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*3 And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. 4 And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; 5 And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. 6 And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. 7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much. (Ex 36:3-7)*

There are two shocking revelations in today's chapter on Exodus, and both appear in the leading verses that head this devotion! You will not hear this text used very often in sermons, but that is unfortunate and neither sheds light upon the parishioners, nor upon the clergy.

The setting is the beginning of the building of the Tabernacle according to the intricate plans the Lord has laid out to Moses. An appeal is made for both free will offerings and craftsmen to assist in the undertaking. *1 Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded. 2 And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: (Ex 36:1-2)*

First of all, note that the men who were called to assist were wise-hearted men in whom the Lord had put wisdom and understanding. The men did not acquire wisdom and knowledge on their own merits, but these came from God. If this fact were true today of the ministers who serve the churches, we might have far fewer charlatans and far more humble servants of the Lord occupying our pulpits.

Secondly, please note that the offerings were not mandated, but solicited from those who felt compelled, of their own free will, to offer. The amazing fact is that the people gave far more treasure than was needed. That is a wonderful testimony of the changed hearts of the people in serving the Lord whom they had offended. *5 And they (Bezaleel and Aholiab) spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make.* What forthright honesty of these two chosen men of God, and of Moses!

Thirdly, and I hope you are sitting down as I relate this, Moses felt compelled to make a proclamation that the people bring **NO MORE TREASURE** for the building of the Tabernacle! *6 And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. 7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.* You might not expect to hear such sordid characters as ‘Smiling Joel’ making such an announcement at his money-grubbing services. Can you imagine that pearly white smile and the words “Well, friends, you are just sending too much money to support this ministry and my opulent lifestyle, so I beg you, please send no more money.” Well, miracles do happen, but I suppose that miracle is the LEAST likely! There are few churches that would ever admit to having enough, and especially MORE than enough, to perform the services of the Lord. But men of the caliber of Moses were made of sterner stuff than the great majority of ministers of our time. By the way, there are some such ministers to the glory of God, who are not out for filthy lucre. We have such men in our own church, and many others, scattered across the landscape of America – the operative word is ‘scattered!’ It is far more easy to know that the people may give more than enough than to find a minister who will admit to it.

The Lord does not have need of the village bum in His work. He requires men of wise hearts, and it is these He calls and equips to do His service: *8 And every wise hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle . . . .* (Ex 36:8) It is truly the wise who are always seeking to serve the Lord, and not the lazy and shiftless: . . . . *behold, there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His Star in the East, and have come to worship Him.* (Matt 2:2)

We discover, in verses 8 through 13 of the intricate work and beauty of the interior curtains and design of the Tabernacle. The detail of the work is there for your own reading. And we read in verses 14 through 34 of the beauty of interior walls, as opposed to the plain and drab appearance of the exterior coverings of goat’s hair and badger skins. Is this not a point of great inner beauty? The furniture of the Tabernacle was of gold, silver, bronze, and wool; yet the exterior was totally unimpressive and plain (goat’s hair and badger skins). It reminds me of a military GP-Medium tent. Why is this the case? True beauty is ALWAYS inward first. Our Lord Jesus Christ was no man of particular physical beauty or appeal: *2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* (Isaiah 53:2-3) It is true that the disciples who followed Christ did not do so for His earthly wealth (He had none), or His earthly influence (He had none), or for the beauty of His countenance (He was quite common in appearance); but they followed Him for the beauty of His Heart expressed in the Words and Works He performed!

A great masterpiece of art is not applauded for its bright colors only, nor for its technical merits, nor for the ornamental frame that bears it. It is the manner in which the beauty and truth of God, and Nature, are captured in its expression. The beauty and worth of a Christian is not written on his vestiture or forehead, but deep within the hidden chambers of the heart. That was true of the Tabernacle with its plain goat hair and badger skin covering and the rich golden features of the altar, lamp-stand, and other accoutrements of the Holy of Holies; and it is true of the man or woman of Christian character. Such golden traits of character are always unpretentious, humble, pure, manly and gentle – and truly beautiful inwardly!

*35 And he made a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: with cherubims made he it of cunning work. 36 And he made thereunto four pillars of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold: their hooks were of gold; and he cast for them four sockets of silver. 37 And he made an hanging for the tabernacle door of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of needlework; 38 And the five pillars of it with their hooks: and he overlaid their chapiters and their fillets with gold: but their five sockets were of brass. (Ex 36:35-38)* The cunning work of the vail and cherubims meant that it was artistically designed and masterfully executed. It was a thing of beauty. The VAIL is an object of grave importance in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple at Jerusalem, and still later for the torn vail in the hearts of every Christian. It separated the Holy Place where the priests gathered from the Most Holy (or Holiest of Holy's) where only the High Priest could go once per year. The High Priest, as described earlier, was the intercessor of the people to God when he entered the Most Holy Place behind the Tabernacle (Temple) Vail. So who intercedes for us now that we have no Office of High Priest to intercede for us?

Let us review the fundamentals of Christ as our High Priest. How came Christ to be our High Priest? By His death and sacrifice at Golgotha. We read from St. Matthew of events occurring on that dreadful day on a hill outside the gates of Jerusalem: *50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. (Matt 27:50-51)* This Temple Vail (Veil) separated the people from God, and only the High Priest could have access to the Father. But, symbolically, the Vail was torn, at the moment of our Lord's death, in twain. It was torn from the top (Heaven) to the bottom (earth) because only God can grant access to His Throne of Mercy.

No longer do we need an earthly High Priest to make intercession for us since we have a greater High Priest (and there was only one High Priest at any time) who not only resides behind the torn Vail of the Temple, but abides on the right Hand of the Father to make intercession for His people. *19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. 20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: 21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) 22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. (Heb 7:19-28)*

Jesus is our High priest, the Bishop of our hearts and the Captain of our souls. *25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)* Do not pridefully, and with a stiff upper lip, look down upon those stray sheep of the Lord's pasture, for you and I were those sheep who went astray, and may do so, God forbid, again. But, may the Lord be praised, the same road upon which we departed from the Lord is always open for our return, and upon that road His gaze is always fixed.

