

## THE OUTER COURT

One of the most influential books I read in the early days of my ministry was the *The Suffering Savior* by Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher. This classic volume had three parts; The Outer Court (from the Triumphal Entry to the Lord's Supper), The Holy Place (From Gethsemane to the trials of Jesus) and The Most Holy Place (from the Crucifixion to the internment). My first sermon was on Easter morning, 1970. As the days approached I was caught up with the events that led to Easter in a way like I had never known before. I believe this is one reason the Gospel, comprising of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ has always been so dear to me. This Gospel narrative was my entry into ministry. This morning and, Lord willing, the next two Sundays, ending with Easter, I would like us to travel toward the cross beginning with almost 1,500 years before the cross to the Old Testament Tabernacle.

God gave Moses the Law. He also gave Moses the blueprint for the Tabernacle at the same time (Exodus 25:8, 9). The Law tells us we are lost, undone and unable to be permitted into fellowship with God because of our sin. The Tabernacle shows us the way back to God and it is actually the story of Jesus telling us who we are, who He is and what we need to know to be in union with Him.

### 1. THE RIGHTEOUS RESTRICTION

Exodus 27:9-15.

The white linen, the finest linen in the world came from Egypt when the Israelites were miraculously delivered through the original Passover. The linen represents the righteousness of Christ. This was a stark contrast to the black goat hair tents of Israel surrounding the Tabernacle.

I Corinthians 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Philippians 3:9: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Isaiah 53:6a: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...."

Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God...."

Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The Tabernacle was surrounded by the white linen fence, which stood at seven and a half feet high. There was no getting around it; there was no going over it. The ultimate aim of the Tabernacle was to get into the presence of God. Our breakage of the Law of God forbids us entering into the presence of God. The white linen fence reminds us of this. Jesus said in John 10:1, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

## 2. THE ONLY ENTRANCE

Exodus 27:16

There was one and only one gate or door into the Tabernacle and that was located on the east side of the structure. The entrance was thirty feet wide, secured by four pillars (posts) placed firmly into sockets. This was a generous opening, reminding us that whosoever will may come to Christ (Revelation 22:17). The four posts are prophetic of the four Gospels which later testified of Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The entrance was woven linen made up of three colors, blue, purple and scarlet (red). Blue symbolizes Heaven. Exodus 24:10: "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." The scarlet symbolizes sacrifice. Leviticus 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The purple symbolizes royalty. John 19:5: "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!"

The purple is the center color mentioned. It takes blue and red to make purple. This pictures Christ, who came from heaven to shed His precious blood for our sins, thus making the only way to God for us. Jesus said in John 10:9: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

## 3. THE GRAPHIC INTRODUCTION

Exodus 27:1-8

No one was going any farther into the Tabernacle without first stopping at the altar where sacrifice was made. In Genesis 8:20 Noah built an altar. In Genesis 12:7 Abraham built an altar. In Genesis 26:25 Isaac built an altar. In Genesis 35:7 Jacob built an altar. In Exodus 17:15 Moses built an altar. In Joshua 8:30 Joshua built an altar. In I Chronicles 21:26 David built altar. In I Kings 18:30 Elijah repaired an altar. Even before the Law and Tabernacle, mankind knew he needed the death of an innocent animal to symbolize that a sacrifice must be made to have audience with God. Every sacrificed sheep, lamb, bull, sheep, heifer, turtledove or pigeon illustrated the horror and cost of sin. The altar is where you find mercy, grace and lovingkindness.

The altar in the Tabernacle was made of shittim, also known as acacia wood covered in brass. Brass is a picture of judgment. The approach to God must be through sacrifice. Aaron placed the sacrifices upon the altar and the Bible records in Leviticus 9:24, "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces." The fire was to be stoked, nurtured and continued as Leviticus 6:13 says, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." The final "fire" from Heaven fell on Calvary. Matthew 27:46: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And now we may obey Hebrews 4:16, which says, "Let us

therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." In I Kings 1:50-53, Adonijah finds mercy at the horns of the altar. This is prescient of the New Testament believer, who also will find mercy at the altar of the cross and may say with John the Baptist, "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b).

#### 4. THE REFLECTION AND THE CLEANSING

Exodus 30:17-21; Exodus 38:8

James 1:21-25; Ephesians 5:25, 26

Just beyond the sacrificial altar is the laver made from the mirrors of the women of Israel. One was required to wash before going any farther into the outer court. When he washed, he saw his own reflection, bringing conviction and repentance. The washing symbolizes the cleansing that comes from taking heed to the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

#### 5. ANCHORED FAST

Exodus 27:19; Exodus 35:18

The brass pins or pegs hold the Tabernacle in place. Even the strong winds of the evening desert did not shake this fully anchored Tabernacle (Hebrews 6:19, 20; Colossians 2:7). Hosea 11:4a: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love..." II Corinthians 5:14,15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

The Christian is held fast by the power of God's unfailing and incomparable love.

#### CONCLUSION:

Using F.W. Krummacher's analogy of the Outer Court, we see the tears of Jesus as He approaches Jerusalem (Luke 19:41, 42) contemplating the coming judgment upon Jerusalem and Himself. He is the Door that the believer must enter but many are refusing (Matthew 23:37). The disciples of Jesus, representing the believers, are partakers of the Lord's Supper who are informed through the elements of the bread and cup that He is going to the "Altar of brass," a type of the cross and there His body will be broken and His blood will be shed for the remission of our sins (Matthew 26:27, 28).

-Pastor Pope-