

Exodus 25:1-9, 10-12, 31-32; 26:1-3, 31-35

The Tabernacle

Sunday February 11th, 2018

We begin today with last week's gospel lesson John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." The key phrase here being, "dwelt among us." The Greek word behind dwelt is "tabernacle" as in the Old Testament Tabernacle as in the "tent of meeting" which you see on the screen.



Today we are exploring the themes of our series on Buildings in the Bible of **Incarnation and Sanctuary**. Through the ages God has chosen different ways, different structures in order to enter into the life of his people. Last week we saw how God incarnated his love for Noah and the animals by providing sanctuary through the ark.

This week we are seeing how God again asked his people to build a Sanctuary where he would meet them. God asked them to build a Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting. It is in that sanctuary that God would meet his people and guide them. By day there was a pillar of smoke and by night fire, which is what you see in the slide on the screen.



This was a mobile Sanctuary. It went with the Israelites wherever they were guided to go. It was a tangible sign of God's presence with them. It was where God incarnated his presence. It was "Emmanuel" God with us.

Today I'll walk us through the tabernacle in word and picture for today a picture truly is worth a 1000 words. We'll look at the Tabernacle in 4 snap shots:

The Plan and Gifting for it,

The Ark of the Covenant,
the Lampstand and other furniture,
and finally the Curtain.

First, everyone gave as they were able. They gave of their resources and they gave of their skills to construct the tabernacle. Verse 1 reads, “The Lord said to Moses: Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give, you shall receive an offering for me.” God didn’t want reluctant givers. God also made the plan.

Verse 9 reads, “According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.” Boy do I wish it was that easy to do today when it comes to building for God. I wish God would just give us the plan like he does in Exodus chapters 25-30 and 35-40, but I guess God wants us to have some of the fun, and test us in our obedience and faithfulness and working together in love.

To build for God takes a long, long time, the patience of Job and the skin of one of those rhinoceros that Noah saved. At every church I have been at we have either been building brand new or remodeling. At FUMC of Mesa it took 14 years from dream to ribbon cutting for the FLC. It took about 6 years to acquire the property, 3 years to raise 2.5million in cash, 2 years to design it, 1 year to build it and countless, countless meetings.

Oh,... that God would give us a clear plan at times, but instead he says, donate your time, think to the best of your ability, dream, and plan and pray; and again, countless, countless meetings. Our Building Committee was set up by the Nominating Committee and affirmed by the Church Council. It was brought into being as the result of the work of our Long Range Planning Committee to explore our building needs over a 5 to 10 year period.

Here’s what they did in 2017: they met a total of 14 times during 2017. There were 11 regularly scheduled monthly meetings, most of them 2 hours long.

There were 3 additional building committee meetings to interview and select an architect (Swaim), a capitol campaign consultant (Kunz) and a contractor (Concord).

The building committee held 5 public meetings to which everyone was invited during 2017.

One was to discuss the requirements as derived from Dream Sunday. One was to discuss the unique requirements of each separate church function and ministry.

One to discuss the four proposed master plans as presented by Swaim architects.

One was to discuss the final two proposed master plans as presented by Swaim architects, and finally the 2017 annual Church Conference.

They held 5 public meetings to which everyone was invited; so that everyone could get in what they believed was best for Vista's future.

They also made 8 reports to the Church Council in 2017, appeared before the trustees three times in 2017, once for each contract signature. And finally they held 3 different kick-off meetings as needed for Swaim, Kunz, and Concord. They have truly been a dutiful committee soliciting input from everyone during the entire process and have prayerfully submitted the Master Plan in 3 phases. I thank them for their effort.

Now back to the scripture: The Ark of the Covenant. There's that word again Ark. Here it was a much smaller ark and what it held was the terms of our relationship with God at the time. It held the 10 Commandments. In essence it was a marriage license between God and his people. Remember Buildings in the Bible promoted or facilitated relationship between God and God's people.

So, here's a picture of the Ark of the Covenant.



Note cherubim, mercy seat.

Notice the poles were on the short end of the box; so that when the ark was carried God faced forward to lead the way. The presence of the Lord would appear between the 2 cherubim in a cloud, or smoke. God did not need to use a physical object, such as this, to be with the Israelites and lead them, but they needed something tangible; so here it is.

The subtle and not so subtle message of this movable ark and tent of meeting was that God; The Lord was not a local God. God went with his people wherever they would go.

In Moses' day every land and locality had its local god. They believed if you went someplace else and wanted the blessing of the divine you had to worship the local god, or gods. The ark and the tabernacle was God's way of saying he went everywhere they went and eventually they came to understand that God was everywhere.

