

K-474 the Mercy Seat of God

by Art Katz

Art Katz explores the profound significance of the Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle, emphasizing God's desire for genuine confrontation and reconciliation among His people.

Duration: 50:46

Scripture: Genesis 2:24, Exodus 25:17, Psalm 85:10, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 2:14, Hebrews 13:8, 1 John 1:5

Topics: "Mercy Seat"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the lack of penmanship exercises in today's society and the instant gratification culture we live in. He expresses his concern about the superficiality of some sermons and the need for a deeper, more holy approach to preaching. The speaker highlights various contradictions and paradoxes in life and emphasizes the importance of coming into a place prepared by the blood of God's Son. He urges the audience to wait upon the Lord in the holiest place and seek the ultimate union of truth and mercy.

Transcript

So, it's been a while that I've been in this neighborhood and I'm seeking the Lord conscientiously of how he would have me to speak on these rare occasions. And this will be something special and untested. It'll be a first.

It'll be my guinea pigs. I'll try it out this morning and if it goes, I think I'll speak the same thing tonight to a black congregation. It's a very special kind of word.

I don't know how it's going to go. If you're even positioned to hear it or to receive it. But if you don't realize anything else, you'll know that a peculiar man has stood before you this morning.

So, I just want to pray a final prayer before opening my mouth in the Lord's name. Precious God, thank you for the great mystery and the glory of the church. For the word of God and the spirit.

For the ultimate purpose of the church, my God, to reveal your glory age without end, world without end, throughout all ages. And we just ask a final grace, my God, and blessedness to be conferred now on the speaking and the hearing, conscious that this is to be fitted in to that whole eternal framework. That this is not just an oddity or a novelty or a speaker passing through, but something timed, something appointed.

So, my God, give us ears to hear it and give me the grace to deliver it. May our eyes look to you, my God, as the one who makes all things possible and that we are the privileged hearers of your word given to facilitate our growth, our maturity. We bless you and praise you, Lord, and give you all praise and glory and acknowledgment for your intention with us this morning.

Have your way now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So, I'd like to direct you to Exodus, the 24th chapter. Or is it the 25th? I'm sorry. Exodus 25.

It's about the tabernacle of God. And I'm not a man given to teaching about that. I'm not those who can tell you the meaning of the cubits and the various appointments and the nomenclature and the articles of furniture.

But there's something in my heart this morning from this place about the tabernacle of God and the holy of holies and the chief and single article of furniture that distinguishes it. Namely, the mercy seat over the ark of God. Are you with me thus far? Okay.

So, what does I remember? And it's important because the earthly tabernacle is a picture of the heavenly and the eternal. This is a very real thing. It almost sounds a little too common and glib to say the headquarters of God.

The headquarters of all reality, the very cross center, the epicenter of where God is and where he meets with man is in the holiest place of all. Three sections in the tabernacle and also in the temple. The outer, the inward, and the holiest place of all.

The first is exposed in the natural light. And there there is much scurrying and activity of priests and sacrifice and shedding of blood, the washing of the water, a labor, all of the necessary prerequisite things and awesome and important in themselves, but not the end of this. For Baptists it may be.

For fundamentalists it may be. The end and the some all and the be all. The fixation on the issue of salvation and the continual reiteration and preaching about it as if there's no other subject.

Not knowing that it's the entry into something much greater. And we who are charismatic have passed into a second court. The incense, the altar of incense, the praise that that signifies.

Another kind of light, a seven-branched candelabra, that's not the natural light but a light that begins to enable us to perceive deeper issues of the body of Christ, the kingdom of God. That kind of revelation that comes with that kind of seeing through the induction through a veil by a baptism in the Holy Spirit. I don't want to belabor that.

That's very rich. I want to go into the third, the final, and the ultimate thing. The holiest place of all, also through a rent veil by the by the renting of his own body and by his blood.

Paul spoke of it this morning. The privilege that is ours to come before the mercy seat of God to find help in time of need. I don't know what I would pray this morning for the body of Christ.

