



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: April 13th - 19th

Sermon: April 12th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community • equipping believers • serving Jesus

April 13

Psalm 96:8

A couple of weeks ago when I preached from Exodus 24, I preached and wrote about the clear teaching from that chapter of the elements of an actual worship service. You may recall in that chapter that there was a call to worship in verse 1. This was followed by a reading of God's Word from the law given by God to Moses (vv. 3, 7). This was followed by a confession of faith and a commitment to obedience on behalf of the people. You could consider this a response from the people to the hearing of His Word. At the end of this worship service, the people celebrated communion and enjoyed the presence of God. One thing that you may think of that was missing from the flow of the service was taking up an offering.

Well, in chapter 25 we see that an opportunity to worship God through giving was indeed provided. Think about it with me today dear friends, the covenant was confirmed in the worship service and one of the first opportunities given to the people was a chance to express their heartfelt gratitude to God for what He had done and to take part in Kingdom work.

I know that Aaron wrote extensively on the biblical teaching of giving in his "Points to Ponder" for last week, so I will not spend a great deal of time beyond today on the subject. I do want to remind you that giving is an act of holy worship. Giving in this way is not about paying your dues. Membership in the body of Christ is nothing like that of a hunt club or civic organization. Giving is an expression of adoration and praise to our heavenly Father for who He is and for what He has done to redeem us and deliver us from bondage to sin. Honestly, it's not about the money; it's all about the condition of the heart. Psalm 96:8 says, "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering and come into His courts."

Giving that pleases the Lord is giving that comes from a heart that is compelled to give out of gratitude, adoration, humility, and genuine love for our Savior. Have you ever stopped to consider the fact that God could have just placed a tabernacle in the middle of the people straight from heaven. He provided manna and quail, and the people didn't have to lift a finger for it to be available. He parted the Red Sea, overthrew the Egyptian army, and provided water all along the way for millions of people by His own strength.

He gave them the opportunity to contribute and to be a part of His plan for their good not His own. To give was nothing more than their "reasonable service" in view of who He had proven Himself to be to them. Anything that He would expect us to give from a willing heart was provided by Him so that we would be able to give. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:7 that He did the works of redemption according to the riches of His grace. May we now be compelled by grace to participate in advancing His Kingdom here on earth and doing all that we can to fund and provide for His Bride – the church!

April 14

Hebrews 8:5

I remember when Johanna and I decided it was time to build our first home. One of the first steps we took was to have a set of plans drawn detailing every aspect of the building from the footing to the roof. It was imperative that we had an exact and detailed plan for the construction of our home. I find it fascinating that when God met with Moses on the top of Mt. Sinai to provide the plans for the building of the first tabernacle in which His Presence would dwell among the people, He stated, “**Exactly** as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it” (Ex. 25:9). He too wanted to make sure that Moses built it precisely to His specs.

Now, there is more to his precision than simple architecture. The fact is that the tabernacle was a shadow or picture of our salvation and typology of our Savior Himself. The design of the tabernacle was meant to be a teaching tool for all who studied its design and layout. The proximity and its furnishings pointed to a greater reality than a mere portable edifice erected among the people. The author of Hebrews would later write, “...for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain’” (Heb. 8:5). Just prior to that he had written, “They serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.”

It is important that we also see that as God is the One who established and requires worship, He is the One who determines exactly how He wants to be worshipped. The tabernacle itself was only about fifteen feet wide by forty-five feet long. It was divided into two sections. The outer room was called the Holy Place, and the inner room was called the Holy of Holies. It was in the later portion that the ark of the covenant was housed. In the courtyard outside of the tent stood a bronze altar for making sacrifices and a large basin for ceremonial cleansing.

The tabernacle was to be a reminder that God was coming to live or dwell among His people (Ex. 25:8). Part of the covenant was that God would be with His people. This tent, positioned right in the middle of the camp, was a reminder of His promise and presence with them. His presence was to be experienced and viewed as the center of their community. For you and me today, we can connect with God in and through the person of Jesus Christ. Like in the tabernacle, God has come to meet with us through Jesus. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory.” The Greek word *skene* translated as *dwelt* in John 1:14 is the same word for tabernacle. In other words, it says, “Jesus came to tabernacle among us.”

