

Aaron Preparing for the Day of Atonement

Holy Supper Preparation

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Bible Text: Leviticus 16:1-6
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Congregation, a preparatory sermon this morning. What is that again? Well, next week we hope to administer the Lord's Supper in the congregation and invite to come to the Table. But there are two things: who is invited, and secondly, how are we supposed to attend? So who? You know we have to be a member of the church in good standing so at the Table there can be unity. So we need to have done confession of faith in the congregation and we need to also walk in the Lord's footsteps outwardly as well, but we also need a divine right and that's very personal, that's between God and us, a divine right. We need life also. We need to be born again, not only being serious but different, being quickened from the dead. We need repentance and true faith because we know it's not enough to just believe the scriptures.

You know, there are people and they believe the Bible completely and they're not saved. Really? Yes, even the devils, even the devils believe the Bible completely, may be more serious than you are. They believe everything. They're not saved. And others believe in that the Lord hears their prayers and that he's a wonder-doing God and he is but that's not saving. It's not saving to believe that he helps you through this life and to depend upon him, there's something more serious than the need of help and comfort. We need to be saved. We need a saving faith and a saving relationship with God and Christ through the Spirit.

So today we hope to also explain that who are God's people, who are invited, but then also how. Flippant? Superficial? Just do it? How serious is it? How can God's children prepare themselves for that? May the Lord give that humility. May the Lord give that faith and that confidence and the unworthiness and all those things. How is also important.

So I had in mind to preach a few times on the great Day of Atonement. I preached about that before just one sermon at a time, covering the whole chapter. This time I'm going slower, more into detail. We'll see how many times we'll preach about it. So this morning only the preparation, only the preparation for the Day of Atonement, only the first six verses of Leviticus 16. But let me only read verse 6. Leviticus 16:6,

6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

"Aaron Preparing for the Day of Atonement." Aaron, the high priest, preparing for the Day of Atonement. Three thoughts. Very simple. Where and who and how? So Aaron preparing for the Day of Atonement. Where, it's all about the tabernacle, we'd like to picture that and show you something of the sanctuary and the veil and the ark and see where, where is it all happening that Day of Atonement, those sacrifices, where? And the secondly, who, who is preparing? It's Aaron the high priest. We think of his clothing and the details given in this chapter on how he is supposed to approach unto the most holy God. Who? And also how? In humility. In sacrificing for himself and for his house. So where, who and how?

Congregation, young people, children, with my mind's eye I see, I see a people in the desert and they are at this time not on the go, they're not walking and approaching unto the new land, the new Canaan. No, they are in tents today and I see thousands of tents in the desert all lined up, very organized. I see children and parents and single ones and elderly. It's quite a people that is on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land but in the middle of that camp, I see an open square. No tents. Oh well, in the middle is a tent, the sanctuary, the tabernacle of God, and there's also a fence around it with posts, with columns, and with curtains, and there's a gate that's open and I see the first piece of the tent, the holy place, and I see in the back, little, small, the most holy place, that's a separate piece of the tabernacle, the tent. And I see in the court before the tent, I see the burnt offering altar and I see also the inside. I see the candlestick, remember? I see the table of showbread and the altar of incense and then a curtain, a beautiful curtain with all those angels spreading out their wings saying, "Don't enter!" In the back that holy of holies with the ark.

You know, let's go outside again and look around at all those tents and in the middle, the sanctuary of God, what does that mean? It means this, the Lord has not only rescued a people out of Egypt, he does not only show them the way that they have to go, he doesn't only protect them against the enemies, but he wants to be with them. He wants to dwell among them. Is that not amazing that the God of Israel didn't only deliver them out of Egypt and show them the way and protects them but he says, "I want to belong to you. I would like to be close to you. I would like to be in the midst of you." A holy God wants to have a relationship with that people.

You know, some people need God for guidance and help and to be rescued and everything because there's no place in their heart. He's not in the center of their life and the Lord wants to be in the center of everything, in the heart of everything. He needs to be in our hearts personally and the Lord wants to be familiar with us. So that's why there is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper shows that the Lord God doesn't only want to save people and guide people and help people but he wants to be with people, he wants to have communion, right? It's the Communion Table, not only the communion of God's people on each other, they are not only friends, they are family. Communion but also communion with God, that closeness, that intimacy, that familiarity with God.

Is that your heart's desire, that God is with you? That you know him and he knows you and he says, "I want to be with you"? I read in Revelation 21:3, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." You know, when the Lord gives children a new heart, and older ones, they receive a desire not only for God's help and guidance but for God himself. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, for himself, to see his face, to hear his voice, to be close to him.

