

## Sermon for Sabbath 2/25/2023



Torah – Exodus 25:1-27:19 | Prophets – 1 Kings 5:26-6:13 | Gospels – Mark 12:35-44; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (Here is a link: <https://bit.ly/3YcBIEh>)

Shabbat shalom. Brothers and sisters, we all know that God is one and because of this His Word is one Truth that is meant to be heard, understood and followed by those who belong to Messiah Yeshua. The last several weeks we've seen a single message develop through the Scriptures that we've been studying. We've discussed how important it is for us to "Keep the Faith," for without trust in what the Lord has done and what He has promised to do, what can we live for? We discussed how important it is to "Keep the Commandments," for without a commitment to the Lord's will for how to live out His purpose for our lives, for what purpose can we commit? And we discussed how important it is to "Love One Another"—even to "Love Our Enemy"—for without a life of humility and forgiveness, which begins with repentance of our own sin and ends with serving God and serving one another according to the Truth, with love, how can we expect to see God?

Once we understand that to follow Messiah Yeshua we must repent of our selfish thoughts, words and acts against God and one another, and then put God first, our neighbor next and our own interests last, the Lord can start to change our hearts to become more like His heart. In the midst of this experience, which takes a whole lot of humility, a whole lot of prayer and fasting, a whole lot of endurance in faith, and a

whole lot of surrendering our own ideas for His ideas and our own ways for His ways, I've found that praise, worship and thanksgiving are the best way to get through the tougher days. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." It — is — the — will — of — God — in — Messiah — Yeshua — for — you — that you rejoice always and pray without ceasing. We can look at the dichotomy of this exhortation and recognize that this means rejoice in suffering and rejoice in blessing; rejoice in the midst of battle and rejoice in times of peace. This is all true, of course, but let's focus in on the hard part for a moment. This means rejoice in mental anguish or doubt; rejoice when we lack understanding; rejoice when we feel overwhelmed; rejoice when we don't see the provisioning we've come to appreciate or expect; rejoice when the enemy appears to be winning; rejoice in the midst of persecution and injustice; rejoice in prison or as we face our own death. When we pray, whether God answers our specific requests or not, we're to continually come before Him to worship and praise Him. God will fulfill His promises, but He's going to do it in His timing, not ours, and we need to not only be OK with that, but to praise Him for the journey toward the life of promise that we are on in every way.

We studied a few weeks ago in Exodus 17 how Moses grew frustrated with the people of Israel who grumbled against his leadership as well as the provisioning of the Lord when there was no water for them to drink—and he said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?" He then cried out to the Lord, praying, "What shall I do with this people?" Is it OK to ask the Lord for help? Absolutely it is. Consider Peter, who walked on water in faith in Matthew 14:22-33 when the Lord called for Him to come out to Him there. Like Moses or Peter, we might experience these highs in our faith. We may have just crossed the Sea of Reeds on dry land leaving our enemies in the midst of the sea. We might have stepped out onto the surface of the sea and walked on it as if it was dry land with our eyes fully focused on our Messiah. We may have just walked out in faith and opened a church in a public place, being led to do so by the Lord. But as the people of Israel saw the desert around them with no provisioning, they began to grumble. As Peter saw the troubles around him, the wind and the waves of life, he began to sink. So too might we begin to sink as things don't appear to go the way we hope or as challenges arise that attempt take our focus off of the Lord and what He has called us to do. I don't need to get into anything specific here, because the lesson here is that we must do what Moses did and we must do what Peter did. We must call out to the Lord to help us. Moses asked, "What shall I do with these people?" Peter cried out, "Lord save me." We too must cry out, "Father, in the name of Yeshua our Messiah, please take us in the direction you want us to go."

There is a warning in these stories, also. We don't want to be like the children of Israel here, who "tempted the Lord," saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" We know that He is. We also don't want to be like the disciples who stayed in the boat and didn't follow Peter out onto the water. If Yeshua asked Peter, "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?," what does this imply concerning the disciples who didn't come out to join Him at all? Did they have any faith at all. Did they trust the Lord. Were they willing to actually act on their faith and do what the Lord has called them for? Are we?

