

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – July 29, 2018

Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Exodus 24:3-11

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." 4) Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5) Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. 6) Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. 7) Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." **8) Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."** 9) **Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10) and saw the God of Israel.** Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. **11) But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.**

Dear People of God,

News headlines in recent weeks have focused on President Trump and his recent summits with the leaders of North Korea and Russia and the negotiations that were part of those summits. Of course, the news reports can only speculate about what happened behind the scenes in those negotiations because only a few details have been made public at this point.

Our text for today deals with a negotiated agreement of sorts. Moses is ratifying an agreement between the Lord and his people. The Lord had given Moses the laws and regulations which they were to follow as they lived their personal lives, as they worshipped him and as they lived together as a nation. We commonly speak of those laws as the Moral Law or Ten Commandments, the Ceremonial Law and the Civil Law. The Lord promised his blessings to those who obeyed and the people proclaimed their intention to do everything the Lord had said. The sacrifices Moses made to the Lord and the meal the representatives of God's people enjoyed in the presence of God closed the deal so to speak. As we consider this interesting OT section of Scripture, we will see that

Theme: God Offers His People Grace

1. His commandments show that we need it
2. Old Testament sacrifices symbolize it
3. New Testament sacraments seal it

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As I mentioned, the Lord's words and laws given to Moses on this occasion included laws that pertained just to the nation of Israel and to the worship life of Israel as well as laws that pertain to all people. We are most familiar with the 10 commandments that explain for us God's will for all people.

Most people around the world are at least somewhat familiar with the 10 commandments because a God's Law is written on our hearts from birth. However, sin has clouded our understanding of that Law. So while people may have a foggy understanding of the Law they don't always willingly accept it or follow it all

the time. Most people follow their conscience and have an understanding that there is a God who holds them accountable for their actions – although not everyone knows and honors the true God. Even those who do not believe in God are willing to have respect for his name and are willing to acknowledge that the Scriptures have some worth – of course, they might say the same about any number of religious people and books. The fourth commandment requires obedience to parents and other authorities -- a practice frequently practiced to a very high degree even in non-Christian cultures. But sadly we often see many examples of those who have no respect for authority too. The Lord's command, "You shall not kill or murder" is on the books of all nations as is his prohibition against stealing. While growing numbers of our people in our society would ignore what God has to say about the proper use of sexuality – many find themselves in complete agreement with what God says about marriage and sexual relationships. Most people are ready to condemn those who speak untrue and hurtful things about others and of course, it's easy to condemn the greed in others. That's a brief review of the 10 commandments and how they are regarded by society in general.

What is true about society in general is even more true among those who call themselves Christians – together with the Lord's people at the time of Moses we have no argument with what God's laws say – and because we are in agreement that God's word is good we would have no trouble declaring our intention to follow his will. Is there anyone here who would not be willing to say with God's people of old, "**We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.**"

While our consciences affirm God's law as God and while our new man has the desire to obey – our sinful nature often gets the best of us – causing us to do things that we don't want to do. The apostle Paul describes the struggle for us well when he says: (Romans 7:19 NIV) For what I do is not **the good** I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.

Most people attempt to explain away their offences but the bottom line is that God's law shows our sins and condemns us. The Lord holds individuals accountable for their own sins when he says: "**The soul** who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18:20). He repeats that thought in the NT through the Apostle Paul: (Romans 6:23 NIV) For the **wages of sin** is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. In spite of our agreement with the Lord's Law; the fact remains that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!

We need the gift of God – the grace that God offers his people through Christ Jesus. The Lord's commands show us our sin and our need for grace and forgiveness. Our text reflects this need for the Lord's grace as it explains to us the sacrifices and fellowship offerings Moses made on behalf of the people.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5) Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. 6) Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. 7) Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." 8) Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The altar symbolized the Lord's presence – the pillars symbolized the 12 families that formed the nation of Israel. The burnt offerings and fellowship offerings were vivid reminders that because of their sins the people were not at peace with the Lord. The words of Isaiah the prophet apply to ancient Israel as well as to us: (Isaiah 59:2 NIV) But your iniquities have **separated** you from your God... Since death was the required punishment for sin – there could be no way to establish fellowship with the Lord without the shedding of blood. The blood placed on the altar was symbolic of a payment of blood to the Lord. The blood Moses sprinkled on

the people was symbolic of the cleansing and forgiveness the Lord would provide by the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

The NT helps us to see the Lord Jesus and his perfect sacrifice as the ultimate peace making sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:19-22 NIV) **When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. (20) He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." (21) In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. (22) In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (1 John 1:7 NIV) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

The Lord's grace to his people is evident from his willingness to accept their offerings as well as in his desire to bless them when they lived in agreement with his commands. Further evidence of the Lord's grace is found from the fact that **Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10) and saw the God of Israel.**

It would be obvious that these men did not see the full glory of God for as the Lord himself has made clear: (Exodus 33:20 NIV) **no one may see me and live.**" Yet God allowed these leaders of his people to see a glimpse of his divine splendor assuring them of his forgiving grace and his abiding presence. Surely, this must have prepared these men well for the task of leading the Lord's people on their journey to the Promised Land.

Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli [sapphire], as bright blue as the sky. 11) But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank. When we hear of these men enjoying God's grace, and eating and drinking with him; we can't help but think of the way in which we enjoy a similar experience as we eat and drink in the Lord's Supper. The meal these men enjoyed in the Lord's presence strengthened and encouraged their faith. It assured them that God offers his people his grace. The New Testament sacraments seal that grace to us.

Notice how the Lord Jesus speaks of what happens in the Lord's Supper. (Matthew 26:27-28 NIV) **Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28) This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

Jesus speaks of giving us his blood – the blood which ratified a covenant or agreement – so that we might enjoy the forgiveness of sins. So, we say that in the Lord's Supper we enjoy a meal through which the Lord offers us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. This meal strengthens our faith. In response to the grace which is sealed to in this meal we resolve to set aside our sin and to serve the Lord in keeping with his will.

But the Lord's Supper isn't the only feast that comes to mind as we hear of Moses and the leaders of Israel feasting with the Lord. When we hear of the pavement made of sapphire – clear as the sky itself we're reminded of the heavenly banquet which the Lord Jesus promises to those who believe in him.

That's a banquet we will enjoy as a gift of grace – because of the payment our Lord Jesus made for our sins. Thankfully the behind the scenes details of our rescue from sin, death and Satan are no secret – like the details of government negotiations today. They are clearly proclaimed to us in vivid detail in sections of Scripture -- like our text as well as in the Gospel accounts that show Jesus as the perfect fulfillment of all that the OT sacrifices foretold and promised.

Thanks be to God for his wonderful gifts of grace! Amen.