Face to Face
Making Space for God • Message 6
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- **Thank God for inviting you into a personal, daily relationship with Him.**
- **Ask God to help you prioritize time in His Word and in prayer.**
- **Pray that Brookwood is a community of people who stand in the gap for others.**

Scripture Reading:
The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.
Exodus 25:1-9 (NIV)

A. Introduction

Recently, I went on one of my favorite trips of the year. Annually, some guys in my community group take our kids on a camping trip. Not to brag, but it is basically their favorite trip of the entire year. These kids would choose this camping trip over Disney, the beach, the lake, and many other things. Pretty amazing.

We always have something that happens on this trip. A story, a memory. There has been the year we had one of the children get a fishing hook stuck in the back of his skull. The year that our children learned the value of bringing extra clothes when they thought it would be a good idea to jump in the river.

But one of the stories that I love the most involved my family. One year, we brought out our 2-person tent. It was small. Also, my boys were young, so I thought this will be the last year of this tent. Everyone else on the trip had like the Taj Mahal's of tents. Big, spacious. One of the tents had like a living room space inside the tent. I think one had a doorman that you had to ask permission to get in.

We were getting roasted by the guys in my group about our tiny tent. That night it got real chilly. Y'all know there is chilly, and then there is camping chilly. This was camping chilly. But we made it through. We pushed through the cold and decided to do our best. Turns out camping with three people in a 2-person tent creates a lot more warmth than you would think.

The big tent boys, well, they were chilly. Teeth chattering, chilly. It was a memory that the boys love to relive each year. And if you are wondering, yes, we got a bigger tent after that!

I think we often think that bigger equals better, but in this situation, it wasn't about the bigger tent; it was about the proximity, the presence inside the tent that kept us warm. We learned that night that a big space without the presence to fill it feels empty and cold, but a small space filled with presence fills the space with warmth and life. The same is true when it comes to God. His presence, not our plans or our performance, is what truly makes the difference.

Today, we're looking at how God invited Israel to build a place for God's presence and what it means for us to make space for God in our lives today.

In Exodus 19-23, Moses is given the Law from God Himself. Exodus 24 begins with God calling His people closer.

B. Making Space for God involves:

1. **<u>RESPONDING</u> to the invitation.**
   (Exodus 24. C/R: Luke14:15-24)

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach the Lord; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him." When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."
Exodus 24:1-3 (NIV)

3 different opportunities for proximity to the Lord:

A) The People will not come near.
B) Moses, Aaron and his sons, and the elders can worship at a distance.
C) Moses alone shall come near to the Lord.

Moses was brought close to God. God, once again, is showing us that He desired a face-to-face relationship with Moses and desires the same relationship with us.

Blood was confirmation of the covenant. The blood being put on the altar and on the people links the two together, symbolizing the union of God and Israel.

After the blood confirmation, Moses, Aaron and his sons, and 70 of the elders partake in a peace offering, which is meant to symbolize the communion that Jesus describes in Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24.

Who gives the invitation here?

God. God invites the people to worship. They saw God and ate and drank. God initiates this relationship with the Israelites.

It is so important for us to be reminded that God, who created the globe and made it spin, initiates a relationship with us. This idea of a covenant invitation is something that you have to land on and sit in.

God is inviting you into a deeper relationship with Him. That was His plan from the very beginning.

Today, I want to challenge you to live in this reality. God has invited you into relationship. Many of you in this room need to make time daily to just share with God that you receive the invitation to be in relationship with Him.

This isn't a once-and-for-all invitation; it is a daily opportunity to come into the presence of God. God invites, we respond.

Often, we seek to earn the approval of God, but we cannot earn His approval. Jesus did earn God's approval, and God invites us freely and openly to participate fully because of Jesus.

And when we spend time in God's presence, it fuels everything we do in this life. But many of us reject the invitation for some of the same reasons Jesus speaks about in Luke 14.

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' "But they all alike began to

make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.' "'

Luke 14:15-24 (NIV)

Once the people of Israel respond to God's invitation to seal the covenant, God begins showing Moses how His people will make room for Him to guide them in following the Law.

2. **<u>PREPARING</u> a <u>PLACE</u> for Him.**
   (Exodus 25-27. C/R: John 15:4; Hebrews 8:4-6)

Then, after Moses, Joshua, Aaron and the Elders worshipped God, God gives instructions to the people to build the tabernacle and reveals that He will dwell among them.

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

Exodus 25:1-9 (NIV)

God gave Moses specific instructions on how to construct the Ark of the Covenant, the table, the lampstand, the tabernacle, the altar of burnt offering, and the courtyard.

God shows Moses a picture before He gives Moses instructions—vision, then strategy and tactics.

Tabernacle

The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling for God's presence. It was designed to be a pattern of a heavenly reality. (Hebrews 8:4-6)

But the tabernacle didn't start here in Exodus. Its origin traces all the way back to Eden.

Eden was God's first dwelling place with humanity. God walked with Adam and Eve face-to-face, without separation. Before there were any of the things that Moses and the people built, there was fellowship with God and His people.

When sin entered the world, the fellowship was broken. But God did not stop pursuing His people. At Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses a model to see and a set of instructions to follow. A new way for His holy presence to dwell among a sinful people.