In Malachi 3:13-17, we read concerning the children of Israel in the generations between these two stories: "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the Lord, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'" He answers, "You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His doctrine and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free.'"

My brothers and sisters, we cannot have this attitude in our hearts at any time, or we will be as good as dead, just like the Israelites who grumbled and whose corpses were scattered in the wilderness. We may call out to the Lord and ask Him to save us or we may call out to the Lord and ask for His help, but we better not ever get to the point where we believe in our hearts that it is useless to come here every Sabbath and worship Yeshua who saved us and brought us across the waters, from a place where we were dead in our bondage to sin to a place where we are free and forgiven and offered an opportunity to follow Him through the wilderness into eternal life. Let us never get to the point where we believe it is pointless or unnecessary to commit in our hearts to follow His commandments on account of our love for Him, thinking that those who disobey His commandments on account of rebellion or deception are somehow better off than us. We must reject these thoughts and temptations of the evil one.

In Hebrews 3:12-19, 4:1-2: we read an exhortation that applies directly to us: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to

those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”

As Malachi 3:13-17 continues, we read the following about those who remain steadfast in their faith despite trial and tribulation; those who did not succumb to their unbelief—we read: “Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. ‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’”

Brothers and sisters, just as Messiah Yeshua is the first fruits who rose from the dead and paved the narrow way into eternal life, we are the late harvest who will belong to Messiah at His coming. When we read about the Kingdom that is to come in Revelation 21, we see that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life will enter in. No unclean, dishonorable, abominable, deceitful, or doubtful person will enter. We read in Exodus 32:33, the Lord say, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.” We must be the Saints who endure by “keeping the commandments of God and our faith in Yeshua” (Revelation 14:12) to be written and maintained as a listing in the Lamb’s Book of Life. When we reach out to God and ask for His help, we must trust that His help will come, even if He delays, and rejoice in our faith. If we grumble against Him impatiently in unbelief, my friends, I believe His help may even be further delayed or it might not come.

We must have the hearts of Paul and Silas, who rejoiced in prison singing songs while they were wrongfully confined. We must have the heart of Joseph, who prophesied to give hope to Pharaoh’s cupbearer despite knowing that he would be left behind in prison. God would eventually provide a means of escape. We must face the cross as our savior did, knowing that after great suffering, He would be raised up in victory. When we do this, there is hope of revival on the horizon.

Is there a revival at Asbury University in Kentucky? If there is revival spreading from a spark of faith that ignited there, will the fire spread here? Will this be the awakening that gives America another breath of life? I don’t know brothers and sisters, but I know this. Any revival begins when two or more people get on their knees and confess their

sins and ask the Lord to forgive them, but it doesn't stop there. It continues when those same people commit to following the Lord and His will rather than their own, and they go and spread the good news about their commitment to the Lord and what the Lord has promised them on account of that commitment. Revival starts with brokenness of heart, confession of sin, prayer and fasting.

Pastor and evangelist R.A. Torrey had some words about revival that I think are worth repeating and giving deep consideration. He said, "I can give a prescription that will bring a revival to any church or community or any city on earth. 'First, let a few Christians (they need not be many) get thoroughly right with God themselves. This is the prime essential. If this is not done, the rest that I am to say will come to nothing. Second, let them bind themselves together in a prayer group to pray for a revival until God opens the heavens and comes down. Third, let them put themselves at the disposal of God for Him to use as He sees fit in winning others to Christ. That is all.'"

