

Tent of Meeting Sermon

Intro

It's curious, most summers as a family we head off to camp in a Tent on a showground somewhere in England for the Christian conference of New Wine. Given that neither Jo nor I enjoy camping in a tent, never mind being surrounded by up to 20,000 people in an often muddy field it's a curious way to behave. But, the desire to know and experience more of God's Presence makes the cost worth bearing. Finding and experiencing God in a Tent is nothing new as we discover this morning.

Passage

Chapters 25-31 and then 34 to the end see God instructing Moses to build a Tabernacle/Tent of Meeting? Ch 25 begins *"The Lord said to Moses, ² 'Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give ⁸ 'Then let them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you."* Ex 25. 1-2, 8-9.

God wants to be with us

God calls his people to build a place for God to be present with His people. WHY? "so that God can be present amongst them..... God is moving closer from the mountain top to being in the heart of the people and ch 35 onwards shows the Israelites following God's instructions for this Tabernacle with all the furniture, fixtures and equipment in it's right place.

So much of the story of Exodus is devoted to building this Tent of meeting. We can't ignore that. This Sanctuary, This Tabernacle pitched right in the centre of the camp is really important to God. This Tent is to be, A Real, visible, practical and spiritual residence for God's Presence amongst them and with them

God really does want to be in relationship with US God seeks us out; God yearns for our company. After the Fall In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve hid when God came to the garden. And the Bible pictures God asking the yearning question, "Where are you?" Here God is taking the initiative restoring, reconciling - God wants to be with us. God's heart of love yearns for connection with us, we are the apple of his eye.

When in your life have you been closely connected to God? Was that sweet? What are you doing to allow God to draw near in your life? At Christmas we celebrate that this same Divine Presence came and lived among us in the human form of Jesus. .God has not given up on you, God wants to be with You this am!!

God deals with our Sin

But isn't there a problem? How do we as failed and flawed human beings dwell with the Holy, majestic, perfect and powerful creator of the Universe? This Tent was both a temple of God's Presence and a palace, the residing place of Israel's King. When you read the text It's hard not to be taken by the care, love and detail in the building of this Tabernacle. There's attention to beauty, to splendour and goodness.

We are worshipping people. Our worship matters to God, the Architecture is precise, there are rich smells, there's beautiful fabric and sumptuous colours, there's splendour reflecting the nature and character of the one True Creator God,

One of the most visible features of the sanctuary was the altar of sacrifice. The place where sin is dealt with. Sometimes we wish we could just shrug off sin, like it's, "No big deal." (it's just the way I am!!) But the sanctuary reminded the Israelites, and us, that sin is a big deal, because sin is rebellion against God. Sin is destructive; sin is costly and sin needs dealing with.

And praise God, Jesus has come to permanently deal with our sin, once and for all. Lord I repent, "Please forgive me." The sanctuary taught it through sacrificing a lamb; Jesus' life, death and resurrection were the

once-for-all sacrifice to bring us forgiveness, healing and restoration today. You can accept it today by simply saying to God, "I'm Sorry God, Please forgive me."

God displays His loving Presence

Once the Tent of Meeting is Finished in Exodus 40 we read ³³ *And so Moses finished the work.* ³⁴ *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.* ³⁵ *Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.* ³⁶ *In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out;* ³⁷ *but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out – until the day it lifted.* ³⁸ *So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.*

The Tent was a visible reminder of God's presence to the people, A place of Encounter with the Living God. God's earthly dwelling place to experience his loving Presence and power. .Jesus' life and death shows us how his love for each one of us is so deep that he was willing to do anything it took to reach us....

We Christians seem to forget the depth and magnificence of God's Presence, His Holy Spirit. All of us here need to go deeper with God need more of a connection with God and there is so much more of God to discover. WE can simply be content with knowing about God. In the 11th Century the church split, The western church went down a more rational route, the eastern church embraced the power of God's presence much more readily.

Thomas Aquinas, was one of the great early western teachers in the Church (13th century). He was a great thinker, a brilliant philosopher. He is best known for his famous work, The Summa Theologica, which was a weighty summary of the knowledge of God. Bottom line, Aquinas had a really big brain and was very intellectual in his faith. He spent most of his life trying to show that human beings have no direct contact with spiritual reality. So he set out these logical proofs for God's existence, five reasons to believe in God. Shortly before his death he had such an overwhelming, direct experience with God that he stopped writing. . A friend urged him to complete his great work, The Summa Theologica, and he answered, I can do no more. Such things have been revealed to me that all I have written seems as straw, and now I await the end of my life. Such an extraordinary experience of God's Presence changed everything.

I know some of you may be a bit cautious – but The Israelites, Aquinas, Wesley and the Pentecostals have taught us that we can't constantly obsess about our doctrine being correct? our Bible reading plans? our church attendance? our morality? Our programs? When the Bible is asking is how real is your present experience of God? How personally connected to the Living God are you?

Conclusion

God has made it his business to dwell with his people, to be present in our lives. He offers cleansing and freedom from sin and tasting and seeing the wonder and beauty of His Presence in our lives. , The Presence of God is a sweet aroma this Christmas

The pursuit of God's presence and purposes don't generally begin with big flashy meetings It simply starts with, "For my own soul, I need more of God," Will you say yes to God this morning, will you give your life to Jesus? Will you open your life to the transforming power of God's personal Presence?

Let's Pray

Loving and saving God, thank you for your redeeming power, receive our thanks and our lives as our offering to you this morning. We long to discover more of You. In Jesus' Name AMEN