How Quickly We Forget
Exodus 32:1-35

Monday, April 8th - Living Water

Melanie DeKruyter - gracespring Member

“Then the Lord said to Moses, 18 “Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. 19 Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. 20 Whenever they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting a food offering to the Lord, 21 they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come,” (Exodus 30:17-21).

These instructions were given to Moses in the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, a place God’s people would come to worship Him. One need only read these instructions and see how seriously God takes our clean-ness. Our holy God clearly intends for us to be equally serious in approaching Him.

A practice of the faithful in the days of Jesus was mikveh. This is a baptism of repentance & dedication, and done before entering the presence of the Holy One for worship. We know that it was not a baptism of testimony of their faith, and not the baptism we Christians hold opinions about whether it is a prerequisite for heaven and should we involve our babies. It was a simple yet profound act of cleansing oneself to be ready for worship, fit for His presence.

If you were to travel to Israel and Turkey, you would see many mikvoth (plural for mikveh) at all the ancient synagogues and early churches. A mikveh is a sort of ritual bathtub where water was directed in from a stream or river. I have even seen what is believed to be a mikveh hundreds of feet underground in a cavern system where Christians hid from persecution in Asia Minor, now Turkey. Imagine the dedication to this act of repentance to carve out a mikveh & pipe in living water, in utter darkness, to be true to this act of obedience.
My first experience with mikveh was in Israel fifteen years ago. We stood knee-deep in the Jordan River. First, we put water on our heads, asking the Holy One to cleanse our minds from all distraction and sinful thoughts. Then we brought water to our chests, asking Him to cleanse our hearts, the seat of our will. We scooped water into our hands, and asked the Lord to cleanse our hands of all activity that did not glorify Him. Finally we wiped our feet (already underwater), in an act of asking God to cleanse our feet from any steps taken to places displeasing to Him.

Next came a time of dedication. We began by again putting water on our heads, asking God to give us His thoughts. We splashed our chests, dedicating our hearts and asking Him to give us His will. We scooped more water and pledged our hands to doing His work, and finally rubbed our boots and begged our Father to give us feet for the path of His choosing.

As we stood quiet and profoundly renewed, we pondered Jesus’ mikveh. We understand better now why in Matthew’s account, John the Baptist was almost unwilling to baptize Jesus—He had no need of repentance! He needed no cleansing. Yet Jesus insisted, being a true Hebrew of faithful practice, in order “to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3).” Jesus dedicated Himself to the Father’s will knowing full well that it would cost Him everything. We appreciated that Jesus did not begin His ministry, or call His first disciple, until after His time in the Jordan.

We wondered how we have gone about our lives rarely taking the precious time to cleanse ourselves and ready ourselves for His presence.

It is beyond my ability to comprehend, let alone describe here in writing, the total refreshment from the cleansing, and the sheer exhilaration at having dedicated our whole selves to walk in this world with our feet soaked and ready to do His will, His way. The next hours as I sloshed around the desert in wet boots, I felt more and more sad as my hair traded water for dust and the handprint on my shirt dried into a grimy shadow of those moments in the living water.

The Holy One has been taking me to places in His Word that teach me that true refreshment (Acts 3) and His exalting (James 4) come only after a time of humbling and repentance. May we daily immerse ourselves in His Word, soak in His presence, and go out into the world sharing the refreshment of the One who calls Himself Living Water.

Tuesday, April 9th - Altar of Prayer

Rebekah True - gracespring Member
In the Tabernacle, there is a Holy Place. Only after the priest of the LORD had been ritually cleansed, he could enter the Holy Place.

“Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. 2 It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high[a]—its horns of one piece with it. 3 Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. 4 Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding—two on each of the opposite sides—to hold the poles used to carry it. 5 Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 6 Put the altar in front of the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law—before the atonement cover that is over the tablets of the covenant law—where I will meet with you,” (Exodus 30:1-6).