God gave us His Son just like He gave Israel the tabernacle so that He could come and dwell among His people. In Christ, the major difference is that He did not simply pitch a tent. For us, He took on flesh and blood to give us direct access to God and a way to meet with Him. We know today that the only way to meet with God and to have access to Him is to receive Jesus Christ as our own personal Lord and Savior.

April 15

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The very first piece of the entire edifice that was to be constructed was the ark of the covenant. I wonder why He wanted Moses to start there. It is safe to assume that the reason that He started here was because it would be the exact place where God would soon descend to dwell with the people. It was located within the Holy of Holies and would be the center of His presence. We could say that He was working from the inside out which is what He does in the heart of every person who comes to be saved. The beginning of it all is the transformation of the heart.

God provided detailed instructions as to how to build the ark. It was roughly 4 feet long, 2 feet wide and 2 feet tall. It was not a very large box and apart from the gold overlay and trim, it was rather simple in itself. There is no language connection between this ark and Noah's ark or the little basket in which Moses was placed in the Nile. The ark had four gold rings attached to the "feet" which kept the ark off the ground (vv. 12-14). The poles were to be placed in the rings along each side by which the ark would be carried and were never to be removed (v.15). No one was to touch the ark because of the holiness of God.

The ark represented the holy presence of God. This was a reminder of His majesty and transcendence even as He chose to be among His people. If you ever wondered why Uzzah died when He touched the ark as it was tipping over, this is why (1 Chron. 13:9-10). God's holiness is not to be played with. We should never lose sight, in our familiarity or acceptance by God, that He is God and we are not! We must be careful that we don't treat God or the things associated with God carelessly. We should do our best to honor His Name in all that we do and how we live.

May we never forget that we, as His children, are called to be holy ourselves (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Because of the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit, our bodies are transformed into tabernacles of God. We must do our best not to use them for sinful reasons and thereby desecrate His holy presence within us. The Law of God was to be placed in the ark. God placed His law within the ark which points to the fact that He has placed His law within our hearts and caused us to walk in them. The Law is meant to reveal to us the holy nature of God and His attributes. Although we can't live up to them fully or completely, we do see the high standards of God, His holiness, and His expectations of us. This was all meant to drive us to Jesus of course.

Again, consider the tabernacle and its layout and then think of how it relates to you and me. We are the tabernacle of God and His law has been written inside of us where He dwells. Tomorrow I am planning to write about the mercy seat and, like you, I am so very grateful that His blood was shed on top of the requirements of the law and atonement made so that I could truly stand in His presence.

April 16

Leviticus 17:11 & Hebrews 9:22

We know that on top of the ark of the covenant was the golden cherubim and the mercy seat. The angels were designed with their wings lifted and spread over the mercy seat and their eyes facing one another. There was to be no representation of God Himself as that would have been a sin for Moses to make an image of God. The living presence of God would fill the space on top of the mercy seat and between the cherubim. This is the place where Moses would meet with God and receive His Word for His people. Numbers 7:89 says, "And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and He spoke to Him." What an amazing reality for Moses.

Dear ones, we too get to speak to God and stand in His presence. Only now it is accomplished by the finished work of Christ on the cross and His shed blood. The tabernacle was about access to God and being in His presence. The ark contained the Commandments which stipulated the terms of the covenant with Israel. I think it is safe to picture the ark like this: The top of it was God's throne while the ark itself was His footstool (Ps. 132:7-8). Now let's talk about one of my favorite parts of the ark of the covenant.

We have come far enough together through the study of God's Word to know that we cannot measure up to the demands of the Law of God. In the Holy of Holies, we get a picture of our Holy God seated above the ark and the Law under His feet – written in STONE. We know that what was in the ark could not save them just as it cannot save us. As a matter of fact, the law served only to condemn us. The Law condemned our sin and here we find God sitting right on top of it. The top of the ark was of the utmost importance.

