



# MORNING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020

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*Readings: Exodus 27; Matthew 24:29-end; Psalms 47-48*

“In our readings from Exodus, we are in the midst of all of the details the Lord gave Moses for the building of the Temple. It is amazing how concerned God was: from the type of wood to the exact specifications to the kind of metal to be used. The directions were detailed and highly specific. I must admit, such readings, day after day, can be a bit tedious, but they tell us three important things about God.

**First, God values space.** The dimensions of the Temple, along with the specific sizes, shapes and locations of every adornment, were spelled out in detail. Here is a prefiguring of the incarnation itself: God values our earthly dwellings, so much so that He specified the details of His own place on earth. Such an engagement with our human home paved the way for the visitation of Jesus in the flesh, the supreme investment in, and valuing of, human life. This concern with space is to be balanced with the Gospel notion of the Spirit. Note the marveling of the disciples at the Second Temple, a structure far less impressive than that of Exodus chapter 27, with these words, “Look Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” Which prompted Jesus to remark, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (Mark 13:1-2). Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the Temple puts into perspective both the importance of divine space and the ultimate value in the reality of the Spirit.

**Second, God is interested in detail.** The precise measurements of the Temple had more to do than just a well-fitted design. Even the vessels and hangings were given specific dimensions. God’s concern with detail is actually a comfort. As Jesus reminded His disciples, “Even the hairs on your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30). This is a direct response to those times when we don’t want to “bother” Jesus with our prayers over little things. But God’s love for us extends to the little things, and as His children we can bring every concern to Him, both great and small.

The contrast to detail is distraction. When Jesus visited Mary and Martha, we read, “Martha was distracted with much serving” (Luke 10:40). It is a good thing to serve, but when we get distracted with the details, then our service quickly dissolves into complaining: “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?” Details remind us of God’s care, while at the same time tempting us to lose focus. So a grand and majestic church can speak to us of the glory of God, or it can cause us to focus on the decor and design, missing the God to which such beauty points.

**Third, Exodus 27 reminds us of God’s call to excellence.** All of the master craftsmen, the workers and the builders were called to offer their best. The work was not to be sloppy. Instead, the measurements were to be precise, the selection of material was to come from the very best and the end product worthy of the glory of God. Anything we offer to God we offer with excellence. Whether we preach a sermon, teach a lesson in Children’s Church or chair a committee, our work is done not to mere mortals but to the God of the universe. We seek to please God above all things, and to please Him with our best. But we also know our best is not enough. We are sinners, and our best efforts fall miserably short. As Isaiah reminds us, “... All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” (Isaiah 64:6). Our efforts at excellence are to be balanced with the eternal weight of glory, which can only be done by God’s marvelous grace. Offer God excellence at every turn? Of course. Recognizing our need for grace at the same time? A must.

While these chapters of Exodus may seem tedious, they are still God’s inspired Word, and they teach us wondrous things about God, ourselves and others. May we be mindful of divine space and our Lord’s keen interest in it while balancing it with the reality of the Spirit. May we glory in a God of detail who knows our every need – even the smallest ones – without being distracted by them, that we might, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus. And may we always strive for excellence in serving Christ, always aware that our excellence falls pitifully short, only to be caught up in the wondrous, redemptive love of God that covers us with His grace and mercy.

– Fr. Marc