It was on Paul's heart that we don't look upon this as some kind of spiritual equation, some kind of highfalutin ethereal vocabulary, some ethereal thing that does not in fact point to something substantial and real. It needs to be made eminently real. It's God's intention for us to actually come into that place that was reserved in the days of the Aaronic priesthood for only the high priest once a year.

But for us, once and for all, by the blood of Jesus, we can enter into the holiest place of all. I don't remember where I preached this last. It's been a long time since I've sounded this thing.

It may well have been Zimbabwe or some African nation that's right on the razor's edge. Where a brother said to me, that is the most pertinent word of God that's been spoken in my hearing into the body of Christ in Africa. Because who knows what's going to be for them there.

But there's a place to repair. But it's not a place of escape. It's a place of ultimate confrontation with God who will meet with us on the conditions that are congruent to the character of that place.

That's what I want to speak about this morning by the grace that is given in my time of need right now. Because this is a once and for all. We're not going to have this opportunity again.

And I can speak a lot of rich things, significant things, but it's pleased God to put this in my heart. So let's look at the directions given Moses for the construction of this single article of furniture in this ultimate and holiest place of all in which there is no light. There is no candelabra, no natural light, only the light of God himself, only the radiance of God himself, the shekinah of God.

Because there he meets with us. You shall make it says in verse 17, a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hamid work at the two ends of the mercy seat.

I think it says in King James, beaten out of gold, something like that. I like that beaten part. Or hamid is good too.

And make one cherub at the one end and one cherub at the other end. You shall make the cherubim, plural, of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. This is not just chance direction.

This is the exquisite and explicit direction of God charged full in every syllable with such a resonance of meaning that the eternity of eternities will not be able to take it in. Hamid out of one piece, two cherubim out of one piece and out of the mercy seat together, out of gold, hamid and beaten. There are a lot of ways that it might have been constructed, but this is the way that God explicitly would have it to be constructed because it instructs us in enormous ways as I hope to suggest at least in part.

Verse 20, and the cherubim shall have their wings spread upward covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another. The faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. I don't know how you do that.

Facing one another and yet facing down toward the mercy seat in exactly the same time. But however you do it, it's intrinsic to the faith. However you do it, it's necessary for us to know it.

How to face one another and at the same time look down to the place of mercy under which is the ark of God with the tablets of the law and the rod of Aaron and the golden pot of manna. This is dear to my heart. It lies too deep for words.

I can't even articulate it. I can only tell you where this message was born. In Jerusalem, a few years ago, arriving exhausted and spent from Egypt, trying to catch up with my wife on a Ben Israel tour, arriving several days late because of developments in Egypt and missed flights, and coming in like four o'clock in the morning, having gone to the wrong hotel because the agency had changed hotels on me, and finally

getting to bed and having a few words with Inger and letting her go off in the morning with the tour, and then remembering to say, put the sign on the door that the chambermaid does not knock or wake me up.

I'm desperate for rest. But whether she put the sign on or not, there was the knock. The woman came in.

I awakened. And after I grumbled a moment, the spirit of God said, Exodus 25, and began to open this to me. And the cherubim to me at that time somehow were the Arab and the Israeli.

In fact, the two cherubim that face each other can stand for any polarity, any contradiction, any opposing force, any synthesis and antithesis. Am I getting too fancy? Well, I will. There's something about opposition that the world shrinks from, that I, in my inner man, delight in.

I like it when it says Joshua, prior to entering and taking the city of Jericho, there was a man who stood opposite him. And I love the man who stands opposite us. I praise God that we don't have a God who's a backslapper and who affirms us in our own conceit and delusions, but who stands opposite us.

He doesn't mind opposing us because it's for our ultimate and necessary good. I think that you're living with your eyes open. I think you're aware that this is a world that is charged with paradox and contradiction, not the least of which in the South and the most prominent and profound is black and white.

Don't think that that's been resolved. Don't think that civil rights has done it or busing or any such thing. There's an antagonism.

