

Extraordinary Home

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. My name is James. Nice to see you all today. If I was to ask you to picture home in your mind, what would you imagine?

Do that for me. What does home look like? Is it noisy people around a dinner table? Is it time talking over food and talking over tea and coffee?

Is it the warm embrace of a loved one? Is it being with the people you know and love, who know and love you and you know and love them?

Is it being in the place where you feel comforted and supported and cared for? Now, this might be a really loving picture for some of us. This might be something that happens quite often that we actually need to be more thankful to God for.

But for others, that kind of picture of home is almost impossible to achieve. A family might be overseas or in another state and with COVID and lockdowns, to see family is incredibly difficult.

[1 : 07] Maybe we've lost family members or maybe we have broken relationship with our family. This picture of home might actually be just cold and lonely and difficult.

You may long for home because you've moved around so much that you just don't know where home is. Maybe you live far away from your family and long to live near them. You may long for family that you'd want to be near.

Because some people live with a longing for a home in which they feel safe and loved. We all have a longing for home inside of us.

To be known and loved, to have deep relationships. And we can do a lot of things to try and get that image or to keep that image safe. Each of us have a longing for home inside of us.

And this is only found when we get to the home that we were made for. We are in a series at the moment, going through the book of Exodus, called Ordinary People, Extraordinary God.

[2 : 15] And we've seen so far in this series that God has taken a people, taken them out of Egypt, saved them out of Egypt with plagues, with a miracle at the Red Sea, parting the sea so they could get through it.

He's taken the people to Mount Sinai. God has made a covenant, a long-lasting relationship with his people.

He's given them laws, and now God is going to make a home with these people. The challenge for us will be today is to think about where our home is.

Because God offers us his home, a place of love and safety and comfort. And the question will be, will we journey to that home? So as we get into Exodus 25 and a couple of chapters after that, let me pray for us.

Heavenly Father, as we look at this picture of home today, help us to long for the home you are preparing for us, Lord. Amen.

[3 : 17] Let's see two points today. First of all, we're going to see the map that points to home, and then how we journey to this home. You can be following along in the St. Paul's app.

Let me encourage you to be taking notes there on paper. Write them on your hand and up your arm if you need to. First of all, Exodus 25 from verse 8.

Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Now, this is actually quite amazing. The God of the universe, the God who is everywhere, knows everything, knows the beat of every single heart, who made the smallest ant and made one of my favorite creatures, the giant sea squid.

This wonderful God is going to make his home with a group of people. And this is reminiscent of a marriage relationship.

In the last couple of weeks, we've seen God take his people to Mount Sinai and make a covenant with them, make a relationship, just like a marriage. And now he's moving in with them. He's going to be with them wherever they are.

[4 : 26] And God instructs them to build this tent, a tabernacle, so he can travel with them. This is the first flat pack, IKEA-style building. It's designed to be set up, packed down, set up as they move around.

And to understand this fully, we need to go back to the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, God placed man and woman in the garden, in the first home.

It was a place of provision and safety and rest, a place where God was with them in their home and they were known and loved. But the humans, we rejected this home and got exiled.

And now as we see that the tabernacle get built, it is like a map showing the way back to that home. And so it's full of pictures and images and Easter eggs pointing back to the Garden of Eden, leading us to the home.

And so God lists, we'll go through a couple of these to show it how it points back and then points forward. Firstly, there's a list of precious stones that are required for the building of the tabernacle.

[5 : 41] And the list starts with gold and ends in onyx. It's very similar in Genesis with the description of the earth. It had good gold and it had onyx.

In chapter 25, verse 31 to 39, it describes the construction of the lampstand. It has buds and blossoms. This lampstand was designed to look like a tree.

It's an echo of the tree of life that was found in the Garden of Eden. When God made the world in Genesis, he repeats a phrase, there's a repeated phrase, comes up seven times.

God said, let there be light or let there be something. It's repeated seven times. And now here in Exodus, there's another phrase repeated seven times.

The Lord said to Moses, build this. It's the same imagery. The building of the tabernacle is like the building of our first home in the Garden of Eden.