In Genesis 2, when we read that God took a "rib" from Adam, the word "rib" is actually translated as "side." Some theologians suggest that this imagery reflects the idea of creating or forming a protected, sacred space inside of humanity. That God's ultimate desire and intention is to create a people in whom His presence can dwell.

Then John says something staggering:

"The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (John 1:14). In the wilderness, God dwelled in a tent; in Bethlehem, God dwelled in a body. Jesus is the true and better tabernacle. God's presence with God's people in human form.

At the cross, Jesus' side was pierced (John 19:34), the blood and water pouring from the side of Jesus symbolize the cleansing and life that allow us to become God's dwelling place.

Now, because of Jesus, the presence that once rested in the most Holy of Holies dwells in you by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:16 – *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that His Spirit dwells in you?*

From Eden to the wilderness, from the incarnation of Jesus to the Spirit living in us, the whole story of Scripture is the story of a God who keeps moving towards His people.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
John 15:4 (NIV)

So how do we respond? We respond in the way that Moses did. We make space for God. For some, this is about our time, our energy, and our efforts. What are you making space for now?

Is it for Jesus to be the center of your life, or do you have something else at the center that you make time and space for?

A few years ago, Brian Heasley was here during Breakthrough, and he spoke of our garden. He mentioned a chair that he sits in to meet with the Lord. For some of you, you might need to find a physical space in your home or perhaps your car where that space is dedicated to meeting with the Lord.

We have to give up the romantic picture you might have of spending time with God. Does God desire that we make space for Him? Yes. And also, we sometimes don't get it perfect. Remember, God was on a Sapphire path, as seen by the elders of Israel. He showed Moses a model of the tabernacle that God Himself had built and told Moses to build it with the people's help. You think the people built the tabernacle as well as God did?

Did God step into that tabernacle and fill it with His presence?

When we make space for Him, we are saying to God, *You form us, You order our lives, and You are the center of all that we do.*

Wonderland - Not only that, but we strive at Brookwood to also prepare a place for other people to experience God. Coming up in a few weeks, we will host Wonderland, a Christmas experience for birth – 18, for everyone to know the love of Christ. We are inviting Brookwood Families and the entire community on Friday, December 12, to come experience Christmas with us

Not only that, but there are many opportunities to give, including Generations Group Home, a dwelling place for treatment for boys who have had a history of behavior problems, and we want to show the love of Christ to those boys, and you can sign up for both of those opportunities at brookwoodchurch.org/Christmas.

Once the space was prepared, someone needed to enter it on behalf of the people. This is where the priesthood comes in. The dwelling place invites nearness.

3. **<u>DRAWING</u> <u>NEAR</u> to Christ.**
   (Exodus 28-29. C/R: 1 Peter 2:9)

God also gave Moses instructions for Aaron and his sons to become priests.

"Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor. Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen."

Exodus 28:1-5 (NIV)

Once the tabernacle was prepared, someone had to enter it on behalf of the people. God wasn't just creating a place, a tent, a building. He was creating a pathway into His presence. That's why God established the priesthood.

The priest's garments had specific instructions. These were holy garments meant to identify the priests for the Israelites. Priests represented the people before God and foreshadowed Christ as our High and Perfect Priest.

Ephod – Connected to the Breastplate and was worn over the shoulders. Bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. Priests would carry the people into the presence of God.

Breastplate – 12 stones, each with a tribe's name, and fastened over the chest of the priest. This was a reminder that God's people rested over the heart of the one who represented them.

Shoulders speak of God's strength; the breastplate speaks of God's love, and both point to Jesus, the one who carries us and loves us perfectly.

In the Old Testament, there were only a small subset of the people of God that were priests. But because of Jesus, all of us in this room are priests. We are God's representatives. Whether you are at home, church, or the gym, you are a representative of Christ. Priests were called to represent Christ for the people, and now, through Christ, we carry His presence into the world.

The cross of Jesus doesn't just grant us forgiveness of our sins; it grants us access to God.

I want to make sure you feel what I felt in studying for this message.

Remember at the beginning of our text today that Moses, Aaron and his sons, and the seventy elders of Israel saw God standing on the Sapphire pavement. That same God ate with them. God of unimaginable glory sharing a table with ordinary, imperfect people.

Then He shared that He was going to come and dwell with them. Not far above them. Not removed from them, but with them.

I was struck this week that God's plan was to bring all that goodness, all that glory, and come down into the wilderness with the people of Israel. The ones who complain, argue, plot, and rebel against Him. God wants to dwell with those people.

The God revealed on sapphire pavement willingly drew near to a people wandering in the dust, and He still draws near to people like us.

Communion –

Communion is our intentional opportunity to draw near to Jesus.

Because of Jesus, we don't just watch from a distance. We are welcomed into the Holy of Holies.

If you are a child of the King who has been born again by the Spirit of God, the same presence that once rested behind the veil now dwells in you. You are God's temple because God's Spirit has made His home in you.

Communion slows us down long enough to remember why all of this is possible. It gives us a moment to pause, reflect and remember what the point of all of this is.

For a moment, let's reflect on Christ offering Himself to us fully. He is a God who desires not just to save us, but to dwell with us as His people.

Take your bread.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."
Luke 22:19 (NIV)

Take your cup.

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."
Luke 22:20 (NIV)

Prayer.