There's a historic weight of things. Again, it lies too deep for words, but there's something that God is waiting for according to the pattern of the tabernacle that he's not yet received. When we cherubim, we angelic people shall face each other.

I love that. Looking at each other in the face means not turning away. It means not avoiding the reality of things or what our painful history might have been to each other.

As for example, Gentile and Jew, the mystery of the body of Christ, male and female in all of the antagonism and difficulty in which Satan is having a field day today, or the generations, the fathers and the sons for which God is waiting lest a curse come upon the earth. Wherever you look, even in the body of Christ, prophets and apostles or prophets and teachers, though they are distinct callings in God necessary, and yet there's a resonance of antagonism in the different kind of personality and temperaments that each calling requires. I've observed this over the years.

We prophetic personalities are quite free-swinging and we're not that punctilious about the little jots and tittles. Last night I had a little point of remembrance as Paul showed me a question mark in a certain verse that changed the whole meaning of which I was taking great liberty and making tremendous points with the saints. The point was valid, but the scripture that I was using was a little bit flamboyantly employed, something a teacher would never allow.

So there's a tension. If someone says there's no difference between Gentiles and Jews, forget it. Ask my wife.

22 years with me, and I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews, not in the sense that I've had an orthodox upbringing, but I'm Jewish in such a way, I don't, it's beyond culture. What should I say to my wife? The antithesis, Gentile of the Gentiles. And I'm the man of the tent and the altar, and she needs walls for her

ceramics and her bric-a-brac and all that kind of jazz that needs dusting and retention and dotes on photographs.

I mean, we're worlds apart and yet required to be in a certain tension of relationship. So one of the questions I want to put to you this morning is, do you have a stomach for tension? And maybe if I were to make an on-the-spot and off-the-cuff definition of what a saint is, one who, because of his love for the God who has saved him, is willing to live in the tension of the faith, willing to suffer the tension of contradiction and paradox and not glib and facile, reconciled things, who has a heart for truth and will not stop halfway, but sees something through despite the terrible shaking and confrontation and all the other kinds of things for which the flesh recoils. Because this is what the pattern of the whole holy of holy suggests of these cherubim facing each other, but not enough to stop there.

They need to look down also to see the arc of God in which are contained the tablets of the law. See, my God doesn't gloss over things. His answer to race relationships is not a pat on the back and the financing of a program or some such thing.

My God is the God of history, and it says in Ecclesiastes that that which is past is now. That which shall be is now, and God requires that which is past. You're not going to swallow it down and become some indigestible lump and then finally it fades away.

He wants the facts. He wants the truth. He wants the reality of the situation up front, but not to see it nakedly, but to see it through the mercy seat, to see it where the blood is sprinkled on this thing beaten out of gold, to see each other face to face, not dodging or evading the issues of life and reality, but at the same time to look down to the place of truth, the righteousness of God, the authority of God, the provision of God symbolized in all those things, but to see it through the place of mercy.

There I will meet with you, he says. Verse 22, and there I will meet with you from above the mercy seat and from between the two cherubim, which are upon the ark of the testimony, and I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel. I'll tell you naively this morning, I believe that that was not just a prescription for the priests of Aaronic times.

It's God's everlasting prescription. There I will meet with you in such a way, there and only there will I meet with you above and between. I'm not going to meet with you in the place of convenience.

I'm not going to meet with you in the place of cop out or evasion or turning away. I'm not going to meet with you in a place that will comfort you falsely. I'll meet with you there, above the ark of God, above the righteousness of God and the tablets of the law, and between the cherubim, above and between, in that tension, that palpitating tension.

Is that getting too fancy? If you think that I'm speaking these things this morning to say, look ma, no hands, and look at Paul's friend, isn't he a well-spoken articulate, and what a fanciful thing. We don't hear that from many. You are mistaken.

I'm not a fanciful guy. I'm not given to ethereal things because they're esoteric and distant and strange and different. I'm nuts and bolts.

