

OFFERINGS FOR WORSHIP

Series pt 15: Exodus 35-36
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 11/12/23, Matt Heerema

Please open your Bibles to Exodus chapter 35.

This morning we are on part 15 of 20 of our walk through of the book of Exodus. If you've been following along in the series so far, it is important to note that this morning we're doing sort of a time-shift in the narrative. We're skipping ahead a little bit from last week's passage. Last week God gave Moses the plans for the tabernacle and the tools Israel would need for the sacrificial system of atonement and communion with God. Today we're skipping ahead to another few chapters that repeat that section almost word-for-word, except instead of saying "God says, *do this...*" it says "*So Israel did it...*" And good on Israel! Its one of a few places they actually obey! But it's not quite that simple. There are a few chapters of some major problems in between, and we'll be covering that in the next couple weeks.

But because of the similarities of the passages where God says "do this..." and Israel "doing it...", we wanted to look at the two sections together, last week and this week, and make some observations about the way God had Israel carry out the creation of the Tabernacle and tools for worship.

Today we're going to look at Israel's offering of possessions, skill, and labor, in the construction of the tabernacle. And what we'll see in Israel's offering is primarily about God commanding the offering, and God providing for the offering. And looking at it, we will see some ways we are to bring offerings to God.

GOD COMMANDS THE OFFERING

Exodus 35:4-10 (CSB)

4 Then Moses said to the entire Israelite community, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 5 Take up an offering among you for the Lord. **Let everyone whose heart is willing bring this as the Lord's offering:** gold, silver, and bronze; 6 blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; 7 ram skins dyed red and fine leather; acacia wood; 8 oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 9 and onyx with gemstones to mount on the ephod and breastpiece. 10 **"Let all the skilled artisans among you come and make** everything that the Lord has commanded...

Exodus 35:21-29 (CSB)

21 Everyone **whose heart was moved and whose spirit prompted him** came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its services, and for the holy garments. 22 Both men and women came; **all who had willing** hearts brought brooches, earrings, rings, necklaces, and all kinds of gold jewelry—everyone who presented a presentation offering of gold to the Lord. 23 Everyone who **possessed** blue, purple, or scarlet yarn, fine linen or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or fine leather, brought them. 24 Everyone making an offering of silver or bronze brought it as a contribution to the Lord. Everyone who **possessed** acacia wood useful for any task in the work brought it.

25 Every **skilled** woman spun yarn with her hands and brought it: blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen. 26 And all the women **whose hearts were moved** spun the goat hair by virtue of their **skill**. 27 The leaders brought onyx and gemstones to mount on the ephod and breastpiece, 28 as well as the spice and oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. 29 **So the Israelites brought a freewill offering to the Lord, all the men and women whose hearts prompted them to bring something for all the work that the Lord, through Moses, had commanded to be done.**

God commands that the offering is of possessions and service

Notice in this passage that God commands both the giving of possessions for materials for construction of the tabernacle, as well as the gifts of service: talent and labor, to turn those materials into the tabernacle and implements of worship.

Both men and women, leaders and laity, brought whatever gifts they had from among the things God commanded.

God commands the offering to be a willing one

God is not commanding a tax here. Notice the emphasis on the willingness of the giver.

God commands the specifics of the offering

An important detail here is that God asking for specific gifts, specific labor, for a specific goal. There is an important combination here of wanting only those who were willing, to give, but also some specific direction for those gifts. This was not a free for all “I just want you to give up something, you decide what you want to give, and for what...” There was no “designated giving” in this scenario. God asked for specific things.

GOD PROVIDES THE OFFERING

Exodus 35:30-34 (CSB)

30 Moses then said to the Israelites, "Look, **the Lord has appointed** by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 31 **He has filled him with God's Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and ability in every kind of craft** 32 to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, 33 to cut gemstones for mounting, and to carve wood for work in every kind of artistic craft. 34 **He has also given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others.**

Exodus 36:2-3 (CSB)

2 So Moses summoned Bezalel, Oholiab, and every skilled person **in whose heart the Lord had placed wisdom, all whose hearts moved them**, to come to the work and do it. 3 They took from Moses's presence all the contributions that the Israelites had brought for the task of making the sanctuary. Meanwhile, the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning.

He didn't demand something that they did not have.

This might seem obvious, but I think its important, that God did not ask something from them that they did not have the ability to provide. He did not ask for gold they did not possess, for skilled labor that didn't exist among the people. He didn't ask for things that were impossible for Israel to give. He asked for willing, obedient hearts to give from among possessions and skills they had availalbe to them.

God never asks us to do the impossible. The problem is never whether we *can* do what God asks, the problem is whether we *will*. The problem is always with our hearts.

He only demanded what he had given them in the first place.

But this brings us to a key detail in the whole story of Exodus. Where did all this stuff that God asked from them come from in the first place? Remember you are dealing with several million people who until very recently were slaves in Egypt... where did they get all this gold and fabric and finery?

Exodus 3:21-22 (CSB)

21 And I will give these people such favor with the Egyptians that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. 22 Each woman will ask her neighbor and any woman staying in

her house for silver and gold jewelry, and clothing, and you will put them on your sons and daughters. So you will plunder the Egyptians.”

Exodus 12:35-36 (CSB)

35 The Israelites acted on Moses’s word and asked the Egyptians for silver and gold items and for clothing. 36 And the Lord gave the people such favor with the Egyptians that they gave them what they requested. In this way they plundered the Egyptians.

And what about the skill needed to construct all the items God commanded?

Exodus 36:2 (CSB)

2 So Moses summoned Bezalel, Oholiab, and every skilled person **in whose heart the Lord had placed wisdom, all whose hearts moved them**, to come to the work and do it.

God only asked of Israel what He had given them in the first place. And so it is with us today.

WE ARE ALSO COMMANDED TO GIVE.

There are many similarities to God’s command to the Israelites for this offering, and what He asks from His people today.

He still asks us to **give willingly** of our possessions.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (CSB)

6 The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.

And He still only asks us to **give what He has given us** in the first place:

1 Peter 4:10 (CSB)

10 Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

He asks us to give not only of our possessions, but of our time and **of our gifts and skills**.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (CSB)

4 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. 7 A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good:

Because it turns out, *everything* we have, is only what He has given us in the first place. And He **asks us to give it all, willingly**. To serve others, and to worship Him.

Romans 12:1 (CSB)

1 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.

Where can we find the motivation? The strength? The willingness to give like this?

By keeping our eyes on the one who is asking us to give. And remembering that He never asks from us something He hasn't already given us, and something He Himself is unwilling to give. We **give because He gave**.

Philippians 2:5-11 (CSB)

5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. 7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross. 9 For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Pray with me.