**Session 19**

***God of Freedom, Week 10b + Wrap-Up***

**Exodus 39 *and* Exodus 40**

**12-13 February 2024**

**Patterns and Rhythms in Scripture –** In our homework for Exodus chapter 39 this week, we noted that the phrase “as the Lord had commanded Moses” was repeated seven times in the first thirty-one verses…and then verse 32 says, “Thus all the work of the tabernacle…was *finished*.” Notice how this parallels what we saw in the creation account in Genesis 1 when Moses recorded the phrase *“and God said, ‘let there be\_\_\_”* seven times and then wrote in summary, “So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were *finished*.” We also saw the refrain “and it was good” seven times in Genesis 1. Moses repeats that pattern in verse 43 of Exodus 39: Moses *saw* all the work that the people had done on the Tabernacle and its furnishings, and he *blessed* them, i.e. he *saw* all their work, and he pronounced it *good*. This seven-and-summary pattern continues in chapter 40: “just as the Lord had commanded Moses” is repeated seven times in verses 19-32, and then we find, “So Moses *finished* the work” in verse 33. Not only that, but God Himself pronounced their work good by filling the Tabernacle with His glory!

**The God of the Tabernacle –** Jen urges us to celebrate what we learn about God from the construction of the Tabernacle:

1. God is in the grand plan. He cares about the sweeping scope of the entire project. He cares about its location—it is erected in the very center of their camp because it is to be the center of their lives. He cares about its orientation because that speaks truth about where they came from and where they are headed, with a gate that faces east. And everything in the Tabernacle would remind them of crucial truths they needed along the way in the wilderness.
2. God also cares about all the details. He cares about every little bell and every finely hemmed robe. He cares about every person, named and unnamed, who took special care with the myriad of details in the stone-setting and engraving, the weaving of all kinds of cloth, the making of items made from base materials and of precious metals, and on and on.
3. He is the God of each one of our grand sweeping “story arcs” and of the smallest details of our lives. All the days ordained for each of us were written in His book before any of them came to be. This is a God we can trust.

**A God Unlike All Others –** When everything is in place and all the inaugural ceremonies have been completed, God’s glory comes down and fills the Tabernacle. Mose—and indeed all the people—know that the thing that sets them apart from all other nations and peoples around them is the fact that their God dwells among them! The gods of Egypt demanded labor without ceasing and a grudging obedience out of fear. And the gods of Canaan will certainly demand the same things. But this God—*their* God—wants joyful obedience out of gratitude. This God wants a humble and contrite spirit in place of a sacrifice.

**God’s Tabernacles–** You and I don’t know where the Tabernacle is now. And the temple which was built in its place is no longer standing either. But we have seen over and over again that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all these things, and we too take on the role that the Tabernacle and the temple were to play: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?...For God’s temple is holy, and you *are* that temple.” It was 50 days from the time that the Israelites celebrated the Passover back in Egypt to when God descended in smoke and fire to the top of Mount Sinai. And it was 50 days from the time of the Passover when Christ was crucified to the day that the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers at Pentecost with tiny flames of fire on each of them. Each believer takes on the work of ministering and of becoming a living sacrifice. Surely our *justification* is given to us by the work of Christ, and just as surely our *sanctification* is the work of a lifetime. So here we are, little “tabernacles in the wilderness,” and who knows how long the Lord will have us remain here to be tested? But we do know that He is IN us and He is WITH us.

**The Story of Exodus Is *Our* Story –** The story of Israel is our story. We were once enslaved to sin, bound in darkness, and He delivered us by the blood of the Lamb. He washed us in the waters of baptism, and He nourished us on Bread from Heaven and living Water. He led us into the wilderness where our faith would be tested, and we learned that though we had left “Egypt”, it is still in us. He gave us the law of love so that we would be set apart from all others, honoring Him and honoring our neighbor, and He shows us the pattern for what “Home” looks like: light for our hearts, food for our souls, prayers that are heard, and worship rightly rendered. And He fills us with His Spirit to lead us through the wilderness to the place of our final rest. How long will that be? 2 Corinthians 5:1-9 speaks of the longing we have to be there:

*“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.”*

**One Final Creation Narrative for Us –** Revelation chapter 21 describes the scene that will fulfill all of our longings to be home with the Lord…forever.

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of*

*Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.’ And He who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ ”*

For as long as we are in the wilderness, may the Spirit of God rest upon each of us in such a way that His Law is written on our hearts and His worship is evident in our lives.