And yet although the Lord wants to be with that people and wants closeness, he's hiding in a tent, and he is in the most holy place and there's a curtain. So the Lord is saying distance. In a way, the Lord does not like a long distance relationship. No, the Lord wants to be close to you, not far away but close, and yet although close, they also need to understand that God is not just a friend, that God is not on the same level, and that things have happened that need to be solved. There is sin as well and that things need to be taken care of because he is a holy God and a sinful people.

You know, it's that same feeling as you have when you think of the address of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." "Our Father" is so tender but then "which art in heaven," such a majesty and don't think lightly of him. He's a Father but. And so the Lord has that tent in Israel but he's a holy God.

You know, in the heart of the tabernacle was the ark. Remember that golden chest? Not too big, a few feet long, covered with gold, and there is a lid on there called the mercy seat, and under that lid are the tables of stone with the law, and the rod of Aaron that budded, and the pot of manna later on. And on that mercy seat are two angels without wings of gold facing each other and hovering over the ark, so to speak. But you know, the most important thing is something we have a hard time seeing. What is that? That above those angels is the kabod, that's the original word, the kabod which means something heavy, something weighty. I think that would be a proper translation, weighty, glorious, in a cloud, the presence of God.

Well, we know that God is present everywhere, we call that omnipresent, but you know, although God is omnipresent, there are also places and situations and circumstances that God is really and deeply, I would say, more densely present, and so is God very present in that most holy place behind the curtain, behind that thick curtain. And what does it say in the first verse of Leviticus 16? "And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died; And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat." So the Lord is saying to Moses and Moses saying to Aaron, "You have no access. The door is closed. God is in the midst of the people and yet, in a sense, the door is closed. And if you go there, Aaron, just at your own convenience, you die." The Lord threatens Aaron and Moses, "Don't open the door. You can't go there just anytime you want." That's that holiness of God.

So God's in the midst but also a very holy place. Nobody could go there. You know, when they break up the tent and set it up again, of course they had to be involved, but normally when the tent was standing there and the people in the tents around it, then they could not open the door because why? Two words from the Bible about why the door was closed most of the time except one day a year for a few minutes on the Day of Atonement. Why? 1 Timothy 6:16 is about God, it says about God, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." That's heaven, right? Exactly, and that most holy place is kind of an example of what heaven is like. Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, "whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

And very clear is also Hebrews 9:7, "But into the second," that is, that most holy place, the second tent, second part, "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost," verse 8, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." So why was that curtain closed? Signifying that the way to the holiest was not made manifest, it was not open yet, the matter had not been solved yet.

So compare this again to the Lord's Supper Table. Closeness to his people, also a holy place, and the Lord also showing something of his majesty. "This is my body broken for you." So when God's children sit at the Table, there is a closeness and there is a distance. We are not God. It's to be humble and yet close. So the Lord is present everywhere, right, but at the Table in a special sense. When God's children eat with their spiritual mouth, our Father said the proper body and blood of Christ. There's a special closeness, a special presence and the Lord gives that by the Holy Spirit.

Let's go to the second thought. As I indicated before, verse 1 begins in a very special way, "And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron." So it is exactly after that is mentioned. Nadab and Abihu were the two oldest sons of Aaron and they were fools. The priests, very important people in Israel. Priests. Anointed to help their father in his service. Not high priest again but very close. The highest priest in the community. And one day they thought, "You know, we have a desire to sacrifice." What's wrong with that? And they said, "Let us do it whenever we like it and the way we want it." And instead of taking the fire from the burnt offering altar, they took their own fire from home and they started sacrificing not exactly the same way as the Lord had taught them. There's a difference.

Some say according to Leviticus 10:9 that they probably were drunk. They were intoxicated, just not knowing what they were doing. And when they're standing in a cloud of incense around them, lightning struck and just killed them instantly, like the Lord killed Hophni and Phineas and Annias and Sapphira. So close to the tabernacle, to the holy place, the Lord struck them, killed them because a few things had to be very clear: their status does not matter. It does not save them and the Lord wants to make it very clear, "It's my way and not your way. I make the decisions and I give the details and you cannot fit it in yourself." And two cousins had to bury them and the Lord said to Aaron,

"Don't rend your clothes. Don't dishevel your hair. Don't cry. Don't mourn. Take my side not your sons' side. Be on my side." Imagine, Aaron looks at his sons, they're laying dead, heartbreaking to him and he was not supposed to cry. The Lord said, "No. Let your wife cry, your children cry maybe but you don't cry. You stand on my side." It has to be clear. So why is that? Well, this also needs to help Aaron to understand things that's beneficial in this situation, that he trembles, that he understands this is a holy God, a holy God you cannot manipulate, a holy God you cannot bribe, a holy God you have to take absolutely seriously.