And so I hope you can see that everything I've said so far is related to this. Can we at First Fruits Ministries and Corner Fringe Ministries become that small group of Christians who get thoroughly right with God ourselves? Can we commit ourselves to keeping His commandments and keeping our faith in Yeshua, no matter what happens to us? Can we continue to meet together and pray together every Sabbath, every Holy Convocation, and every other chance we get? Can we be long-suffering in this effort, waiting on God to open the heavens and come down, and never ask God, "Where are you?" He's right here. Can we design in our hearts that we are going to follow God down His path for us and not design a path to tread on our own? Can we continue to depend on His Holy Spirit to lead us, through good times and bad times, enduring through it all with hope and rejoicing? Brothers and sisters, we teach what it means to get "thoroughly right with God" right here, and we have been doing that since we launched our church in May of 2020. We need to pray more. When we need to, we need to be willing to yell out, "Lord help!" and "Lord save us!" and know that wherever we are in the grand scheme of things, He is here with us and He will "never leave us or forsake us." He will bring revival right here to this place if we pray for it, and I do so pray this right now in the name of Yeshua. Will you join me in this prayer? Will you join me in fasting along with our brothers and sisters at Corner Fringe as the Spirit leads you? Can we dedicate ourselves to living according to the will of God in our lives, and correct each other gently when we need to get back on the path? Can we hear one another during these conversations? Can we put ourselves at the disposal of God to use us as He sees fit to win others for Messiah, no matter how uncomfortable the steps He lays out become? In Proverbs 16:9 we read, "The mind of man plans his way,

But the LORD directs his steps.” Brothers and sisters, let us plan to continue in our love of the Lord with faith in our Messiah Yeshua. Let us commit to obey the commandments of God because of the salvation that the Lord has given to us as a free gift. Let us set our hearts to prayer and fasting so that the Lord will use us to reach those who are lost, deceived or fallen away. And let us plan to go where the Lord calls, even if it means stepping out of the comfort of our boat onto the surface of the wavy sea to walk after the Lord. The Lord will plant each one of our steps where He wants them to be to reach the destination of His choosing at His appointed time, and in this, brothers and sisters, we ought to rejoice!

I want to show you something about this week’s reading from our Torah Portion called “Terumah” (תְּרוּמָה), which means “sacred offering.” The portion includes Exodus 25:1-27:19, 1 Kings 5:1-6:13, Mark 12:35-44 and 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. If we understand the context of the story in Exodus, we can clearly see that the Lord provides us with everything we need to get ourselves right with Him, but we must willingly step out in faith to offer Him back what He has given us for His purposes. When we do this, He will come and dwell among us. As R.A. Torrey said, “God will open the heavens and come down.” Then we can pray for Him to guide us in the fulfillment of His plans so that we can spread the good news to others.

First, let’s look back at Exodus 11, when the Lord said to Moses that He would bring His final plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. In verses 2-3, the Lord said to Moses: “Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold. The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.” This was after nine plagues but before the final one. These great signs and wonders had given the people faith. In Chapter 12, after the Lord sent His Angel to strike the firstborn children of Egypt but pass over the homes of Israel where lambs’ blood had been spread on the door, we read that Pharaoh ordered Israel to depart from Egypt. And then we read in Exodus 12:35-36 this critical verse: “Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.”

Here we can see that the people had gotten themselves right with God. They put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts as the Lord had commanded and thus saved their

firstborn from destruction. Not only that, but the people had also followed the Lord's command to ask the Egyptians for gold and silver, and the Egyptians were so eager for Israel to depart from them that they also gave linens, or articles of clothing as we read in English. Through obedience to the Lord, the Lord had provided Israel with everything they needed ahead of time, but they wouldn't understand what this plunder would be needed for until much later. Israel would still spend another week in Egypt on their way toward the sea, they would cross the sea, and they would grumble several times along the way, and yet they also stopped to praise the Lord for His provision. The Lord would test them, institute His Holy Convocations, and He would weed out some of them who proved to be unfaithful—they were just going along with the crowd, but they didn't truly believe. It is here that we enter into our weekly reading and we see the significance of what the Lord had commanded back in Egypt.

In Exodus 25:1-9, we read: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."

All of the materials the Israelites plundered from the Egyptians were used to make the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the menorah, the altar, the table for shewbread and all of the curtains. In Exodus 12:35-36, when Israel took out materials of "silver, gold and clothing," the Lord was providing His People with what they would need in the wilderness ahead of time so that when He asked them to build a tabernacle for worship, they would have the materials. What's fascinating, though, is that the set-up for this event went back even further. Way back in Genesis 15:13-14, "God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.'" It's really important to concentrate on this for a moment. What does it say about the Lord that more than 400 years earlier the Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would come out of slavery with many possessions? What does it say that months earlier the Lord commanded Israel to ask for these possessions? Now

these descendants of Abraham, these former slaves of Egypt, were free from bondage in the wilderness and they had all of the promised plunder.