I'm Mr. Practicality. My heart is aching for deep resolution and reconciliation and righteousness and peace and joy in the earth to be demonstrated first by the people of God in something that's not to be obtained in the world around conference tables or political compromise or that kind of thing. This is the intercites, the

crosshairs of reality.

This is where the action is. But how many of us have been there? It's a priestly place and a place for waiting in the presence of God above and between. About a week ago before I left for this trip, ruminating and aching even for the condition of my kids who reflect, in my opinion, too much the spirit of this world.

And my God, it takes virtually a miracle to avoid that spirit. The Lord kind of stirred me and I wrote a few notes. I want to show you that there's an antithesis that the world and its spirit and its wisdom is absolutely contrary to that of God.

Far from the patience and the waiting above and between where I will meet with you and I will give you, the world has another mentality that is much more quick, much more facile, doesn't require coming into a place that has been prepared by the blood of God's Son. In fact, far from confrontation and face-to-face, the world's temper is exactly opposite. It's cop-out, it's flee, it's escapism.

That's what drugs are, alcoholism, and every other kind of evasion. This is a cop-out, escapist generation. Paul and I were talking a little bit last night about the political involvement of the church and how we need discreetly to catch the mind of the Lord about that involvement and not to surrender the whole field to the liberal church whose gospel is social gospel, but there is a profound place of involvement in the world for believers of our kind, not to take up every issue that comes by, but to be led by God and to profoundly to be a presence and to speak a Solomon-like wisdom in that place.

Well, our community was called into an involvement over the drug problem, and there were nationwide discussions in every community, a series of TV programs, I don't know if you remember that, a few years back, we went to ours, and the first thing that rankled me was the euphemistic language. Instead of calling it drug addiction, it was chemical dependency, which is already a lie, which is already an obscuring of the issue, a softening, an unwilling to confront it face-to-face as it really is. I love what I read in a commentary recently, that the first prophetic task is to see something as it really is at its worst.

We are a church called to be a prophetic presence, not to flinch or to turn away from the things that are real as they are. You know what I said to those cop-outs? I said, if you're unwilling to recognize the demonic, invisible spirit realm that undergirds all reality, without which there is no real understanding of the phenomenon of drug addiction, then you yourself are guilty of the same escapism that describes those who take drugs. The whole world is escapist.

We're in a flight from reality. This is evasion, unreality, make-believe, soap operas, TV things that inundate our senses with a whole make-believe cop-out thing. There's only one agency in the earth intended for that which is real.

It's the church. We need to guard that, and we need to love that. We need to see things as they are, even at their worst.

If there's going to be true resolution and the breaking forth of the glory of God in the world, there's so many things I could say. One of our dangers is even to disguise our own condition to ourselves. And one of the ways that can be done is ironically through our own singing, through our own choruses, through our own praise and worship, which has itself a kind of capacity to lift us and to give us a sense of things that might not be the accurate description of where we really are.

I'll tell you how foolish a community I come from, that we have covenanted with God never to allow our choruses and our praise to exceed the quality of our life, not to let our virtuosity and our ability to make heavenly music disguised of the fact of what we really are at any moment in time. And if you moved into any of our meetings, you would have put your fingers in your ears. Such cracked voices, so off key, so missing the tempo and the beat.

But that's where we were in life also. So we wanted the two to rise together, that the praise, when it would become praise and worship, that finally breaks through into the heavenlies. And by the way, it's one of the few things that actually affrights and makes to move the powers of the air.

So don't speak that any other time in these days. Make a mental note to put on your agenda the study of the principalities and the powers of the air. It's a top priority requirement for the body of Christ, if I don't speak of it myself.

Again, the only agency on earth that can budge these powers that are presently exerting malevolent influence on communities, cities, nations, is the Church. The authentic Church, by the quality of its true praise and its true worship to God, its very presence in truth. The Church is the ground and pillar of truth.

That's why we need to contend for the faith given once and for all to the saints. It's something that needs to be contended for, because truth is painful before it's glorious. We don't want to see things as they really are.

We want to swallow things down. We don't want to see the condition of our children, our marriages, our congregations. We're not the critical and analytical body that we ought to be.