So that's all in God's providence because all things must work together for good to them that are called. And also Eli had to bow in the same way. The high priest Eli, remember? Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him and Eli said, "It's the Lord. Let him do what seemeth him good." "Seemeth" in brackets. Parents have a tendency to take sides with their children, right? Some of you just do it automatically. Your children are always right and the other ones are always wrong. You are very biased. And sometimes you're like Eli and you don't restrain them because we are sometimes too weak, too close to our children. And the Lord says to Aaron, "Take my side." Parents, it's not the main message this morning but just a piece of it: don't side with your children, side with God.

So this must have touched Aaron deeply, being a priest and going into the holy place, and let me add the Lord's Supper, is not taken lightly. It's not a game. It's not something we have instituted. We have to follow the Lord and we have to be very careful in those things because the Lord is a precise God, very precise God. You have to really read the Bible and really need to know what you're doing, and really need to know if you can attend the Lord's Supper or not. It's a holy thing, right? You can eat and drink damnation to yourself. I don't want to scare you off but I would like to just preach the Bible.

Oh, I see the high priest standing there. He was so beautifully clothed, it's amazing. I think of his long coat and his ephod coat, the shoulder coat in blue, beautiful blue. And two stones on his shoulders, onyx stones with six names of the six tribes and the other six tribes on the other side, carrying on his shoulders the tribes of Israel. And the breastplate with 12 stones in four rows, all different, 12 different stones on his chest. And that mitre on his head and the golden plate in front of it and all the colors. And I see and you also hear it when he walks on the hem of his garment little bells and the little pomegranates, and a bell and a pomegranate. All those colors, blue and purple and white. It's quite something to see but, you know, the Lord said to Moses and to Aaron, "Don't enter with those clothes because you can't do that. You'll die if you do. You have to take a bath and take upon yourself the most simple priest clothes in white. Only white. So no ephod, no stones, no pomegranates, no little bells, no mitre, no special golden girdle. Just come down from that height and just dress yourself most simply as a priest only in the white."

So I see the high priest in different clothing now and he's going to enter later into the most holy place. You know, that's so beautiful. That does not only tell us something about our place but also about Christ's place. Clothing, by the way, is apparently important. With your clothing you speak. With your clothing you tell us something about who you are. And also when there is the Lord's Supper, it's not wrong to think about how

should I be dressed? I think that's proper. How you dress is important. And one of those things is humility, to be down, just simple, absolutely simple. Simplicity is important in the Bible, moderation, simplicity.

So Aaron is going into the most holy place in his most simple clothing but I also see something here of Christ, Christ who is God, and I read in Exodus 28:2 and other places, "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty." For glory and for beauty. Do you see Aaron standing there? For glory and for beauty. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, I see Christ as the high priest, the ultimate high priest, in glory and in beauty. He came down from heaven and he left all those beautiful clothes in heaven, so to speak, and he came down in the most simple priest clothes, and he humbled himself, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." So when I see that high priest standing there in his simple white clothes, I see Jesus. I see that dear Lord Jesus being equal to his brethren in all things, sin excepted. I see him being so willing to save a people from their sins, being so holy and simple himself.

So next Sunday, the Lord willing, the Lord Jesus appears, right? But not as the high priest in his most expensive and glorious and beautiful garments, but the Lord Jesus coming next Sunday in simple clothing in the form of bread and wine. "This is my body broken for you." Very simple. That's the Lord's will and that's the Lord's purpose. So think about that and also question yourself, what do you know of that Christ? Have you been impressed by him? Have you seen him? Has he become precious to your heart? Would you like to meet with him? If he is unfamiliar, if you are unfamiliar with him, you say, "Who is that? I have no idea who it is. I've heard about him." Then don't come to the Table. It is for God's people, for them that love him, for them that believe in him, for them in whose hearts is room for him, for them who want to follow him and touch the hem of his garment, for them who seek salvation in him and nothing in self.

So the high priest is appearing next Sunday the most simply, and that is beautiful when he appears in his word and in his sacraments of bread and wine to have communion with his people and to show them, "Here I am. Here I am. You are my people and I am your God." Is that your desire? Has the Lord drawn you to that? Have you seen yourself as the complete opposite of him? Your clothes not white at all but dirty everywhere? Wondering may I even come to the Table? Do you have to have white clothes? Do you have to make yourself white? Do you have to wash yourself? No, that's all in him. Remember, I just can't forget about that expression of John Bunyan, our righteousness is in heaven, our frame sometimes better, sometimes worse does not add or take anything away from that righteousness in heaven. See this high priest. He's righteous. And now to be clothed with his righteousness, not having your own righteousness but his righteousness.

So where and who and now how, our third thought. I read in verse 6 the following, "And Aaron shall offer his bullock," his bullock, "of the sin offering, which is for himself, and

make an atonement for himself, and for his house." So the high priest looks humble and white and clean in his priestly clothes but, you know, he may have felt himself and I am sure his wife knows and his children know that he is not perfect, that he is a sinner. You know, his wife may think, "Aaron into that holy place? I know too many things about him." And his children may say, "Our father? That's kind of difficult, hard to believe it. He has hurt me a couple of times. He has done things I don't like." And you know, Aaron was not a perfect man at all. He had kind of a weak character. He was a helper to Moses but also very defensive sometimes and he was an instrument also in making the golden calf, right, do you remember?

