

We See Jesus – Lent 2015

"We See Jesus Bringing Us into God's Presence"

Text: Exodus 40:17, 20-30, 33-35

As we enter the Season of Lent on this Ash Wednesday, God grant that each of us would be moved to confess from our hearts this simple confession and prayer: **"God be merciful to me, the sinner."** Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, during our series of mid-week Lenten services this year, we intend to focus our thoughts around the theme: *We See Jesus*. Our goal is to take a walk through the Old Testament in search of our Lord. We will search for types or pictures that pointed ahead to Jesus, foretelling and describing just exactly what the Messiah was going to accomplish for sinners, together with what, from our perspective today, he has now accomplished. This evening we begin by seeing *Jesus bringing us into God's presence*. Our text for this sacred occasion (Ash Wednesday) is found recorded by God the Holy Spirit in the 40th Chapter of Exodus, several selected verses:

^{ESV} **Exodus 40:17,20-30,33-35** *In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. ²⁰ He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. ²¹ And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²² He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, ²³ and arranged the bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁴ He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, ²⁵ and set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁶ He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, ²⁷ and burned fragrant incense on it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁸ He put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ²⁹ And he set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ³⁰ He set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing... ³³ And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work. ³⁴ ¶ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of*

meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

So far the inspired words of our Holy God. That our God would bless our humble, feeble human efforts with his divine grace and blessings so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

On this Ash Wednesday, we enter again into the 40-day season of Lent. The name Ash Wednesday itself indicates repentance, since it was so named for the custom of applying ash to one's body on this day (typically to the center of the forehead) as an outward manifestation of sorrow over sins. The rite is drawn from the Old Testament custom of putting on sackcloth and sitting in ashes – the Old Testament symbol of repentance. Ash Wednesday is therefore an important reminder for each one of us; a time to bring to mind our own personal sinfulness as well as our desperate need for a savior. On this night, therefore, we begin our journey of introspection and repentance by searching for Jesus in the Old Testament, and then applying what we find there to our own individual hearts and lives today.

So also this evening we begin by seeing Jesus in what might to some be a rather unusual place – the camp of Old Testament Israel in the arid regions east of the Red Sea – several thousand years before Jesus was even born. Here we join Moses as he erects and furnishes the tabernacle for the first time in the wilderness of Sinai. One thing that we will want to clarify from the very beginning is that finding Jesus in the Old Testament is not limited to finding types or pictures of Christ – though such types or pictures are obviously not uncommon. The Brass Serpent made by Moses is one such rather obvious type or picture that foreshadowed Christ, as was the Passover lamb. In such places we obviously see Jesus. But what we will discover this evening in our search for our Savior is that we see Jesus *whenever we find evidence of what he did, or, in the case of this evening's study, what he undid*. Suppose, for example, you decide your garage door needs to be replaced. You know a guy who will do the work for you and he says he will do it the following day while you're at work. You leave for work seeing the old door and return from work seeing the new. The fact is when you look at that new door you see more than a door. In a way you see your friend, or at least evidence that he was there. Maybe years later you see a picture of your house taken when you still had that ratty old door, but when you look at that picture you see more than just the old door. Again, you see your friend. That's the sort of thing we will be looking for this Lenten season.

The unbelieving world, of course, has now and will always think us either daft or fanatical for seeking and then claiming to find Jesus in the Old Testament. They chalk it up to overactive imaginations as well as an insatiable need on our part to find ancient verification for our New Testament convictions. In their condemnation we recognize man's tendency to judge others according to their own deficiencies, and to dismiss and ridicule what they themselves cannot see. The Apostle John, who outlived the rest of the Apostles by several decades, saw already in his own day such trends developing. He was well aware that the doubters were already then accusing Christians of finding Christ where he (in their estimation) could not legitimately be found. So also John wrote in his first Epistle: **"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."** ⁵ **They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.** ⁶ **We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."** 1 John 4:4-6 Again in 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul wrote, **"A person who isn't spiritual doesn't accept the teachings of God's Spirit. He thinks they're nonsense. He can't understand them because a person must be spiritual to evaluate them."** ^{GWN} 1 Corinthians 2:14 But doubt never cancels reality, therefore we allow the Scriptures to speak, and to show us the Savior whenever and wherever he is to be found.

