullness of what is fulfilled in Jesus to the welfare of our own soul to the strengthening of our own community we pray in Jesus name amen to