

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

February 27 – Exodus 25: 8-9, 26: 30 – 35

As God gives Moses the instructions for building the Tabernacle, He makes a very specific point to tell Moses to build it exactly according to the instructions that God had given him. In fact, to make his point, God tells Moses two times (Exodus 25: 9 and Exodus 26: 30). The Tabernacle wasn't to be something that the Israelites just slapped together however they felt like it. It was to be made precisely the way God instructed it to be made. If you were to take the time to read all of the details about the Tabernacle and its furnishings in Exodus 25: 1 – 31: 11, you would see that God cares about even what would seem to be the very smallest details. He not only tells them what to make, but He also tells them exactly what they are to make it from, how they are to make it, and how they are to make use of it. Why would God care so much about such seemingly small details? The first, and most obvious reason, is because this Tabernacle was going to be the place where God would make His dwelling (25:8). Imagine, building a home for God to live in. Obviously that task would require detailed instructions and the utmost care in construction. The word sanctuary that appears in Exodus 25: 8 literally means holy place—a place that is set aside for a special purpose. The Tabernacle wasn't just any old ordinary place, it was the dwelling place of God.

As John began to write his Gospel, he starts by talking about who Jesus is, and he says something very, very interesting in verse 14 of chapter 1.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

It is a powerful thought to think that Jesus is God made flesh, but John doesn't stop with that. John also says that Jesus came and made his dwelling among us. The Greek word that is translated as "dwelling" in our Bibles is the word *σκηνώω* (*skenoo*). What is interesting about this word "skenoo" is that it is the Greek word for Tabernacle. Think about the significance of this. In Exodus, God had people build a sanctuary for Him to dwell in, but then in the New Testament, Jesus is made like us, so that he can come and dwell with us. In the Old Testament, the glory of God resided behind a curtain in the Most Holy Place, in the New Testament, the glory of God comes and walks among us. Jesus didn't commute from heaven, he moved right in and lived among us. He came and dwelt among us; he became like us, but without sin, so that he

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

could take our punishment and give us his righteousness. Because Christ has done that for us, our lives become the place where the Spirit of God dwells.

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple (the temple replaced the tabernacle as the dwelling place of God during King Solomon's reign) and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

Imagine that, because of Christ, we have gone from God living behind a curtain in the tabernacle, to God making his dwelling among us (Christ), to God making his dwelling in us (The Holy Spirit).

February 28 – Hebrews 8: 1 – 6

Yesterday we saw part of the reason why God gave such explicit directions for the construction of the Tabernacle was because it would be the place where He dwelt among his people. But there is also a second reason that doesn't really become obvious to us until the writer of Hebrews explains it to us. The Tabernacle was the place where the High Priest carried out his work, and the most important part of that work was to offer sacrifices that would atone for the sins of the people. In the Book of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews connects Jesus, in a very powerful way, to the work that was carried out in the tabernacle. In fact, the writer of Hebrews calls Jesus our Great High Priest, and in the verses we read today, the writer of Hebrews tells us that, as our Great High Priest, Jesus is at work in the heavenly tabernacle.

Look at verse 5, the writer of Hebrews gives us the reason why God told Moses to be so precise in the construction of the tabernacle—it was the earthly representation of the heavenly reality. In other words, the earthly tabernacle was a copy of the heavenly dwelling of God. The writer of Hebrews goes on to tell us that the work the priests did in the tabernacle was also a representation of the work Christ would do for us.

There are some very interesting things the writer of Hebrews tells us about this work that Christ is doing in the heavenly tabernacle. First, the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus sat down at the right of the throne of God. This is not just a small detail. It is rich in meaning and significance. First, when someone sits down it indicates their work is done.

Hebrews 10:11-12 *Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never*

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

take away sins. ¹² *But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.*

Jesus' death on the cross is the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. It is once and done. That is exactly what Jesus meant when he cried out on the cross, "It is finished."