So then where is Christ to be found in our Old Testament text for this evening? Where do we "See Jesus"? Is the tabernacle itself a picture of Christ? The Mercy Seat? The Ark of the Covenant? It is important to remember here that just as no one has the right to manufacture truth, so also no one has the right to manufacture pictures of Jesus in the Old Testament. Scripture alone can do that. So it is that we have no right to refer to the Bronze Serpent as a type of Christ except that Jesus himself did so when he said in John 3:14-15, **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,"** ¹⁵ **that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."**

The whole purpose, remember, of seeing Christ in the Old Testament is to strengthen our faith, not to create doubt or uncertainty. So, again we ask: *As we watch Moses erect the tabernacle in the wilderness, where exactly do we see Jesus?*

Even a rather casual examination of a good artist's rendition of the tabernacle reveals that God created three different levels of accessibility. If you've ever been to the White House you know something about this sort of "levels of accessibility." Every year hundreds of thousands of visitors tour the White House – but only certain areas. Few ever see the Oval

Office, and even fewer are ever allowed to enter the actual living quarters of the President and his family.

On a much grander scale, God directed Moses to create levels of accessibility in connection with the Tabernacle. They were, from greatest accessibility to least, the Outer Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies).

The Outer Courtyard surrounded the Tabernacle proper. This is where the sacrifices took place, and only believers could enter this area, and then only when ceremonially clean. This is as far as the vast majority of the Jews could go. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place, and then only to carry out their official functions – such as burning incense, replacing the 12 loaves of show bread, and keeping the candles of the Menorah supplied with oil and burning. The Most Holy Place was the most exclusive. Here only one man, the High Priest, could enter, and then only once each year (on Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement).

Why the restricted accessibility? The answer is clear from our text. God agreed to be present among the Children of Israel in the Most Holy Place. No man, not even Moses, could stand in the presence of the Holy God of Israel. Human beings could not stand in God's presence because of sin. All are unclean and imperfect in every conceivable way. A just and holy God cannot abide such impurity. God was, therefore, inaccessible to man.

Understand this point well, for here we learn just how desperate was our condition prior to, and still today apart from, our Savior Jesus. We were shut out, excluded. Every detail of the Tabernacle pointed to sin on the part of man, and the resulting inaccessibility of or to God. It is true, of course, that Old Testament believers also enjoyed the forgiveness of their sins. Their faith in the promise of the Messiah was credited to them as righteousness. Yet the sacrifice of Jesus had not yet been made, the accessibility had not yet been granted or accomplished. The separation was therefore a constant reminder of mankind's sin problem.

What changed? Jesus, as usual, changed everything. Remember, it is neither right nor honest for us to manufacture Christ in the Old Testament, so we turn again to the Word of God and there find proof and validation. You remember what happened in the temple the moment Jesus died: **Matthew 27:51 "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom...."** These few, simple words bring the whole picture into sharp and meaningful focus. The inaccessibility of our Holy God was brought to an end by the death of

his Son on the cross of Calvary. How? Why? God separated himself from us because he could not abide our sinfulness. Yet aren't we still sinners? Not according to God's decree. The temple curtain – that most obvious symbol of man's separation from God – was torn in two at the moment of Jesus' death because at that moment the sins of the entire world found full and complete payment in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant promised back in the days of Jeremiah the Prophet was thus established: ***"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*** Jeremiah 31:31-34

Here then is how and where *"We See Jesus, Bringing Us into God's Presence."* Jesus took the sum total of our filth and corruption and carried it to the cross, there making a full, complete, perfect payment for every single sin. God, in Christ, has now declared you and me *"Not guilty."* Now our relationship with God our Creator is altogether different – immeasurably better. Now we can and should come boldly into his presence whenever we have any need, any desire, any song of praise or thanksgiving, and he has promised to be there for us, and to hear us. God is now also *our* Father, as Jesus taught us to address our prayers to him, ***"Our Father, who art in heaven..."***

