THE BREAD OF PRESENCE
Exodus 25:30

All week I have been thinking about the presence of God and what it truly means to live our lives with a conscious awareness of His presence. The reality of that is pretty amazing and even a bit scary when I think about the Holy creator and sustainer of the entire universe is also God who invites me to draw near to Him and enter into a personal, intimate relationship with Him as His son.

That intimate relationship has been God’s desire from the moment He formed Adam in the garden and has never changed throughout the troubled history of mankind unto this very day. That same God longs for us so deeply and loves us so passionately, that He has gone to extreme measures (the cross) to ensure the image and intimacy lost in the fall would be restored.

In the OT, we are given the first glimpse of God’s desire and plan to bring about the restoration of relationship in the tabernacle. God invites the participation of his people to build this tabernacle and then tells them why.

Exodus 25:1–8 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. 3 And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; 4 blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats’ hair; 5 ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; 6 oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; 7 onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. 8 And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

He gives Moses detailed instruction for the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat and makes another declaration as to the divine purpose and reason for such elaborate furnishings.

Exodus 25:22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat...

This was not about religious artifacts, or the pomp and ceremony of sacred ritual, it was about making a way for His children to once again enter into relationship, fellowship and intimacy with Him. It was about His people encountering His presence.

This is such a mind-blowing idea about the God of the Bible that we have to pause for a moment. The eternal God who is not constrained by the existence of time, the infinite God who is not bound by the constraints of space, the transcendent God who dwells above and beyond all time and space, and the immense God who fills all time and space condescended to the weakness of His people and became manifest for their benefit in one locale. This God is not bound by time, but He bound Himself to the time-bound experience of His people. This God is not bound by space, but He bound Himself to this box. He is above all creational constraint, but He bound
Himself to them. He is everywhere, but He was there. It was about His people encountering His presence.

There are so many types and shadows, so many great revelations to be discovered and studied in the tabernacle and its furnishings but I want to focus today one that caught my attention this week; the table of showbread.

**Exodus 25:23–30** “You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around. You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that are at its four legs. The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold.

Isn’t it incredible the amount of detail God gave Moses about this table? But my interest is not so much the table itself but the purpose it served in the Holy place.

**Exodus 23:30** And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.

The Lord’s instructions … included a provision that twelve loaves of bread be kept always on a table set before the Holy of Holies. The bread was called “showbread (shewbread)” or a better rendering is “bread of Presence”. It comes from the Hebrew expression (‘lechem paneh’) which literally means the “bread of the face.”

This is so interesting that it is called the bread of the face. Whenever the Bible mentions the presence of the Lord it uses the same Hebrew word used here, (paneh) which means face. Adam and Eve hid from the presence (face) of God; To “see God’s face” is to have access to Him and enjoy His favor.

**Psalm 17:15** As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

**Psalm 27:8** When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”

Our God doesn’t desire a long distance, impersonal relationship, He longs for intimacy with us face to face.

**2 Corinthians 4:6** For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In Leviticus we find detailed instructions as to this bread and its ingredients.

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Leviticus 24:5-9 “And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. 6 You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. 7 And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. 8 Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. 9 And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute.”

Ancient symbolism, both Jewish and Christian, regarded ‘the bread of the Presence’ as an emblem of the Messiah. The cakes were made of “fine flour” sifted seven times to ensure there was no grit or any impurity that would defile it. This a type of the purity and moral perfection of the Word, Christ Himself as He walked among men.

Each cake contained two “tenth deals” or omers of flour (about four quarts). This is indeed precious. A double portion is the thought suggested, foretelling the truth that Christ is the showbread or delight of both God and His people.

The bowl of incense was to be placed upon each stack of bread speaks of the offering of prayer and worship. Arthur Pink said, “Pure frankincense was placed upon them, and speaks to us of the active grace of Christ, and assuring us that those who are in Christ are ever before God according to the value and fragrance of His blessed Son.”

The incense was burned to indicate God’s acceptance and ratification of Israel’s dependence upon Him, as praise to God while living upon His Presence. It represented the Divine acceptance of the gift and symbolized the prayer with which the priests were to draw near in this communion. This was not the sacred incense of the sanctuary, but the frankincense of the people’s offering. As the loaves represented the twelve tribes, so this frankincense represented the people’s prayers.

Every Sabbath these cakes were renewed, so that they were “before the Lord continually” never was the Table un-supplied. Once removed the showbread was eaten by the priests in the Holy Place. This expressed on the one hand the consecration to God of all that belongs to man by placing bread, the staff of human life, continually before His presence; and on the other, the condescension of God to communion with man in making these loaves the food of His priests.

The table and the bread are a picture of God’s willingness to fellowship, dwell with and commune (literally speaking, sharing something in common) with man. It was like an invitation to share a meal, an extension of friendship. Eating together often is an act of fellowship. God was willing for man to enter into His presence to fellowship with Him, and this invitation was always open.

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Sharing a meal with someone in the ancient Eastern cultures was a sign of fellowship and peace, so the priests’ eating of the bread of the Presence in God’s house signified the Lord was at peace with His people. Yet this was a limited peace under the old covenant because only the priests enjoyed the privilege of dining with the Creator. Under the new covenant, however, Christ has affected an eternal peace between the Father and His people, so whosoever will may dine in His presence.

Jesus demonstrated this when He ate with tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners. But this was more than just a gesture of friendship on earth. Jesus came to call us back into relationship with Him, to restore in us His created image and to make it possible for us to enjoy everlasting fellowship with God.

John 6:32–35 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34 Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” 35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

John 6:53–58 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

God so desires our fellowship that He was willing to come to earth from heaven as our “bread of life” to give eternal life to all those who would partake in it. Jesus said,

Luke 4:4 ... “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ”

Our God is calling us to the table of and inviting us to feast upon His presence in the person of His Son, Jesus. It is as we become more aware of His presence and His nearness in every situation of life that we will truly begin to understand and enjoy what the Psalmist meant when he said,

Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

There is a Latin phrase, that captures the essence of what I wanted to share today and I believe it is the grand idea of the Christian life. “Coram Deo” This phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of God.
To live *Coram Deo* is to live one’s entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

Just as the bread of presence was continually before the Lord, so we are to live in His presence, not just visit it on the occasional Sunday when we don’t have something better to do.

Living in the presence of God means whatever we do and wherever we are doing it, we are living under the watch of God. God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape and hide ourselves from the loving, penetrating gaze of the Father. (Adam where are you?)

It recognizes that there is no higher goal than offering honor to God. Our lives are to be offered as living sacrifices in a spirit of adoration and gratitude. To live all of life *coram Deo* is to live a life of integrity. It is a life of wholeness that finds its unity and coherency in the majesty and presence of God.

Jesus willingly left the glory of heaven and gave Himself to the cross. His body was broken, His blood poured out and the way of access back into the presence and fellowship with God was forever opened and secured. And today, just as in the day of Moses’ tabernacle, God still desires to fellowship and feast with His people.

**Revelation 3:20** (NASB) *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*

In closing this morning I want to encourage everyone here to seek after Jesus, to worship Him, love Him and partake of Him, to live your life *coram Deo*.

To live every moment of every day in the presence of God, under the authority of God, and passionately, without reservation to the glory of God.