And if we're not that to ourselves, being spiritual and judging all things, how are we in a position to speak in to the worldly community about us? So the world's theme is evasion, flight, running away. Tension is something to be avoided, because tension is suffering and pain. We can't, the world cannot stand insufferable contradiction and draining annoyances and excruciating petty opposition and insoluble situations.

We want to make nice. We want to smooth over. We want to find some way to bail out or to get through.

And what I'm sensing in the world because of this tendency in our civilization and society is a growing impatience. We're raising up a generation with a very short fuse that can quickly explode into irritation through frustration, anger, and then violence. Violence is the pervading characteristic of a society that stands at the very threshold of the judgment of God.

And violence is being increasingly celebrated in our civilization and is becoming a commonplace. You can't go anywhere. I've just come from Toronto, Canada, picked up the paper every day to read the rapes, the murders, the mayhem, the wife beatings, the molestation of children, the violence is in the air and it shall become increasingly so.

People are distempered and impatient. They can't see something through. They can't bear the tension of something and it spits out in an act of violence that wants to destroy the vexatious thing that is before them.

Beat the wife to a pulp or whatever it is or the boss or the foreman on the job or to meet the irritation with a violent response that would extinguish it and remove from us the prick of it. Bring us to, as it were, a final

solution. That's what we saw in German civilization with the Jews.

First, we could not afford to have them live amongst us. Then we couldn't afford to have them live as Jews. Then we couldn't afford to have them live amongst us.

Then we couldn't afford to have them live. There's something in us that seeks an ultimate solution that wants to get the irritating thing out of sight and out of way. And that's why we have storage bins and garbage compressors and throw away this.

We don't want to see the evidence of the things that are not resolved that would haunt us or press issues on us that we don't want to consider. Throw it away. Start over again.

Or go out and buy yourself a new dress or a new husband. Have a second marriage or a third family. There's something in our civilization that's pressing increasingly toward that, which is the very antithesis of what God is wanting in his church.

A people who will come in through the veil that has been opened to us and wait upon the Lord in the holiest place of all, above and between, in that palpitating tension between the issues of righteousness and mercy, to find the place ultimately where truth and mercy kiss. Do you love that? In Psalm 85, I'm sorry, I will hear it says in verse eight, what God the Lord will say, for he will speak to his people, to his godly ones, but let them not turn back to folly. Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

See, there's an issue much greater than the resolution of our problems or the removal of our annoyances or our frustrations, that glory may dwell in the land. The ultimate issue of race relations is not peaceable coexistence. It's that glory may dwell in the land.

God birthed this message in Jerusalem, and I thought to go back to sleep after he had quickened these verses, and ding-a-ling-a-ling, the phone rings. Somebody found I was in Jerusalem, and ah, there's a Thursday morning Bible study in Bethlehem with an Arab fellowship, Baptist Arabs. Will you come? And I came, trailing clouds of glory with this word in my heart, and spoken for the first time to Arab Christians, because at that time, and I think essentially still, there's very little relationship between Jewish and Arab Christians in Israel.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. You can understand why. It's easier for Jewish believers to be with Jewish believers.

Easy for Arab believers to be with Arab believers. I mean, essentially in a white congregation this morning, I'll be in a black one tonight. And so it goes.

Take the path of least resistance. Why suffer the awkwardness of our cultural differences? And I'm even willing to say racial differences, and not say that that makes one a racist. Just an acknowledgment that God himself and his genius has created distinction, has made male and female and Jew and Gentile and black and white.

And in the natural, there's something that resists the deepest amalgamation and bonding between that which is opposite you. And only by the grace of a God who meets us, the above and between, can we break through into that transcendent thing that is true reconciliation, that is true oneness in the place of mercy and truth, where they kiss and meet together, that eventuates in praise like nothing you ever heard.

You'll not need an amplifier.