Some people have referred to the top as the atonement cover. We know it as the "mercy seat." Don't think of the term "seat" as a chair in this instance. It is better to think of it as a location. It should be thought of in the manner in which we would refer to a "seat of power." For example, we may say that the "seat" of government in the U.S. is Washington D.C. The mercy seat in the tabernacle was the place where mercy was found. It was the place, used only once a year, where atonement was made for the sins of the people.

When the high priest would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat, this showed that sin was forgiven and that atonement had been made; the people were covered by the blood. Think of this amazing shadow or picture that God painted for them and for us to better understand redemption. Above the ark of the covenant was God in all of His holiness and perfection. Underneath the top was the law that exposed all their sins. In between the two the blood, shed as the atoning sacrifice that covered sins and turned away wrath (propitiation). In this, the wrath of God was assuaged and the people were reconciled. The blood on the ark provided safety from God's judgment. When God came down to dwell with the people, the first thing that He saw was not the many ways in which His law was broken, but the saving blood of an atoning sacrifice. Lord have mercy, that is so good!

April 17

Hebrews 9:11-12

I imagine that the covering or lid that was placed on the ark was beautiful with the cherubim sitting majestically on it with wings spread wide and heads probably slightly bowed in humility and adoration and all of it overlaid in pure gold. Don't forget that there was no actual "seat" in between the two cherubim. It was simply the place where God would dwell and mercy would be applied. Again, I am sure the lid in itself was an incredible piece of artwork to look upon.

As beautiful and as precious as it must have been, the top itself was not enough to make atonement for the sins of the people. What actually accomplished reconciliation between God and the people was the blood applied to the mercy seat. It was not merely the presence of the "atonement cover" that produced atonement for the sinner. It was divine provision of a means or facility for implementing reconciliation. It was only when the payment that God's divine justice regarded as sufficient for man's sin was applied that atonement was actually possible. The blood of the sacrifice was a must.

Friends, don't ever forget that there is no mercy where there is no sacrificial blood shed on the mercy seat. The incredible picture drawn for us in Exodus 25 is of God who is above, enthroned in His majesty. We are below, breaking His law. If we are ever to be saved, the blood of an atoning sacrifice must come between His perfect holiness and our unholiness or sin. The blood of a sacrifice that is acceptable to God had to be offered and applied.

Oh church family, this is where Jesus comes into the picture upon His cross. He became the sacrifice acceptable to God by His divine origin AND perfect life here on earth. He sacrificed Himself and poured out His blood for sinners; for you and me. The book of Hebrews contains these amazing words, "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12). We can say today that our mercy seat is the cross of Christ where His blood was shed to pay our sin debt, satisfy the Father's demands of His law, and to provide us access into His presence as justified and redeemed children.

Jesus came to offer Himself as our propitiation. I know you have seen this word many times, but it is important to remember that it means the wrath of God was satisfied by the payment Jesus made with His own body and blood. There is no more that must be offered for our forgiveness, and the Father has accepted His offering once and for all. On the cross at Calvary, the blood of the Spotless Lamb of God was poured onto the mercy seat, and He came between the Father's holiness and our sin. It is at the cross that we find mercy.

April 18

John 6:32-35, 51

As we get excited about seeing Christ in the pictures or shadows of the Old Testament, we must be careful not to read too much in or stretch the truth in fanciful ways. The best way I know how to guard against mere speculation is to make sure that we allow the New Testament to serve as the key to unlocking the shadows in the Old Testament. I believe that if it does not, then we should not add significance to objects that the New Testament does not appear to add. If the New Testament does not draw any connections between objects in the Old Testament and Jesus, then we should not either.

Now, with that being said, I want to take a moment today to discuss the table that God instructed Moses to build that would be placed just outside the holy of holies in the holy place and the bread of the Presence on the table (Ex. 25:23-30). The table was holy but not as holy as the ark signified by the ability to remove the poles from the table unlike the poles for the ark that were never to be removed. It is often referenced in the Pentateuch and is also mentioned in 1 Kings 7:48 where it is called “the golden table for the bread of Presence.” The most important aspect of the table was what sat upon it – The Bread.