But furthermore, in the ancient near east culture, sitting at the right hand of a ruler was considered to be the ultimate position of power, authority and honor. So when the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, he is proclaiming that Jesus is King of Kings.

Ephesians 1:19-23 *That power is like the working of his mighty strength,* ²⁰ *which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,* ²¹ *far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.* ²² *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,* ²³ *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

But there is something else that should catch our eye that the writer of Hebrews says in verse 2 of today's reading. In verse 1, he told us Jesus is seated indicating his work is done, but in verse 2 the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is also at work serving in the sanctuary (tabernacle) on our behalf. Why does Jesus need to continue to serve if his work is done? His sacrificial work is done, but day after day Jesus is interceding with the Father on our behalf serving as our advocate, defending us from Satan's accusations.

1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* ² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins*

March 1 – Revelation 7: 9 – 17

Before we leave the tabernacle and go on to its furnishings, we should look at one more New Testament passage that makes use of the Greek word for tabernacle *σκηνώ* (*skenoo*). In verse 15, of today's passage, John, the writer of Revelation, uses this word to describe a scene that he sees in his vision of heaven. In this scene, John sees a great multitude of people, dressed in white robes, praising God for the salvation they have been given through Christ. Through faith in what Christ has done on the cross, this great multitude has come through the

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Great Tribulation, and is now gathered around the throne of heaven, praising and serving God. What a great scene, but that is not the end of what John sees. Look at verse 15. John tells us that God will spread his tent (σκηνώ) over them to protect them. As we are taken by faith in Christ from the tribulations of this life to eternal life, God will spread his tent over us. Our eternal dwelling place will be with God in his sanctuary.

Revelation 21:1-5 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

Our eternal dwelling place will be God's tabernacle. There will be no more tribulation, no more tears, no more death, no more sin.

2 Corinthians 5:1-7 *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ We live by faith, not by sight.*

As we give up the earthly tent of our bodies, we come under the shelter of God's tent for all of eternity.

March 2 – Exodus 25: 10 – 22

As we turn our attention to the furnishings of the tabernacle, we see Jesus in each of these as well. The first furnishing that God told Moses to make for the tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant. This chest contained the tablets of the law, Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17), and a jar of manna (Hebrews 9:4). The cover of the chest was made of gold and it was referred to as the Mercy Seat. Before we go any further,

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

stop and think what a beautiful picture God gives us in all of this. There is the law, to be preserved inside the chest, but over the law—covering the law is the Mercy Seat. God knew that because of our human weakness we could never measure up to the law's demands, so God made a way for mercy to cover our transgressions against the law.

James 2:13 *mercy triumphs over judgment.*

But it is mercy that comes at a great cost, the blood of an innocent victim that was sacrificed in our place. As God gives mercy to us, His judgment is passed on an innocent victim who stands in our place.

Once a year the High Priest would make atonement for the sins of the people, and he would take blood from the sacrifice and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat to accomplish this. Clearly the Mercy Seat is a very powerful picture of Christ and what Christ would do on the cross. As the blood from the animal sacrifice was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, sins were forgiven and the wrath of God was turned away. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. His blood turns away the wrath of God and makes atonement for our sins.

1 John 4:10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

Jesus is the Ark of the Covenant. He is the presence of God with us. He is the fulfilment of the Law and the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Mercy Seat. His death in our place and his shed blood covers our transgression and sin against the Law of God.

March 3 – Exodus 25: 23 – 30

Often, we read over the details concerning the furnishings in the temple, and we think very little about their significance. But each of these furnishings points us toward Jesus. In today's reading, we read about the Table of Presence and the showbread that is set out on the table. As you read about this bread you see that were always to be 12 loaves of it sitting on the table, and each loaf represented the 12 tribes of Israel. In verse 30, God calls this showbread the "Bread of Presence," and that is exactly what this table and the bread were meant to communicate to Israel—God's presence in their lives—God's desire to have fellowship with them. Perhaps there is no greater act of fellowship than to sit down and share a meal together. The table and the bread were a picture of God's willingness to fellowship and have communion with man. The table represented an invitation to share a meal, as an

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

extension of God's friendship toward Israel. God was willing for the Israelites to enter into His presence to fellowship with Him, and this invitation was always open.