[6 : 47] And the biggest, the most important part of this is that this is where God would dwell. God was there in the Garden of Eden. God is going to make his home here in the tabernacle. This tabernacle is built with rings and poles so it could be carried around and moved with Israel and then rebuilt and packed down.

So, this tabernacle is a new home for God with his people. It points back to humanity's first home, but it also gives us a road map to our final home.

And there's some pieces of furniture that we're going to see here. The first three point to what makes this a really great home. So, have a look with me. We're going to have a look at furniture. I'm not sure if you've, you know, come to church thinking, I really need to spend some time thinking about furniture. That's, that's what we've got here in Exodus 25 and it actually gives us a wonderful picture of home.

So, let's have a look at this. First, we see the ark in chapter 25 where we see that we live under God's reign. From verse 10, have them make an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide and a cubit and a half high.

[8 : 04] Overlay it with gold, pure gold, both inside and out and make a gold moulding around it. The picture of this ark here, I don't know if you've seen Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark recently, I know I have.

The picture of the ark here is, it has the same size and dimensions as an ancient king's footstool. What would happen is, ancient kings would have their throne, they would have their throne and they would go and sit on their throne when they were bringing judgments.

You know, it was the day for court cases to come before them, the king would make judgments on the world and so they would have a throne and in front of the throne they would have a footstool.

Okay?

So the footstool and the throne go together as the place of judgment and the picture of the ark here is that it is that very footstool. Israel doesn't have a human king.

Israel has a theocracy, a God king and God is in the heavens, seated in the heavens and here with the people is his footstool.

[9 : 11] Sitting in the heavens his feet are on the earth and this is where he rules. God put something in his footstool. Verse 16. Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law which I will give you.

God is going to rule his people through the Ten Commandments and that symbolizes the entire law. The ark is the place that God will rule over his people.

At the Garden of Eden that was when Adam and Eve chose to reject God and get exiled from their home but here God is going to rule directly over his people again.

And so the picture at this point is it's a golden empty box that's going to have the tablets in it. I love the amount of gold that gets used here. It's just a wonderful amount of gold showing how valuable each of these pieces are because it points back to the awesome God that we have.

But we've got a golden box and God also describes the cover that's made for it. It's called an atonement cover. It's the lid that goes on the box on top of the stone tablets.

[10:24] Now this piece of furniture just like the rest has really rich symbolic imagery. It's not just a lid. It's not just a box needs a lid. What kind of hinge does it have?

It's not that kind of thing. It's really significant that the stone tablets that have the law that they are being covered because the penalty of breaking the law is death.

The penalty that comes from disobeying God is being covered. It is if the phrase in English it is if God is covering the cost of his people's sin.

And so at the seat of his power where his footstool is on earth God is going to rule over his people and bring justice but also with the atonement cover he brings mercy.

Even at this stage God's people need their sins covered over. Not covered up but covered over.

And God is indicating that there is going to be someone who will cover the cost of the people's sin.

[11:29] That's the first piece of furniture for us. The second piece of furniture is a table where there will be food because home is where we eat food with God.

I can't think of a person's house that I've ever been into that didn't have a dining table. I think if I came into every one of your houses I would find a dining table. Would this be correct?

Does anybody not have a dining table? You don't have a dining table? You don't have a dining table? It's too small? Okay. My heart breaks for you. We'll get you in a milk crate and a tiny dining table.

So what does this say about our houses? You know I don't want to pick on one person in particular. Maybe it says I don't want to have fellowship. I know of no I'm not saying that about you at all. A minister I used to work with he had five kids large family that had a large dining table.

They got rid of that. I actually have that dining table now and they got a new dining table so they could have lots of people at their house because they wanted to feast with people. They wanted to open their home.

[12:38] They wanted to do food with other people because that is what home so often is. Home and dining table are so central to family and it's true of God's home here.

A table is made verse 23 make a table of acacia wood two cubits long a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high and on this table a meal gets served.

Verse 30 put the bread of the presence on this table to be before me at all times. Now the bread isn't here because God gets hungry. God doesn't need it. In Leviticus we are told that the bread of the presence was 12 loaves of bread.