When the Lord wants to do a work through His people, He will set them up with the provision they need way ahead of time, and He will tell them that He is doing this, too, even before that. He has done this for us, and I could tell story after story about this, but I want you to meditate on what the Lord has given to you in treasure, talent and experience leading up to today. When the time for fulfillment of prophesy comes, there will be testing along with it. What would have happened if Israel did not obey the Lord and refused to plunder the Egyptians? Let's ruminare on this question. When it doesn't make sense what the Lord is commanding us; when obedience might seem foolish or we might be tempted to ask, "What profit is it that we have kept His doctrine and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts?"; this is the time that the Lord tests our hearts and prepares us for what He's going to do next. If we grumble in disbelief and disobey, the only ones who will miss out on God's planned blessing will be us. If we obey the Lord out of our commitment to the relationship He has offered to us, when we walk on water and go out to Him where He might seem just out of reach of where we're at, He will reveal even more of Himself to us, come and meet with us, pick us up and carry us when we can't continue alone, and He will share His glory with us into all of eternity.

There is another conclusion we can draw from this story. Our obedience to God must not be done blindly, but with a willing heart that is eager to see what the Lord has planned for us next. We know from reading copious New Testament verses that it is impossible for us to perfectly obey God on our own, but with our faith in Messiah and the Holy Spirit's help, anything is possible with God. Yeshua said in Matthew 5:48, "be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." This is a tall order, but our verses from Exodus explain what the Lord expects of us here. He says in Exodus 25:1-2: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.'" This is the most important verse in this whole message. We must give willingly with our hearts out of the abundance that the Lord has provided to us. If we do this, the Lord will accept what we give to Him. This applies to absolutely everything relative to our relationship with Him, and it beckons back to the Greatest Commandment, as Yeshua calls it in Matthew 22:34-40, which we read in Deuteronomy 6:5-6: "Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." If we are going to obey the Lord's commandments, we ought to do so out of a desire in our hearts to please God,



not out of a blind fear of punishment. We should never just go through the motions. If we are going to give our lives for the Lord, we ought to do so with sincerity and truth because we want the Lord to be first in our lives. We certainly should not give anything to the Lord to elevate our stature among our fellow man or in an attempt to prove our holiness or generosity.

The Lord gives us a few examples of what this means. In Matthew 6:1-4, He says: "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

There is another sense of what it means to give willingly to the Lord with our heart. Consider our reading from Mark 12:35-44. Starting in verse 38, we read, "Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation. Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." There are two things to comment on here. First, we see another similar lesson to what we just read in Matthew 6. Whatever we give to the Lord, time, treasure, charitable deeds, or generally, wholehearted effort in the work that He has called us to do for Him, we ought to do so in humility, not expecting anything in return. We give to the Lord because the Lord has given everything we have to us, including the breath of our lungs. We serve the Lord because the Lord has given us the skills, the tools and the provisions needed to do the work. Secondly, it doesn't matter how many mission trips we go on, how many sermons we give or Bible studies we run, or how many people we preach the Gospel to. It's not a competition among Christians whether we bring one more person to the Lord, 100 more people to the Lord or a million more people to the Lord. What matters is that we give everything we have out of a desire to serve the Lord and do His will. Are finances needed to do some of this

work? Absolutely. But even in that sense, we will only be rewarded for what we give willingly to the house of the Lord. If we take the attitude that everything we have belongs to the Lord, then the work that He calls us to do will become a lot easier to accomplish, and our hearts will willingly offer everything out of our abundance that is needed to do the Lord's work.

