

# Building the Sanctuary of the Lord

Bible Verses Referenced: Exodus 35-40, Exodus 40:34-38, Matthew 22:37-39, 1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 2:19-22

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we are grateful that You love us, and You have supremely manifested Your love through the gift of Your Son, Jesus, who speaks to us of His love through the pages of Holy Scripture and calls us to love You with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

And so, as we are contemplating the Book of Exodus and the building of the sanctuary of the Lord, make us ever mindful that we're doing it for You, Lord, that we do it to have a place to come and gather in the midst of Your presence. And so, come, Lord Jesus, and be among us, and fill us with Your Spirit. May the preaching of Your Word be Your Word, for the sake and glory of Your name. Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. Welcome.

This is the last Sunday that we're going to be in the Book of Exodus, so we really have covered a lot of ground. And I want to think about the last part of the book of Exodus, which is all about making a sanctuary for the Lord. This idea of the sanctuary of the Lord is that God would literally dwell within the midst of His people, so that as the people of God, they would always have God at the center of their community.

They would only move when God's Spirit and His presence moved. And so they were always paying attention to where the Lord was leading them and being mindful of the presence of the Holy, Holy, Holy God in their midst. And so the last part of the book of Exodus is about them taking up a collection so that they can build the sanctuary, and it was as their heart was moved.

And we've actually made this the theme of our stewardship season, following along with the Book of Exodus, is that we are called, as the new covenant people of God, to have our hearts moved and to give to God's sanctuary in our day. Now, on one level, the sanctuary of the Lord, we sometimes refer to this as the sanctuary. Who here calls it that? The sanctuary.

Technically, from a church architecture perspective, the entire complex is called the church. This is the nave, and this part up here, architecturally, is the sanctuary, okay? Now, a lot of our contributions go to helping to build these kinds of beautiful structures that give God the glory, and speak of His transcendence, and His majesty, and His holiness.

Give us a place to come in a free and private space to just let our hearts soar with praise of the living God, and to bring Him the praise. So, part of our giving is to build a building. But in the New Covenant, one of the things that the Scriptures teach is that the building is really not the emphasis.

It's the building up of the people of God to be a living sanctuary, that our lives are like living stones built upon the chief cornerstone of Jesus, and each one of us, laid upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, is like a little brick. Each life is a brick that is being built into a holy structure, a temple of the Lord, a place for God's presence and His glory to dwell.

So you probably remember this from childhood, right? Here's the church. Here's the steeple. Open the doors. There's the doors. And what? There's all the people. You did get this. This is actually not a New Testament version of the church. This is the building. We call it the church, yes, but it's really the people that make for the church.

You are the church. We are the church. And so, when we think about the giving of our contributions, one of the things that's so wonderful about the book of Exodus is it names actually the names of the people who the heart put in their mind and gave them specific skills and talents. Bezael and how do we say that guy's name? Ohholiab.

Those two guys are named, and forever we will remember them as being the craftsmen which were inspired by the Holy Spirit to build up that tabernacle on the sanctuary of the Lord. And just as they had specific people back in their day whom the contributions that were being given were helping to fund so that they could dedicate their lives to the work of building up the sanctuary.

So too do we have people that are currently being employed by the gifts that you give to this church? I want to name some names. The Ohla Babs, boy, we don't name kids that anymore, do we? Ohholiab. The reader came to me before this and goes, "How do you say that name?" And I heard how she said and I said, "That sounds pretty good." But I want you to know the names of your staff, and I know you know most of these people, but maybe there's some names here you haven't heard before.

But these are the people that as you give to the church, they are themselves giving back to you and investing in your lives. Paula Phalan, Bill Fannon, Catherine Octor, Tiffany Wheeler, Heather Johnson, Julie Sanchez, Sandy White, Manny Valentine, William Stokes, and Lila, and Douglas, our other clergy, James Holier, Angelina Devonzenzo, and Shannon Dell.

We have a lot of nursery workers and people that work on the yard and the different mechanical structures of this. I mean, you start to think about all the people that this place employs just to keep it going. It's really quite amazing. The other day I met the people who clean St. Mark's, and it's actually a family from Miramar. It's a husband and a wife and their two sons.