The priest had holy work to do: ministering to the LORD in worship and offering prayers on behalf of the people of GOD. This was not simply a task on his to-do list for the day—this holy work was his whole life’s purpose: ministering to the LORD and the LORD’s people. Communing with the LORD was His own idea and He has ever and always made a way for us to come to Him in Spirit and in truth.

Prayer is communication with God. It is listening and talking to him and it’s important in a healthy relationship with Christ. However, as soon as it becomes ‘a task to just finish then move on,’ it loses its joy.

The joy of prayer comes with time and love. It doesn’t change overnight. When I started getting more serious about prayer, I realized this truth. It’s not like a switch that turns on and suddenly long prayer times become a favorite pastime activity. Prayer, for me, used to be something that I knew was important for Christians to do, but I never loved doing it and I would always get distracted during my prayer times. I never could get through twenty minutes of prayer, and an hour seemed unheard of. It was on my list of “Things I Must to do as a Christian,” but it never went on my list of “Things I want to do” or “Things I do because I love God.” It was simply a box I checked without putting my heart into it. And because of that, I never found joy in it. It was as simple as that.

One truth about prayer is that prayer grows out of love. Unless your heart does not sing of love for Christ, how can your actions? Should we not love to listen and talk with Him if we truly love Him?

One of my favorite verses in Psalms says, “Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge,” (Psalm 62:8).

He wants to hear your heart. He wants you to come to him because you love him, not only because you have to. Prayer is a GIFT to those who uncover its treasure. And truly, once you have uncovered that treasure, its reward is priceless and its testimony to God’s goodness is beyond words.
I delight in prayer. I value my prayer times with God so much more highly than anything else in my day. I long for those times during the day when I get to spend time with him because this world is broken and exhausting. It drains me and I lean on Christ because He is my source of strength. Truly the hymnist had it right, “I need thee every hour in joy or pain...” There is true rest in God’s presence.

**Wednesday, April 10th - Blessing God through Prayer**

*Rebekah True & Melanie DeKruyter - gracespring Members*

Placed near the back, directly in front of the veil which guards the Most Holy Place, there is an altar. This is the Altar of Incense, a place where priests alone may come and offer prayers for themselves, their families, the people of GOD. The Lord Himself instructed Moses to have the skilled workmen build a beautiful altar, a place to offer prayers. This holy act of prayer as worship is now for us. Jesus’ redemptive work has made us holy, set apart, as a nation of priests to minister to the Lord in worship and to one another in love.

Prayer is a BLESSING to God. Prayer is WORSHIP. When we offer up our praises to God, as holy as He is and as human as we are, it glorifies Him and lifts His name high.

There was one particular night when I was struggling and crying on my bedroom floor. There on my knees, I poured out my heart to God—all the mess that had been building up inside. I felt ugly with those tears on my face, but as I prayed, my perspective shifted to what God saw of me... And what He saw was beautiful. As messy as I felt, I know that my action of laying everything at his feet was beautiful in his sight.

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest,” (Matthew 11:28). Here are a couple practical ways that I love to pray:

1) Prayer journal - This is huge! I keep a prayer journal and carry it pretty much everywhere I go...Sometimes I write whole pages and other times just paragraphs or short lines. It is wonderful to be able to keep record of God’s faithfulness to me.

2) Physically getting on your knees (before bed, in the morning, etc.) - I’ve started doing this in the morning and at night and found myself surrendering to Christ physically. This posture makes it easier to surrender spiritually and emotionally.
3) Praying while doing normal activities (brushing your teeth, driving, etc.) - Every time I drive anywhere, I’ll pray. I’ll pray about where I’m going, who I’m going to see, what I’m struggling with, etc. My path is literally paved with prayer.

4) Walks through nature and praying - I love God’s creation and this is one of my favorite ways to connect with my Savior. I can be out there for hours talking, quoting Scripture, and singing—praising Christ my King.

5) Incorporating Scripture in prayers - This is very powerful. Words have so much power. His Words make us clean and ready.

   “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

   5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

   9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete,” (John 15:1-11).

6) Prayer room or prayer wall - Put sticky notes on a wall, someplace you see often, with prayer requests and praises.