Into joy unspeakable, into worship that is transcended, that pierces through the heavenlies, because we have been met by God and received a grace at the throne of grace, to find a way into a quality of things of which the world knows nothing, and without which it perishes. How would you like a church that can demonstrate this to South Africa? How would you like a South Africa that can demonstrate it to the continent of Africa, and to the world? That God has an answer, and it doesn't come from by evasion, or making nice, or a little patsy answer, or being syrupy or sentimental, which is itself escapist and untrue. It's by seeing the thing at its worst.

It's by recognizing the painful history. But by meeting a God in that place, who will only meet with us there, because he's the God of truth, and he's also the God of mercy. Waiting for something to meet, not just in a flitting way momentarily, but to kiss.

And I don't know about kissing. I know and I don't know. I'm not talking about a peck on the cheek.

I'm not talking about a smooch. I'm talking about that intimacy, that indefinable thing, the sacred thing that a kiss really is in the attention of God, and not the cheapie in the commonplace that it's become in the world. The joining of mouth to mouth, breath to breath.

Taking, as it were, forgive the expression, almost each other's saliva. Taking the other into yourself. Short of actual intimate union, this is intimacy.

We can find and come to that place with mercy and truth kiss. I think it's the agenda of God for the Church of Jesus Christ in the South. Just as I believe the reconciliation between the Arab cherub and the Jewish cherub is the issue of God for the Church in Israel, and the black cherub and the white cherub is the issue of God for the nation of South Africa.

There's something before us that is more than a succession of Sunday services, and we've got to find it in the reality of our life where we are in our own marriages now, and in our own fellowship. Not by brushing over, but by seeing each other face to face, looking down at the same time to the place of mercy. Loving kindness and truth have met together.

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth springs from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. God is waiting for something.

Can you just sense it, burgeoning, palpitating, waiting to break through? There I will meet with you. A God who is not a patsy. He's not a Jesus buddy who's going to do our bidding.

He's not the author of the prosperity message who is giving us principles to evoke that we're going to paint Cadillacs. He's a God of truth and mercy, waiting for us to meet him on the condition which is congruent to his own life and character, of which the holiest of all and the chief article of furniture in that holy place bespeaks God. But we want to change the channel, push the button, turn it off.

We want to move away. We want to change churches, change pastors, change saints, can't stand the monotony, the frequency, the familiarity. We need novelty.

Remember moving into community and my little then 10-year-old son saying, Dad, can we go to the shopping mall in Bemidji, which is like 25 miles away, the closest town of any consequence? I said, what

do you want to get? Nothing. Well, what do you want to go to shopping mall? I just want to see it. I just want to see the, if you had the language to say it, I want to see the diversity of things.

I want to see the variety of colors. I'm tired of the monotony of looking at these same people. We're restless.

We're impatient. We're going, we're transient. It's the whole spirit of the age, but to come into the holiest place of all and to abide there, to wait, to meet God on his terms is completely contrary to the ethos and the spirit of this age.

It's for people who can bear the tension of waiting. I wrote some clever things. We've gone from pewter to plastic, from heirlooms, heirlooms and keepsakes, to trash, the current girlfriend, flitting ephemeral momentary, exciting novel, and then it becomes dull, then it becomes finished.

I'm amazed at the succession of girlfriends my 22-year-old son has had, put on and take off. We don't know what a lasting relationship is. We don't know what it means to keep ourselves for the relationship that is given of God, but we're always seeking and our eyes are open and flirtatious and looking for that novelty, that distraction.

There's a whole other temper which God calls us according to these remarkable scriptures, and it's true in the body of Christ too. Our picking up and our going out, our flitting about is what applies. There's better church down the street with more exciting program or the visiting speaker than to give ourselves with patience to the working out of the relationship with each other in the place where God has called us.

That truth and mercy might kiss. My kids don't know what it is to ever have done penmanship exercises, the monotony in the routine of making loops that you can have a handwriting that is more than hieroglyphic. This is an easy, facile, quick, instant age, and I'm embarrassed by myself sometimes and more often by other men that I hear speaking from the holy desk, as a man like Spurgeon would have described, the pulpit, who put it together on the spot.