Anyway, the Lord wants to indicate something to Aaron, "Before you do the work, first take care of yourself. Don't only think of administering to the people, think for yourself. Who are you? Who are you yourself? Be mindful of that." So that's why Aaron had to sacrifice for himself first. He was to consider himself. I see, I read in Hebrews 5, "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

You know, the Lord said, "Aaron, before you go in there, you sacrifice a bullock, a young bull, for yourself as a sin offering." Something interesting here is that Christ did not have to sacrifice for himself. Aaron had to. Aaron was a sinner himself. "Who do you think you are to enter into that holy place? First sacrifice for yourself, for yourself, Aaron, and for your house." Probably not indicating his wife and children but his tribe, all the other priests. All those priests, all those office-bearers are sinners themselves and they need to realize that and need to take care of themselves first.

"And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself." So a sin offering it says, right? What is a sin offering? A sin offering is a very specific sacrifice. There are burnt offerings and meat offerings and thank offerings and transgression offerings. This is a sin offering and the sin offering, the word "sin" is in there also in Hebrew. A sin offering because there are sins he has committed and sin in this word means, that word "sin" we have talked about before, "to miss the target; to be beside it; to fail." So the Lord is indicating to Aaron, "You have failed so often. I made you for my glory, I made you for a purpose and you have strayed from that, and you have meant yourself, you have a selfish streak, you have a worldly heart, you are proud, you're sometimes cold, you're sometimes not loving at all." And all those weaknesses of Aaron, the Lord knew those weaknesses and the Lord knows the weaknesses of the pastors and the elders and the deacons and of all God's children.

The Lord knows those weaknesses and therefore you cannot say, "My dad should not be there because he is not perfect. My mother cannot be there because I know a few things of her." Except that it's an offense in the congregation, a public sin needs to be taken care of, that's something else, but we all have those weaknesses and sins and it's very personal. But the Lord Jesus himself, he did not have to state, "Who shall stand?" He had no sin and he could really freely enter the most holy place without making a sacrifice for himself. He was innocent. He was perfect. He was the righteous, the sin offering. With a

sin offering, the priest killed the animal close to the altar and the blood gushed out indicating, "I take his life." We kill him because Aaron had to be killed himself and instead of him being killed like his sons, this sacrifice is killed. That's a substitute, instead of.

And as you know, so the Lord Jesus Christ died. He had no sin but he was made to be sin for us that he may make us the righteousness of God in him. And the same thing, the Lord Jesus is the sin offering himself. He did not have to bring a sin offering for himself, he was a sin offering himself for his people. And when that sin offering was brought to the altar, the best parts were sacrificed and burned to the Lord as a well-pleasing fragrance to the Lord. And a part of the animal was eaten, the meat was eaten. So part of the animal was sacrificed, the blood put on the horns of the altar, and part of the meat was eaten by the people sacrificing, in this case Aaron. Do you see him? Do you see him taking a piece of the meat off that animal and putting it in his mouth and chewing it? That's so close to the Lord's Supper.

Well, he gave his blood for the sins of his people, the righteous for the unrighteous. "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself." An atonement to take those sins away. Are you burdened with your sins? Do you need someone to take those sins away and to make atonement for you? The Lord Jesus Christ, he has made that atonement and I may preach him unto you, to seek your salvation only in him and to look upon him, to believe in him. He is that sacrifice on the cross, that sin offering.

Well, therefore what we need is what we read in verse 29. I am ahead of myself, I realize that. I read in verse 29, "And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you." You shall afflict your soul it says a few times. That is repenting. To give yourself a hard time. To afflict your soul. May that be today that we go through a preparation to give yourself a hard time, to afflict your souls, to humble yourself before God, and to seek for yourself that sacrifice, that sin offering for the first time or again, to be clean through his blood because his blood cleanses from all sin.

So do you realize close to the people and still a distance, and so in God's people's hearts a longing, a longing here as well, and also a looking up against it at the same time. May the Lord take all the obstacles away and give that freedom next week to them that have a church right and also a divine right. Amen.

Lord Almighty, bring it to our hearts. Give that that high priest may be known and be loved and treasured. Lord, maybe we couldn't come close this morning, maybe there was still that feeling of distance and, in a way, no wonder but the Lord give also that closeness this week again in the hearts of thy people, to rely on his righteousness, on his sacrifice, on his obedience as we have nothing ourselves and we can stand before God. Lord, make it yet well. Be with us the rest of this day. Keep us safe and sound to bring us back to thy house tonight. In Jesus' name alone. Amen.