Let's look at another story that spans two chapters in the book of Acts to explore this idea a little further. The multitude of new believers "were of one heart and soul," and importantly, "neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." The words, "neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own" are very important to understand. When we come into this church building, everything that is here belongs to each of us, just like in the early church. This is what enables us to give "witness to the resurrection of the Lord Yeshua" and have His grace rest upon all of us, as it did them. While some have used these verses to express the need for Christians to move into communes and truly give up everything they own, I don't believe that is what's being expressed here. What it is communicating is that everyone who is truly devoted to the Lord first and is committed to a true relationship with Him ought to care for and be cared for within the community, but again, this is a matter of a willing heart that gives to the Lord's purposes, and not for any personal recognition, and not out of a sense of duty or responsibility either. We see as Acts 4 ends and Acts 5 begins an example of how we might go wrong by reading these verses literally, by thinking that we have to literally give up everything we own. In Acts 4:36, we read, "Josus, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." In Acts 5:1-5, we read: "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things." His wife then repeats her husband's sin and suffers the same fate. The issue here is not that Ananias and Sapphira did not give the Apostles all of their wealth. We're not even sure that Barnabas did that. The issue is that the couple made it seem as though they gave all their wealth, but they kept back some for themselves. They didn't give willingly. With the story of Barnabas preceding this one as a contrast of what it means to be "a

cheerful giver,” it is clear that Ananias and Sapphira were seeking the “glory from men” rather than “glory from God.” They were not giving willingly for God’s purposes, but rather they were giving out of obligation and out of a desire to receive praise from others. To give willingly, this is the commandment that we read about in Exodus 25.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Paul teaches us this same lesson: We read, “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

And so this teaching is meant to highlight, brothers and sisters, the importance of the intent of our hearts in everything we do for the Lord, no matter what it is. It is meant to point out that when we keep the commandments of God, we do so not grudgingly or of necessity, but out of love for our Savior who died for us and then rose from the dead so our sins would be forgiven. It is the intent that makes all the difference in our ultimate glorification when the Lord comes, for the Lord knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. In Jeremiah 17:10, we read, “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.” If we keep God’s commandments outwardly, but inwardly are doing so grudgingly, how can we expect revival to come out of our church. If we come to church with hearts that seek only to receive the Word of God, but not pour into others, how will that fuel the fire of revival? These verses can apply to tithing and offerings for the work of the church also, brothers and sisters, but we know that these things are between each one of you and God and must be done with willing hearts. And just to be clear, though it may seem that way to you, that is not why I’m teaching on this today. My heart is for revival, and I want to inspire your hearts to come here willingly with an eagerness to see revival happen here, and we have covered what is necessary to make that happen. The key ingredient is our willing hearts to serve the Lord.

In King David’s great prayer of repentance to the Lord following his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah the Hittite, he shows us the heart that we must have before the Lord will accept anything we bring before His altar. He writes, “Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; you do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite

heart—these, O God, You will not despise.” If we are seeking to become a church that brings revival of the faith into this land and teaches the ways of God to those who don’t know it or who know it incorrectly, then we must first repent of our sins, and we must be willing to always bring our humble and contrite hearts before the altar of God. Sanctification is a lifelong process. It is, as Paul calls it in Philippians 3:14, “the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua” to constantly humble ourselves, to constantly look for areas we have fallen short and seek to overcome them, to learn our lessons and to get to the next level in our relationship with the Lord. The Lord desires this gift more than anything else we could possibly give Him. He doesn’t desire our sacrifices of dollars or time or obedience to His commandments if He doesn’t first have our hearts. Once He has our hearts, we can ask the Lord to help us “build the walls of Jerusalem,” and He will help us at His appointed time. When we come willingly before His altar and present our whole hearts to Him, He will accept our “sacrifices of righteousness,” which is obedience to His commandments. When we come to this place out of a great desire to serve Yeshua, and a desire to obey God’s commandments because of our love for Him; when we pray for the Lord’s guidance and wait on the Lord to bring heaven down to us because of the condition of our hearts, then we can pray for the Lord to guide our steps toward the revival we all desire to see in the communities around us.