Two rows of six. 12 being a very symbolic number for Israel because there was 12 tribes. So this is a picture of all of the people of Israel being able to eat food with God.

In God's home where he rules where he shows justice and mercy he's also got food for his people. He has a home a family for them.

[13:46] It's a wonderful picture of a meal in the presence of God because this this is the point of knowing Jesus. This is the point of Christianity. We don't become Christians just to not go to hell or just to live forever.

The joy of being a Christian is that we get invited to the best table in town. We get to share a meal with God himself. It's what we long for.

The third piece of furniture here is a lampstand. It was designed to look like the tree of life but it also provides light. It's this really warm, lovely image that it's a brightly lit, warm, welcoming home to have a meal with God.

It is a lamp. It's a place of light and life. Once this tabernacle is built, the table, the lampstand, to be in it.

God's home is open for mercy at the ark and for fellowship with him, with the table, with the light. It's a wonderful picture of home.

[15 : 00] And these pieces of furniture which might just look like really expensive pieces of furniture but they are actually all signposts to our home. They reflect where our home was in the garden and they show us the way back because they all point to Jesus.

John chapter 1, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus came and dwelt with us. Dwelt is the same word as tabernacle.

So John literally says Jesus came and tabernacled. Jesus came camping with us. He is our home and he is the way home.

God made his home among us in the person of Jesus so he could bring us home. If the ark is where God reached down and touched the earth, Jesus is the full embodiment of that.

The ark was the place that we come under God's rule. Jesus is the true ark because he is the place, he is the king who rules right now.

[16 : 08] Jesus is the atonement cover over the stone tablets. He is that cover because in his death he says to us, I will cover your sin. Jesus is the true bread.

He said in John 6 that I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry. He is the bread who we celebrate in the Lord's Supper that we get to come into God's presence because of Jesus.

He is the true lamp. Jesus again said in John 8, I am the light of the world. He is the light so we can see the path forward. We can see our way to God because Jesus has opened our eyes.

We all have a longing for home and that is met for us in Jesus. He is our true home. Every longing we have for home is met in him.

All these sign posts of the furniture and the tabernacle are pointing to Jesus. One of the early church fathers, Augustine, said, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in him.

[17 : 22] This picture is of the tabernacle. It's a picture of home. But it is not home. It was a map. It's a map and a promise to a home.

So our second point is that we need to journey to this home. Because unfortunately we are blocked from enjoying home with God because of our sin.

And this is built into the furniture of the tabernacle as well. From chapter 26, go and have a look at chapter 26 of Exodus with me. Verse 31. At first glance we could think this sounds lovely.

Purples and blue, royal colours, cherubim, angels. This is a delightful image for God's tabernacle. But we of course need to remind ourselves this is another one of those Easter egg images that takes us back to Genesis.

In the exile, when God exiled us from our home, when he kicked us out of the garden of Eden, he put a cherubim blocking the way back into the garden with a flaming sword flashing back and forth so we couldn't get back in.

[18 : 44] Here again, God has placed a cherubim so that we can't enter in. The cherubim is still blocking the way back to God. Not only that, the last piece of furniture we'll look at today also points this out.

It's an altar, described in chapter 27 from verse 1. Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high. It's to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide.

This is the largest of the pieces of furniture so far. The altar is here because it's the solution to getting back home. The altar is where the sacrifices were placed.

It's where the way back to God is now because of the blood of a sacrifice. There is so much imagery represented here in this picture of God's home.

God's home starts with a courtyard and as a Jewish person would come in they would have encountered the altar first.

[19 : 49] It dominated the way back home. It blocks the way into God's presence. It blocks it not just physically, not as a large piece of furniture but symbolically. We deserve to die for our sins.

I deserve to be excluded from God's presence because I continue to rebel against him and reject him. But a sacrifice. An animal on that altar is placed and it dies.

And this would have happened hundreds upon hundreds of times. But they are just pointers to God's solution to our sin. Ali is going to put an image on the screen in a moment.

It's from the classic tale A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. There we go. Of a grumpy old man Scrooge who's visited by three different ghosts to reconsider his life's actions.

