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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 29, 2018
10th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Ephesians 4:1-7; John 6:1-15
Hymns: 24; 375; 777; 50:2 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Exodus 24:3-11

So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do." ⁴And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." ⁸And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

⁹Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰and they saw the God of Israel. And *there* was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in *its* clarity. ¹¹But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Do you have everything you need?

A waitress may ask you that a few times in the course of a meal in a restaurant. It's the server's job to be attentive to your needs as the customer dining in their establishment. However as soon as you have paid the bill and you have left your table the only thought that may remain on the server's mind is if you remembered to leave a generous tip.

It's too easy for us to attribute such intermittent caring to the Lord. We simply can't fathom someone that is not only perpetually faithful in attentiveness to our care, but someone who really knows, who knows better than we know ourselves what it is that we need, and is then able to provide whatever is needed. That is the central thought of our worship this morning; that we should come to a better understanding and appreciation of how the Lord looks out for us in our need.

But is that what we see in our text? The events of our text take place at Mount Sinai at the giving of the law and the Lord is presenting the Children of Israel with the Ten Commandments, and then it is put before them that they should pledge their faithfulness to the Law of God. One's initial observation is that this God asking obedience of His people, even demanding obedience of His people, not the Lord providing what His people need.

With the Spirit's guidance let us take a closer look at all that happened that day at Sinai where we learn of --

THEME: God's Covenants Confirmed.

What is abundantly clear in our text is the promise made by the Children of Israel:

I. We Will Obey the Covenant of the Law.

They had already experienced powerful things at the holy mountain. They had seen the glory of the Lord and heard the Lord's voice declare the words of the Ten Commandments, and they had seen the mountain smoking and heard the trumpet blasts and the thundering coming from the mountain. It had all filled their hearts such fear of the Lord that they couldn't stand it. It was literally knee knocking fear! They begged Moses to intercede and receive the words of the Lord and then tell them what the Lord had said. Much of the law was then presented to the people in that fashion both before and after the events of our text. Finally it was time for the people to pledge their faithfulness to God. Our text reports:

Exodus 24:3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do."

Moses prepared a special ceremony for the affirmation of the people's faithfulness to the Lord God. He had twelve pillars erected, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and an altar of stone was built for a special sacrifice to the Lord. When all was prepared we are told what took place.

Exodus 24: 5-7 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."

On two consecutive days Moses read the Book of the Law for all the people to hear. They had opportunity to hear what was presented to them, and carefully consider what they were doing in pledging their faithfulness. On both days they clearly promised without reservation, "*All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.*" (v.7)

Now the question for our consideration; are we willing to hear the Law of the Lord and pledge our faithfulness to all that the Lord has said? Let us be deliberate in our response for this is a holy

covenant with the Lord our God. If He is our God, and we would be His people, then wouldn't we also willingly submit to His holy will? If we confess that the Lord is our God aren't we acknowledging that He is in His rights to tell us how we ought to live? I mean isn't it just logical to understand that part of being God is that God gets to make the rules!

What is wonderful is that the Lord our God is not cavalier about making rules. The Lord does not make rules simply to see us struggle or to frustrate us, or because He thinks it might be funny, or just because He can. Life with the Lord is not a reality TV show!

The Lord has established His law for our good, that we might be blessed by observing the Law of the Lord in our lives. He sees our need for direction in our lives and we are given direction in how we ought to live to His glory and our good and blessing. And so we ought to bless the Lord in our lives and love and serve Him, and also love and serve our neighbor. All this is evident in the Law of God, and so we too should be ready to join with the children of Israel in affirming our loyalty to the Lord our God and declare without mental reservation or purpose of evasion, "*All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.*" (v.7)

The Lord saw that we needed order in our lives and direction for serving the Lord and that order is provided for us in the Law. It is provided with a promise, that if we actually do all the words of this Law and keep them perfectly we shall live, not only here in this life but also in heaven above. But isn't that an empty promise? Isn't that almost toying with us? Even before we committed ourselves to obedience we had fallen short and sinned and fell under the curse of the Law that declares that "the soul who sins shall die?" (Ezekiel 18:4)