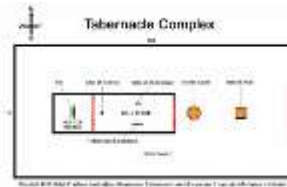
The New Testament manifestation of this was Jesus' Ascension into heaven; so that Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit could be present with us in all times and all places.

God who is the Creator of the Universe chose to meet his people in a tent. God was intimately present, but wherever the Israelites went God went too, in fact God led. Indeed, all who wander are not lost.

Now the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle wasn't very large. It was about 15 ft wide by about 45 ft long a 1 to 3 ratio. Numerology was very big for the Israelites and God. The numbers held meaning. 3 stood for divinity, 4 humanity, 7 and 10 completeness. Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible R-Z p. 502

Outside the Tabernacle was the Bronze Altar for the sacrifice for sins followed by the Bronze Laver for washing before entering the tent.

In the holy part of the tent there were 3 pieces of furniture: The Golden Candle stick (we call them menorahs today), the table of the Showbread and the Altar of Incense. Inside the Holy of Holies there was only one piece of furniture and that was the Ark of the Covenant. Here is a picture of the tent of meeting and the courtyard around it:



take a moment to study this.

The purpose of the furniture on the outside of the Holy of Holies was to show the approach of human beings to God and the furniture on the inside (the Ark of the Covenant) of the Holy of Holies the approach of God to human beings. The furniture symbolized the incarnation of God within the human experience of Israel.

Note that the Holy of Holies is in the shape of a cube 15 feet on a side. The perfection of a cube was symbolic of God's presence. We will see this cube again in the last message of this series when we go to heaven and come back to a New Earth in the New Jerusalem which is a cube 1500 miles on a side! Again the perfection of the cube shows the incarnation of God with us. We will see God face to face and there won't be a curtain, or a cloud, or flame, or priest as mediator between us and God.



Here is a cut away of the Tabernacle

The curtain that is here in the Tabernacle will appear again in Herod's Temple and is torn from top to bottom by God. This showed that access to God is now open to all who would come. This is also symbolized in Holy Communion for we remember at Christ's death the curtain is torn. God is incarnated; God is present; whenever we receive Holy Communion. We don't have to go through a Priest. We don't have to make a sacrifice for our sins. Christ has done that once and for all, for all of us. We but need to remember!

This whole detailed description of the Tabernacle, its' construction and adornment and placement in the heart of the Israelite encampment shows that God is interested in the details of our lives with him. We can bring him anything, though, it seems very trivial to us. It shows in the

richness of its furnishings that God expects us to bring him our best to honor him, and when we do that God honors us.

Finally, God calls building and structures into place at the time and place we need them to meet him.

From the Ark to the Tabernacle to the Stone Temples of Solomon and Herod to the very body of Jesus the Christ; God calls into being the structures wherein which he can incarnate his providence, protection and love. And the mystery of mysteries is that God chooses to be incarnated, present in this world through you and me. And through you and me meets others in their need.

God has called Vista Church to build like Noah, like Moses and the Israelites. Many meet God in sanctuaries during corporate worship for that is the purpose of these spaces, but God also meets us in other spaces that you might not think of as holy. Many young children and youth meet God in Sunday School rooms, meeting rooms and even tents at camps, and on mission trips.

As I thought of this message I realized I met God in a profound way in the Mess Hall of a summer Camp that no longer exists. I was in the 7th grade and we were playing games, simply games with chairs and I experienced an acceptance by others I was desperately seeking.

I met God in a game of what I call “Moving Chairs” and at that time I didn’t even know that it was God that I met. But I experienced God in what, looking back on it, was a beat up, dingy, smelly, old camp mess hall through a dumb game and the love and acceptance of others.

On Wednesday our District Superintendent was here, Marc Conrad. He said to me, “I really like this church. It is one of my favorite churches and the building isn’t that bad either.” He hit the nail on the head.

We are the church more than the building that surrounds us, and if we can work together and be that church; it is more important than anything we can physically build. In the end it is not what we build that

is so important, but how we treat each other getting there is what truly will bring glory to God.

Indeed 1 Peter 2:4-5 says, “Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight,

and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,

to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”



As a symbol of this and our Lenten Discipline each week for the next 7 weeks of Lent, Vista’s Members and friends will receive a puzzle piece to add into our Master Plan. These will go out about 40 at a time.

I want you to pray over your piece. Really pray over your peace for Vista Church and our New Vistas Building Campaign.



Initial the back of the puzzle piece and bring it back on the Sunday or Lenten service after you get it.



We will be reconstructing this puzzle here of our Master Plan. You might notice a corner is already started. On the back is written “Jesus Christ” for he is indeed our cornerstone.

In Jesus Name Amen!!