And when I introduced myself to them and said, "Hey, I'm the new priest here at the church." And they said to me, "Would you pray for us?" And so they all gathered around me. This was over in Leatherberry Hall, and they literally, they fell to their knees like this, all four of them.

And they said, "Pray for us." And so I got on my knees, and we had a prayer together blessing their family and giving God the glory for the work that they're doing in the church and the building up of the sanctuary. I mean, isn't that a glorious thing? Do you know that the staff of St. Mark's every single day starts with prayer? Every day, as a group. Whoever's here at nine o'clock in the morning, we begin with prayer.

It's a wonderful, it's a wonderful group of people. But there's more than that. I mean, there's people that are just giving of their time. They have specific talents and gifts. I mean, you think about how beautiful our flowers are every day and the work and the details of this space, the music program, and the people that are giving of their time on a daily basis to lead as vesti leaders to usher, and behind the scenes, the altar guild, and making sure that everything that is happening here just happens without a beat.

This is an amazing congregation when you start to think about all of the people that are contributing to it. And that's the way the Lord wants it. He wants His people to overflow with generosity towards the worship of Him and be extravagant towards Him in our time, in our Sabbath-keeping, in our tithing, and our giving, so that the experience of His presence can be manifest among us.

And it's sad sometimes, and we see this not only in churches, but you read about it in the Bible, that when the people of God are stingy towards the things of God, the worship life falls into disrepair. There's a story in Nehemiah where they could no longer afford to pay the choir members. And so the music got really bad.

And then nobody wanted to come and worship because the music was awful because the singers weren't showing up for singing. And then everybody just went on to do their own business. You know, COVID was very hard on the church. You know this.

Where we had literally decades and decades of systems that had evolved over time of engaging people in the building up of the body of Christ, and then the government shuts it all down for a period of time, and you can't just simply rebuild evolved systems. It doesn't just come back like that. You just like turned off the lights and you can turn them back on again.

And that was the case not only with the church, but with all kinds of things in our society. And so, now more than ever, the commitments and the dedication of the people of God to the building up of the sanctuary of the Lord is critically important. And what you are doing and giving to the life of this church is one of the most important things that you will ever do in your life.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. That's what the Savior and Lord of the world says, is the most important commandment that we would ever know. Of course, the second one is just as important, but like it, love your neighbor as yourself. Everything else in all of the laws and

prophets are summarized in those two things. But love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

It's fascinating when the way the Book of Exodus ends, and I'll end with this, is the revelation of the glory of God falling upon the sanctuary that the people of God had built. And this is my heart and desire for St. Mark's more than anything else, is that God's presence would dwell in the midst of us as a people, that His glory would reveal itself to us, and that we would be so filled with the presence of God that we would radiate with His attributes, His character, His glory.

Listen to what happened and then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out. But if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day that it lifted, so that the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle day, and the fire was in the cloud by night, and the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.

They always had the Shekinah glory, the light of God, the manifestation of His presence in their midst. They never went anywhere without God leading them, God's presence. Building up the sanctuary of the Lord is the most important thing that we would ever do in our lives. And in that day and age, the people were so committed to doing it that their giving overflowed with such abundant generosity that the leaders had to basically tell them, "No more giving.

We have too much." In all the churches that I've ever been in, I've never had to say that. It's kind of kind of interesting that I chose this passage for my stewardship sermon. But let me give you a sense of how much was too much. There's a list in Exodus chapter 38 where they give an accounting of the materials that were donated by the Israelites at that time.

Twenty-nine talents of gold, 100 talents of silver, and 70 talents of bronze. Now, that's a lot of gold. I don't know if you know how much a talent is to do the math in your head real quick. Can you figure that one out? Well, let me give you some conversions. So a talent is about 75 to 100 pounds. So, roughly 30 talents of gold times 100 would be 3,000 pounds of gold that the Israelites gave for the sanctuary.

A street value today of that much gold would be over 40 million dollars. A hundred talents of silver, every one of the poles of the tabernacle and the sanctuary had a talent of silver at its base, a hundred of those. That would be worth \$1.6 million. These people were abundant in their generosity towards God, and God responded with His presence dwelling among them.

It's an amazing story of what God's vision is for His people. The New Covenant says we are that sanctuary of the Lord, and when our hearts overflow with generous love towards Him, His presence is pleased to dwell in the midst of His worshiping people.