No, the Lord is not toying with us setting us up to fail so that He may condemn us. The Lord is "*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9) The Lord does see what we need to be saved. The Lord sees that we need to despair of our own righteousness, despair of any righteousness that we might seek by claiming that our lives our good and holy. He sets the law before us and leads us to see and acknowledge that the

way of God is good, and holy, and just, and that we promise to live according to it. However the Lord also knows our sinful human nature. The Lord knows that we are a rebellious people. So the Lord provided the clear testimony of the law to our sinful flesh that we might rebel against that law in such a clear and evident manner that we would not, that we **could** not deny our sin. He has provided the testimony of the law for us to lead us to confess: *“Oh Almighty God, merciful Father, I a poor miserable sinner confess unto all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment.”* (The Lutheran Hymnal p. 16) The Lord in His love for us, in His desire to save us from our sin saw that we needed to comprehend the true extent our sin so that we would confess with the Apostle Paul, *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* (Romans 7:24) And the Lord has given us the same hope as Paul possessed in his heart. *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Romans 7:25)

As we examine the event that took place at Sinai we see also this grace of God presented to the Children of Israel most spectacularly as --

II. God Receives His People with the Covenant of His Peace.

Exodus 24:5-8 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.” ⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.”

The blood of the covenant. That’s what sealed the deal. The blood of the covenant that was a burnt offering and a *peace* offering, so that God might look upon them in His peace as they promised to obey the Lord and keep His commandments. Half the blood was offered to the Lord and Moses sprinkled it on the altar, confirming the people’s word of promise to the Lord. The other half Moses sprinkled on the people declaring it to be the blood of

the covenant which the Lord had made with the people. But here is the wonder of God's grace, even while the people were asked to affirm their obedience to the Law of God, God affirmed His peace with them not according to their fulfilment of the Law, but by the blood of the covenant. Even as the people pledged perfect obedience, a promise they could not and would not keep, God was offering them the promise of the peace of sins forgiven, a promise God would keep because it was secured by the blood of the covenant of His peace, the blood of Jesus Christ His only Son, and our Redeemer. It was a costly promise for the Lord to keep, but the Lord saw the need of His people, and in the greatness of His love for them, in the greatness of His love for us, the Lord filled that need by sending His Son to be the sacrifice for sin once and for all.

The message of the sacrifice that day, the message of every Old Testament sacrifice was that it foreshadowed Christ and His sacrifice. The Lord would fill that need, our need for redemption with the death of His Son. So we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "without shedding of blood there is no remission."
(Hebrews 9:22)

In Jesus and His sacrifice we find our peace with God and our admission to the presence of God. Consider the remarkable events that concluded that extraordinary day.

Exodus 24: 9-11 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. And *there was* under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in *its* clarity. ¹¹ But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Moses and Aaron and all those elders of the people saw a glorious vision of the Lord. It was a presentation not only of the holiness of God but of God's grace and peace. And then we are told that they ate and drank in the presence of the Lord. This was not just a nice meal together. This was a partaking of the sacrifice that was offered to the Lord. This was a special fellowship that was established by the grace of God. God is not naïve and the Lord is not a chump that He doesn't know the nature of man. Knowing

what the Lord knows about people, even *His* people He looks upon them in His grace. Isaiah writes of the grace of God:

Isaiah 63:8-9 For He said, “Surely they *are* My people, Children *who* will not lie.” So He became their Savior.

⁹In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the Angel of His Presence saved them;
In His love and in His pity He redeemed them;
And He bore them and carried them All the days of old.

They had given the Lord their word. They had promised, PROMISED to be obedient children, and yet less than forty days later they would be lewdly dancing around the golden calf, worshiping the calf as the god that had delivered them from Egypt. You think God didn’t know that was going to happen? Of course He knew, but in His grace, in view of the blood of the covenant, not of the Law but the of the covenant of His peace established with the holy precious blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, God said, “*they are My people, children who will not lie. The Angel of His Presence (that is Jesus the Son of God) saved them. In His love and His pity He redeemed them. He bore them and carried them all the days of old.*”

And that my dear friends in Christ is how God views us in peace; through the blood of covenant. When we promise to amend our sinful lives and serve only Him, He says of us, “They are My people, children who will not lie.” He extends to us the fellowship meal of the peace offering as we partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. He grants us His peace and the hope of everlasting life when we shall see God, and He shall not lay a hand on us, but let us be in perfect communion with Him for all eternity.

The Lord sees our need, and in His grace the Lord provides.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.