

The Bread of Presence October 2, 2022

2nd Chronicles 4:19-22

19 So Solomon made all the things that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, 20 the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed; 21 the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of purest gold; 22 the snuffers, basins, ladles, and firepans, of pure gold. As for the entrance to the temple: the inner doors to the most holy place and the doors of the nave of the temple were of gold.

Today is World Communion Sunday where we partake in the Holy Communion with the rest of the world. Today I'd like for us to dig a little deeper in our understanding of the significance of this special activity by looking into the Old Testament. Chronicles is a historical book that covers the period of time between David and the Babylonian captivity. One particular challenge facing Jesus was a matter of how to deliver his superior knowledge and understanding to humans with their limited ability to comprehend his lessons. Today we will make an effort to understand the actions and teachings of Jesus on a higher level of understanding.

I think probably the best example to use in an effort to understand things within the realm of our contemporary knowledge lies in our existing educational setting. A pre-school child has the most basic level of understanding. Our knowledge develops in elementary school children, followed by middle school, and high school. Our ability to understand things develops further as we advance in college from associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees. The more we learn, the better we are able to understand the various things in the world around us. Any one of us will never know everything there is to know and we will never know everything there is to know about Jesus. Any effort to do so takes a lifetime of learning.

Now let's consider the Holy Communion and its importance within the realm of the members of contemporary society. There are various levels of understanding its significance. The first level would be a simple and basic understanding. It is just something that people do, and it doesn't matter that much. The next level would be a more developed understanding of its significance. It makes sense to do this, Jesus said to do it and so we should do it out of duty. A more developed level of understanding is one of devotion. I appreciate what Jesus did for me and I also appreciate what he was doing out of love for me. He set this up for us to remember him by and to remember what he did on the cross. I want this Holy Communion, I want it every week, and if I don't partake it feels like something is missing in my life. The highest level of understanding would be a matter of knowing what Jesus knew. It is impossible for us to know everything that Jesus knows.

One thing that we do know is that Jesus knew the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus knew that Israel was the chosen people, not for privilege but for mission to be a light that draws people to God, and live by the word of God. From the time of Moses to king David, the people worshiped God in a tabernacle in order to be close to God, humble themselves before God, pray, and repent. Since the nation settled in the Promised Land and were no longer wondering, David wanted something better and much more special. He wanted one settled place where they could encounter God, present their requests,

make their offerings, and find atonement for sins. David wanted to build a grand temple to replace the Mosaic tabernacle. The work of building the temple came to David from a divine revelation. But David did not get to build the temple because there was too much bloodshed. So, his son Solomon received the glory of building a temple for God.

Solomon built a magnificent and glorious temple and dedicated to God a grand scale of things such a gold amenities and a gold altar. In the inner sanctuary, where it is the closest to God, was the Ark of the Covenant that held the tablets of the law and two very specific items; a gold altar and a gold table for the bread of the Presence (1st Kings 7:48). The human activity was based on the purpose of God. The temple, sanctuary, worship practices, and all the items were all from divine revelation.

In order to understand the significance of what Jesus is offering, it helps to understand the bread of Presence. The Scripture for today shows us the theological significance of the actions of Jesus. This was not just something that Jesus did. It was more than a way for us to remember him and the cross. God told Moses the Tabernacle is to include the Ark of the Covenant and the bread of the Presence (Exodus 25:30). The bread has theological significance as human activity is based on the purposes of God. What was divinely revealed to David was a continuation of practices that were divinely revealed to Moses.

Jesus understands the significance of communion and the value of his offering. He is offering himself as the people's offering. The whole of Jesus is offered for the whole of humanity. It is a sacred act. The bread is a vital element of worship ordained by God, revealed to Moses and always practiced in the tabernacle, revealed to David and always practiced in the temple. This is a really big thing and it is very special as it is revealed to us by Jesus and practiced in the church.