In our churches today we have no forbidden, inaccessible areas. We treat our churches with respect, for there our God visits us in Word and in Sacrament, but nothing is excluded or hidden. God the Father, for the sake of his Son, has granted us full and unfettered access. Therefore we begin our journey through Lent by thanking our Savior for bringing us into the presence of our Holy God, and especially for making that possible by erasing the debt of our sins so that we might now stand before our God without blame, without sin, without guilt, and without condemnation. Every time then that you hear or read about the Old Testament tabernacle and the curtain of separation between us and our God, see Jesus. Remember that he's the one who tore that barrier down and has thereby allowed us to stand, uncondemned, in the presence of our holy God. Amen.

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Mid-Week Lenten Services - 2015

The Opening Hymn *(As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)*

Invocation

Pastor: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Congregation: *(Spoken) Amen.*

Confession and Absolution *(TLH 318)*

P: *Acknowledging that we stand in the presence of our Holy God we humble ourselves, and in true repentance we confess our sins:*

All: *Before Thee, God, who knowest all, with grief and shame I prostrate fall.
I see my sins against Thee, Lord, the sins of thought, of deed, and word.
They press me sore; I cry to Thee: O God, be merciful to me!*

*O Lord, my God, to Thee I pray; oh, cast me not in wrath away!
Let Thy good Spirit ne'er depart, but let Him draw to Thee my heart
That truly penitent I be: O God, be merciful to me!*

P: *Jesus Christ himself has been punished for your sins. God the Father has placed upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. According to His authority, and by His command, I announce to you the divine decree of our God that all of your sins are forgiven, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All:

*O Jesus, let Thy precious blood be to my soul a cleansing flood.
Turn not, O Lord, Thy guest away, but grant that justified I may
Go to my house at peace with Thee: O God, be merciful to me!*

The Reading of the Passion History

The Apostolic Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Pre Sermon Hymn *(As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)*

The Sermon – *The theme for our devotions this Lenten Season is*

"We See Jesus"

(Please turn to the back page for this evening's service details)

The Response – *(TLH Hymn 138 v5)*

**My Savior, I behold Thee with faith's enlightened eye;
Of Thee no foe can rob me, his threats I can defy.
Within my heart abiding, as Thou, O Lord, in me,
Death can no longer frighten nor part my soul from Thee.
Amen.**

The Offering

The Prayer of the Day

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

P: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God the Father,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C: **Amen, Amen, Amen.** *(Sung by all)*

The Closing Hymn *(As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)*

Silent Prayer

Announcements *[All are invited to remain for fellowship and light refreshments.]*

Weekly Hymn and Meditation Schedule

February 18

Hymns: 140, 157,
149

Lenten Theme:
"We See Jesus"

*"...Making Us
Clean"*

Text: Numbers 19:2-
6, 9-12, 20

Pastor Naumann

February 25

Hymns: 158, 32,
154

Lenten Theme:
"We See Jesus"

*"...Bringing Us
Into God's
Presence"*

Text: Exodus 40:17,
20-30, 33-35

Pastor Roehl

March 4

Hymns: 141,
142(1-4), 156

Lenten Theme:
"We See Jesus"

*"...Paying for Our
Sins"*

Text: Leviticus 4:1-3,
22, 27-31; 6:1-7

Pastor Naumann

March 11

Hymns: 155,
150(1-4), 150(5)

Lenten Theme:
"We See Jesus"

*"...Giving Us
Fellowship with
God"*

Text: Leviticus 1:1-9,
3:6-11

Pastor Roehl

March 18

Hymns: 18,
151(1-4), 145

Lenten Theme:
"We See Jesus"

*"...Giving Us
Eternal Life"*

Text: Leviticus
23:33-36, 39-42

Pastor Naumann

March 25

Hymns: 166,
171(1,3-5), 558

Lenten Theme:
"We See Jesus"

*"...Acting as Our
Go-Between"*

Text: Exodus 28:1-2,
15-17a, 21,29-31, 33,
35-38

Pastor Roehl

-Please return this bulletin to the Entry Table for use next week-