And there's this one point in the story where he's on the outside and he's looking in to this family celebration. It's warm, there's joy, you can imagine a family meal in this kind of way, but Scrooge is

on the outside because of his life's decisions.

[21 : 03] This picture is us without Jesus. Standing on the outside of the tabernacle with this wonderful picture of family and home with God.

The meal is laid out, there is bright lights, but we are stuck on the outside of home with God. The altar blocking the way, requiring blood.

The curtain preventing us with relationship with God, stuck just outside of it, so close and yet so far. Thanks, Allie.

Jesus would change this. On the night before Jesus died, he said in John 14, my father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you?

Jesus was going to get home ready for us. Jesus is the sacrifice on that altar, the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. And when he's dying on the cross, listen to what happens from Matthew 27.

[22 : 08] When Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. As Jesus died, the furniture of the tabernacle, now the temple in this situation, the furniture is radically changed.

God, Jesus in his death throws to one side the altar. He has dealt with that the curtain is torn open and we can now get access to God.

Home with God is now open. If you are far from God, longing for him, come home to him today. The light is on, God is there, the meal is laid out.

God calls us to come home, to fellowship with him, to eat with him. And if you feel far from him, don't let the feelings shout louder than what hangs above the home.

It says, welcome home. The furniture, the way the tabernacle was built points to our true home with God.

[23 : 15] We all have a longing for home inside of us. Even when we are home, surrounded by people, we can still feel homesick. homesick. Why are we still homesick?

Why can we be longing for something when we have everything? What about if I was to chase the ideal dream, I'm going to chase the house, and the husband or the wife, and the pet, and the children, and the fireplace, and I've got everything.

Why do I still feel like something is missing? There's still a longing for something else. God has placed a longing for home inside all of us, and that's only satisfied in our heavenly home.

The tabernacle points to it. Jesus would rip the doors off their hinges so we could get into this home. Don't risk chasing anything else this side of that home, because this side of heaven, we can't be home.

We are foreigners in a distant land, all of us. And so when we lift our eyes to our true home in heaven, and long for home, we grow in faith, we grow in trust with God, each step of the way when we realise that what we have now is just temporary, what we'll have with God will be permanent forever.

[24 : 43] I heard a story about Americans living overseas, and at Thanksgiving time, one of the largest of their celebrations, they would come together and cook the bird that was closest to a turkey to celebrate.

Now, I don't really understand this, I've never had a turkey that was any good. I had some North Americans this morning say, well, you've never had it cooked right, we'll cook it right for you. Look, I'll try it.

Maybe that sense of home is finding a particular type of food from the region where you grew up in. My grandmother used to cook Yorkshire puddings with a Sunday roast with gravy and there's just something about that meal that calls to home.

So I love it when my wife makes it, it's wonderful. The reality is that for us, we are not home, we are exiles, we are foreigners here.

And God came camping, he came tabernacling with us, temporarily pointing us to home. He camped with us, he was with us in the tabernacle, he was with us in Jesus and he is calling us home because this is not our home.

[25 : 58] This is not final. This is just temporary and we can easily get distracted thinking that the temporary is the permanent but it is not. This is just temporary.

Far better to live knowing that what we have right now is just for a season but we are expats, we are foreigners waiting to go home. And that's what we do when we gather.

We celebrate the God that is calling us home. We celebrate that we are not home yet. So let me encourage you, sign up to have a meal with people next week.

That we can celebrate with people that God is calling us to a home. We can do that just like the Americans do with Thanksgiving but a far better meal because it's anything other than turkey. Sign up to be in a community group, to be journeying with brothers and sisters every week, reminding ourselves that we are not home here.

We are together, exiles in a foreign land, waiting until we get home. Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, I thank you that you have come and dwelt with us, first of all in the garden, then in the tabernacle.

[27 : 16] Lord, thank you so much that you were with us when Jesus came and dwelt with us. Father, I thank you so much that Jesus has now gone to be with you, to rip those doors off the hinges so that we can be with you, so that we can enter into your presence, that we can have home with you.

Lord, lift our eyes to that home. Help us to long for that home and not for the temporary things of this world, Lord. Pray this in your son's name of your glory. Amen.

Isn't it wonderful we have a