In our story in Exodus 25, as we’ve already discussed, the Lord had set up Israel for this moment in the wilderness for quite some time, and it was their willing hearts to give back to Him into their relationship that He desired. It is on account of their willing hearts that He helped them prepare a place where He could come and meet with them, to dwell among them. And it is on account of our willing hearts that the Lord will come to dwell within us, help us live according to His will and multiply the fruit that He has provided for us already.

Importantly, we see this same pattern repeat itself when it comes time to build the Temple in Jerusalem, which will house the Ark of the Covenant, just like the Tabernacle did in the wilderness. The Lord provisioned Solomon ahead of time to do this work, just as He provided for the Israelites departing from Egypt, and He did so by depending on the willing hearts of the people of Israel. In our weekly reading from 1 Kings 6, we see how Solomon built the first Temple in Jerusalem for the Lord to dwell in. In Verse 9-10, we read, “So Solomon built the Temple and finished it, and he paneled the temple with beams and boards of cedar.” If we look back a generation at King David and his contemporaries, we read in 1 Chronicles 29 how David had arranged to furnish Solomon with everything he needed to build the Temple. And while King David provided quite a bit of the materials himself, it was the generous and willing hearts of

David's generation that provided everything that was needed. When David asked in verse 5, "who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?," we read the amazing responses of the leaders of Israel's tribes in verses 6-9: "Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly." Could God emphasize today's point more than this?

Following this outpouring of generosity, the magnitude of what it means to God for His people to give willingly is captured by David in 1 Chronicles 29:10-20, and this is a prayer worth considering today as we are each called to do our part for God's kingdom. We read: "Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said: 'Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in [the] earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own. I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You. And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision.' Then David said to all the assembly, 'Now bless the Lord your God.' So all the assembly blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the Lord and the king."

As Solomon completed the construction of the Temple his father commissioned, we read in 1 Kings 6:11-13 that he began his ministry with the willing heart that his father had prayed for. God had come down from Heaven to dwell with them and there He would remain so long as they remained in relationship with Him. Here we read: "Then the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying: 'Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.'" This is what we're going for, brothers and sisters. We want the Lord to dwell within us so that His blessings can spread to everyone around us. The ingredients to make this happen are all here, and it all starts with willing and humble hearts.

Now we know that the purpose of the Tabernacle may be to give Israel a focal point to commune with God, but we must also know that the focal point for us today is Messiah Yeshua, and this was the focal point in Moses's day also. Those with a contrite and obedient heart are looking forward to him through prophetic symbology, rather than back at what He literally accomplished for us, as we do. Both parties are saved by grace alone through faith in the Messiah Yeshua, which empowers them to obey God's commandments. In the Old Covenant, many missed the Truth, but it was there for them to grasp. King David certainly fully grasped it. Psalm 51 proves this. Moses did also. Yeshua acknowledges this in John 5:46: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

Today we ought to study Exodus 25-27 and the related Scripture about the Tabernacle, because as God says repeatedly, "See that you make them by the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain." The Mountain of God is a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. As we learn when reading Hebrews, these models were made in the wilderness as a shadow of the real Kingdom that is coming, or in other words, as an image of what is real in God's Kingdom. If we want to know who God is, what He promised to us, and how it will come to being, we need to study these patterns that He provided as a sign for His true throne room. It would take me all day to scratch the surface of this, so allow me to share just a few points as I come toward the end of this message:

God instructed Israel to build the tabernacle as a place for Him to dwell with Israel. This isn't just a place for religious ceremony, but a dwelling place for God's presence to