When Jesus came the doors to having fellowship with God were swung wide open so that all men could come and enjoy the presence of God in their lives. In fact, Jesus seemed to specialize in sharing meals with people that polite, religious society had long ago written off as being beyond all hope of ever entering the presence of God. But there they were sitting and eating and drinking with Jesus. Jesus ate with tax collectors, prostitutes and the sinners of Jewish society. But this was more than just a gesture of friendship on earth.

Matthew 9:10-13 *While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Jesus came to call sinners to Him, make them right with God, so that they could enjoy everlasting fellowship with God.

John 6: 35, 49-50 *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ... Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die."*

God so desires our fellowship that He was willing to come to earth from heaven as our "bread of life" to give eternal life to all those who would partake in it. At the Last Supper Jesus described Himself as bread again:

Matthew 26: 26 *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'"*

We celebrate the Lord's Supper, or communion, to remember this important truth, the way to come into the presence of God is through the broken body of Christ—the bread of life. The day is coming when we will sit in the presence of God and share a meal with him. The Book of Revelation calls it the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 3: 20 *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Revelation 19:9 *'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'*

March 4 – Revelation 22: 1 – 6

As you read today's scripture, you may wonder why we seem to be taking a detour from the tabernacle and its furnishings. We are not. The next furnishing we are going to be looking at is the golden lampstand that provided light for the tabernacle. But before we jump into that, I want us to take a day and think about the importance of light as a theme in the Bible.

The very first thing God created in Genesis 1 was light—light that brought order out of chaos. Adam and Eve's sin plunged the world back into darkness. Oh, the sun still shone in the sky, but spiritually the world was plunged into chaos and darkness because of sin. Because of sin, we were cut off from the light of God. We were people living in darkness, but as we read through the Bible we see the darkness slowly being rolled back by the light. It starts with a golden lampstand in the tabernacle that we will read about tomorrow and it continues to grow throughout the rest of the Bible. By the time we get to the end of the story in Revelation 22, the light has grown so bright that there is no longer a need for the sun to shine, or a lamp to burn. Darkness has been driven away by the light of Christ, and the very presence of God, who is light.

1 John 1:5 God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

We are brought into the presence of God through Christ and we are brought from darkness to eternal light and life through his blood that was shed on the cross. Because of Christ, we are no longer people who are walking in darkness.

Matthew 4:16 *the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."*

Because of Christ we have been brought from darkness to eternal light and glory.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

March 5 – Exodus 25: 31 – 40

God told Moses to make a lampstand out of pure gold to provide light in the tabernacle. But the purpose of this lampstand was more than just to provide light. God told Moses to place the lampstand just outside of the Most Holy Place. It was to be made exactly according to God's instructions—hammered out of one piece of pure gold, with one central branch from which three branches extended from each side, forming a total of seven branches. Seven lamps holding olive oil and wicks stood on top of the branches. Each branch looked like that of an almond tree, containing buds, blossoms and flowers. In the Book of Leviticus, God would give further instruction concerning these lamps and their operation.

Leviticus 24:1-3 *The LORD said to Moses, ² "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. ³ Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come*

As you read more about the tabernacle's construction and layout, it becomes clear that this lampstand was the only source of light for the whole tabernacle. From its position near the Most Holy Place, the lampstand would light the Table of Presence and the Altar of Incense, providing light so the priests could do their work. But this lampstand was more than just functional, it also represented what was to come in Jesus. In the prologue to his gospel, John writes these words about Jesus and his ministry.

John 1:9 *The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*

Just as the lampstand provided light for the priests to do their work and approach God on behalf of the people, Jesus came as the true light to bring people out of darkness to light the way to the Most Holy Place, to bring us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

John 8:12 *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*