7) Praying out loud - I love praying out loud. It helps me not get distracted while praying. You may feel a little silly at first, but it becomes more comfortable.

We know that God’s Words have power, and what can be more powerful than wielding His Words to change the atmosphere? Bless God for His given Word, our weapon against all darkness!
Thursday, April 11th - The Holy of Holies

Kenneth Price - Youth Pastor

“The Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.” Lev 16:2

The Holy of Holies was the innermost room in the tabernacle. It was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a huge and heavy veil. Inside rested the Ark of the Covenant which held the Mercy Seat of God on top. Once a year the high priest was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies to burn incense and sprinkle the blood of the sacrificed animal on the mercy seat to gain atonement for his sins and for the sins of the people of Israel.

The Holy of Holies had to be perfect and perfectly blocked off from the world because inside sat the very presence of God. We see later in Exodus that even upon gazing at God’s back, Moses was so radiant that the people couldn’t look upon him. (Exodus 33:18-34:9) Even with some of the impressive weather we see on the earth, it’s hard to imagine something so powerful that even seeing it could kill humans. But inside of the Holy of Holies, God’s presence sat.

The veil was so important because it was the barrier between the perfect holiness of God and the sinful brokenness of man. The rituals that the priests underwent in order to walk into the Holy of Holies once a year were so calculated and intentional so that they could be in God’s presence without dying. Through Jesus’ sacrifice we now have this presence inside of us. The veil in the temple was torn and God’s presence is made available to His people. What I’m constantly reminded of when I study about the tabernacle is the intentionality of everything. What I’m constantly challenged about is that we have the presence of God in our lives now and yet - have we lost the intentionality? These rituals and buildings were meant to worship God. How is your worship?

Friday, April 12th - The Veil

Kenneth Price - Youth Pastor

The veil was the most ornate object in the tabernacle. It was woven from fine linen and contained blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. The craftsmen embroidered the figures of cherubim on the veil which symbolized the angelic beings who protected the throne of God. The whole veil was supported by the
finest acacia wood and overlaid with gold and silver bases. The veil was a wonder to behold. As we learned yesterday the veil was put in place to be a barrier between the holiness of God and the brokenness of man. (Ex 26:31-35)

Think for a moment - the veil was always there with a mediator (the high priest) going between God and man. God longed for His presence to be among His people, but our sinful nature permitted us from being with Him. For years and years it was this way. Until Jesus.

When Jesus died, God tore the veil in the temple in Jerusalem from the top to the bottom - an act that only God could do. (Matt 27:51) The veil in the temple was 60 feet tall and four inches thick. Because the veil was torn from the top to the bottom it was symbolic that God destroyed the barrier that lay between humanity and Himself. It was a display that only God had the authority to do. This display was from the holy and perfect God saying that Christ was our new mediator and that we now are called to be holy priests, basking in His presence and bringing it to the world around us. (1 Peter 2:9)

Saturday, April 13th - There I Will Meet With You

Kenneth Price - Youth Pastor

“There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.” Exodus 25:22

On top of the ark of the covenant sat a lid. The lid was called the mercy seat. Two cherubim sat on top and it was made of the finest gold. The mercy seat represented the throne of God’s judgment for His people and His presence rested above it. God promised Moses that in this place, He would meet with Him and share with Him the heart that He had for His people.

The Hebrew word for mercy seat translated best to the term “propitiatory.” This means in essence the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift. Yearly, the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat as an act of atonement. This act of propitiation was only able to be offered by God through the sacrifices that His people made. The mercy seat represented the place that God sat in judgment over the sins of His people, but also the place that His wrath was satisfied through the sacrifice poured out.

I love the reminder that grace is a freely given gift that we don’t deserve, while mercy is withholding of punishment that we do deserve. In looking at the mercy seat, it is remarkable to remember the
perfect and holy God who sits in judgment of our sins, yet through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are shown both grace and mercy. Today spend time thanking Him for his grace and his mercy.