be with His people. Within the tabernacle behind the curtain in the “Holy of Holies,” God commanded Moses to place the Ark of the Covenant that Moses made. This is the same Ark that David brought into Jerusalem for his son Solomon to later place in the Temple he constructed. The ark contained the commandments written by God on tablets of stone and a pot with an omer of manna collected from the wilderness, and nearby was Aaron’s staff that budded and bore fruit. All of these elements are symbolic for the future salvation we would have through Messiah Yeshua. In the New Covenant, we know that the Holy Spirit writes the Law on the hearts of all who put their faith in Yeshua, who is the manna that came down from Heaven, the bread of life that feeds us for all eternity. He is the fruit that budded from Aaron’s staff, the Lamb of God whose blood was sacrificed on a tree for our atonement, so the angel of the second death would pass over us at the End of days. Ultimately, the Ark we read about in Exodus sat behind the curtain in the Holy of Holies, but one day in AD 30 that curtain was ripped in two by Yeshua’s death on the cross. In the Old Covenant, the Lord spoke to Man from above the Mercy Seat on the hewn tabernacle created by Moses, and Moses was the intercessor for all of Israel. In the New Covenant, the Lord speaks to us from the Mercy Seat in Heaven, accessible through Messiah Yeshua, and delivered through the Holy Spirit that dwells within our hearts, and Yeshua is the intercessor for all who are grafted-in to Israel by His blood.

Hebrews 9 goes into great detail of how the Wilderness Tabernacle was a model of the Tabernacle in Heaven, so to study these concepts further, spend some time studying these verses. The Tabernacle was an Earthly representation of the real Tabernacle of God, where He truly sits on the Mercy seat, the Throne of the Universe. Does God sit on the Mercy seat given to us by Messiah in the midst of our hearts?

The Earthly Tabernacle and all its implements serve as both a prophetic template as well as a symbolic truth representing the Messiah to come. Here’s an example from Hebrews 9; in verse 11, where we read, “Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” Yeshua is literally the eternal High Priest who sits on the right hand of the throne of God, eternally interceding for those who trust in Him with all faith and obey His commandments. We can see in Revelation 1:12-13, that Yeshua stands amid the seven golden lamp stands, the great Menorah of Heaven, because He is the “light of the world.” We read, “Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.”

Today, we still celebrate God's presence among us during the Feast of Tabernacles, and we remember this time Israel lived in the wilderness. At the same time, we also remember when God came to tabernacle with Man in the flesh, when God took on the flesh of Yeshua and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. We remember how God greatly exalted our Messiah so that we can confess today that Yeshua is Yahweh to the glory of God the Father. Finally, we look forward to the time when God will come to dwell with us forever; when He brings us a New Heaven and a New Earth and sit on His throne in our midst to light the eternal day. As God sets up the Tabernacle in the wilderness, He is setting us up to understand that He will one day dwell with us forever. We must first bring our free will offering—our entire being—and set ourselves before Him, whole heartedly ready to serve.

So again, as we come here to church each week, we ought to come with willing hearts before the altar of God and bring our prayers to Him as He sits on Heaven's Mercy Seat. From His throne, He provides us with His commandments which He writes on our hearts within the tabernacle of our flesh so that we know what steps to take next in our service of His will. As He proceeds from Heaven and enters into our hearts, we can imagine Yeshua's Holy Spirit dwelling among the seven lamp stands, which represent the different parts of His Body that each illuminate one, whole and united church that is dedicated to His purposes. We see that clear oil is needed from beaten olives to illuminate the lamp stands. We must be grafted in to the Olive Tree of Israel if we are to produce the fruit that comes from the tree, and we must have the Holy Spirit dwelling with in us to produce the pure oil when we are pressed through the trials and tribulations of life. Will our light shine? Will our lamps burn continually. And will we, like the wise virgins Yeshua tells us about in Matthew 25 have enough oil to burn until the Messiah returns for us? Only if we endure in our faith in Yeshua and keep the commandments of God with willing, humble and contrite hearts.

Ultimately, when the Lord was setting up the eternal tabernacle for our understanding, He Himself brought everything He had, even His very life as God living in the flesh, and offered it up freely. In Luke 22:41-43, we read: "And Yeshua was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him." And He willingly gave Himself up for us, carried that cross to calvary, and died there, despite His power to come down from the cross and save Himself. He did this so that we would have an opportunity to welcome His Spirit to dwell within us for all eternity. He did this so we



would never be without Him. And right before He did this, He said, in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And so brothers and sisters, let us deny ourselves willingly so that Christ can come to dwell within us, and when He does this He will show us which steps to take so we can bring others with us on the narrow road to Heaven. Shabbat shalom.