Twelve loaves of sacred bread were to be placed on the table. We gather more information about the bread from the book of Leviticus. In chapter 24 verses 5-9, there are instructions for how to make the bread and how to place it on the table. From what we can gather, it appears that fresh bread was made weekly the day before the Sabbath. The priests were to eat the showbread that was already there and replace it with the newly and freshly baked bread.

The only thing about the table that appears to truly be symbolic was the bread itself. The bread was the important thing, not the table. The bread was certainly not to be offered as something God needed to eat. Luke wrote in Acts 17:25, “Or is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” This was not some idolatrous act to provide God with food. Just the opposite is actually the truth. The bread represented His ability and willingness to provide for His people. Psalm 111:5 says, “He provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever.” The significance of the number of loaves, 12, was that all 12 tribes had a place at the table and would be provided for.

The bread in the tabernacle reminded the people God knew what they needed and would be faithful to provide. We, as His children today, should work at learning to trust God to meet our daily needs as we commit ourselves to faithfulness and obedience to Him. We should also understand that our greatest need is not a loaf of bread but God Himself. Remember what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 8:3? It says, “...that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Are you feeding upon God’s Word dear one? Are you pursuing Christ not for what you can get from Him but because you need Him (John 6:26)? Finish this Point to Ponder today reading John 6:32-35 and 51. Jesus is the Bread of Life.

April 19

Isaiah 9:2; John 1:4

If you pay attention to God's design for the tabernacle, you may have noticed that there are no windows in it. The "walls" were made four layers thick with the outer layer being made from ram skins with a thick, waterproof tarp made from a thick sea animal hide for the top. My point is that it was most likely quite dark inside. I can only imagine when the priest walked in that he would have trouble seeing what he was doing or where he was stepping. As you might surmise, God already had this issue in mind when He instructed Moses to have the golden lampstand made. You can read about its design in Exodus 25:31-36.

It was to be located in the Holy Place opposite the table for the bread. If you have seen a Jewish menorah, you can get a picture of what it may have looked like. The ornate design included a flowery "cup" at the top of each branch in which the oil was placed for fueling the light. You can get a bit more detail from Numbers 8:1-4 concerning the lampstand. The obvious and practical function of the lampstand was to provide light for the priest to see. Further, I believe we can determine that there were also symbolic meanings that we can derive from its use and the New Testament.

Commentators conclude that the lampstand was a symbol of God's life-giving power. Each branch ended with budding, blooming, and ripening fruit which point to life. Not only is He life, but He is also light. John wrote, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5b). He is our light and our salvation (Ps. 27:1). The fact that there were 7 lights on the lampstand is likely indicative of the use of the number 7 throughout the Bible to refer to completion. He is the perfection of light.

You may recall from John 1:4 that it says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Again, we see some of the features of the tabernacle and the elements in it pointing to Jesus Christ as illuminated in the New Testament. Jesus is the source of light and life for all who believe (John 3:15). I can't help but think of what Isaiah wrote in his book. It says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone" (Isa. 9:2). Remember what Jesus said in John 9:5, "I am the light of the world." Jesus was given to all who believe not just to the priests who served in the tabernacle.

Friend, the Bible often describes lostness and separation from God as deep darkness (Prov. 4:19; John 3:19). The Bible itself is called a "lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Ps. 119:105). Church family, I hope you don't have to work too hard to see and understand the significance of the lampstand and the way it points to Jesus as our light. Any understanding we have in relation to the Scriptures is because the Holy Spirit shines divine light upon our hearts and minds to illuminate His truth. God provides that as He tabernacles within each of us as "the temple of God." May we each live our lives letting our light so shine before men that they may see our good deeds and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Seek to abide in Him so that your life will bear much fruit to the praise of His glory and grace (John 15:5 and Eph. 1:6, 12).