Somehow, some magical thing will happen. Quote a few scriptures and hope it works and jazz it up a little bit. Think of an anecdote, a little story, and you got a sermon.

Instant sermon, instant church, instant relationship. God's calling us to a very holy place. So just think of every kind of contradiction and paradox that's to be found in life.

I made a list of them, Hebrew and Greek, Jew and Gentile, male, female, black, white, father, sons. I mentioned these. Logos and rhema, structure and spontaneity, family and community.

What a tearing issue that was for us. To what degree do we give ourselves to our families and to what degree do we give ourselves to the body of Christ? How do we reconcile this tension of demand, both of which is legitimate? I'm not talking about things that is a choosing between good and evil. I'm talking about good and good.

Rhema and Logos is good. Revelation from God is good, but so also is systematic and disciplined exegesis. But there's a tension, there's a friction, there's a contradiction.

Can we bear it? Can we receive it? Submission to men and adoration and devotion to God. How do we balance that? A lot of these are at the heart of the faith itself. Judgment and compassion.

We love to talk about God's forgiveness, but I hear very little about God's judgment. Paul said, knowing the terror of God, I persuade men. Not only do we not know his terror, we don't even know his fear.

That's why we're so glib. That's why there's so much hanky-panky. That's why pastors are falling like flies.

That's why they're taking off with their secretaries and divorce and remarriage and scandal in the body of Christ. No sense of the fear of God. We've not majored on that.

We've extracted and majored on the attributes of God that are easier and more delightful to contemplate. His kindness, his mercy, his goodness, his love. But I want to tell you there's no sliding scale of values or attributes.

That the judgment of God is as intrinsic to God as is his love. In fact, if we would see it aright, his judgment is his love. We need to eat the whole lamb, roast with fire, and not just pick the juicier parts.

We need to see these seeming contradictions and not be terrified by them, but see them through and break through into another place where we get the whole benefit of both the judgment and the mercy. Because after all, what is mercy without judgment anyway? I don't think I'm speaking about a light thing. Because it says in Romans 11, in an unfinished mandated mystery that God is waiting for from you to the Jews, that by your mercy they might obtain mercy.

But if you yourself don't know mercy, if it's just a word in your vocabulary, because you've never known judgment, you've never known what it means to receive the grace that comes to the wretched, how shall you extend it? You've got to break through from mere phraseological Christianity to the awesome meaning of these things where God will meet with us and speak to us in that place only, above and between, in the things that pertain to the sons of Israel. I'm speaking like a fool tonight, this morning. Okay, just obedient, a fool, but an obedient fool.

The lamb and the lion, suffering and glory, vision and details. I'm a wonderful visionary, but I have scant patience for the details. But somehow I've got to swallow that too, got to see that too, got to be reconciled to that as well.

And you who are detailed and systematic, who are bent out of shape by these visionary characters that are off the wall, need somehow, you cherubim need to face each other and look at each other face to face, but look down also to the righteousness of God through the place of mercy. Wherever you look, this is just a beginning of a list. Body and spirit, time and eternity, heaven and earth, the mundane and the ethereal, the secular and the sacred, the historical past, the eschatological future, the discipline and favor.

This is my great tension with my wife. I'm the disciplinarian, the guy who requires my wife is take it easy. They're only kids.

They're only young who wants it. And, you know, look the other way. He really didn't mean it.

If he meant it, I would have killed him. I'll tell you, I think that that's been more a single cause of tension in our marriage than perhaps any other. And you know who made, who built that in? God himself.

The woman, the mercy person, the man, particularly the prophetic man, judgment, righteousness, discipline. How do you reconcile that? And that's the whole thing. How do you reconcile that? How do you reconcile any of these things? If we walk away and we will not see the issues and we will not deal with

them in the place of truth, we'll not even come to the place of mercy.

There's a place for us above and between. Wherever opposites and contradiction meet, thesis and antithesis, when they face one another in the place of unbearable tension and seeming irreconcilability at the excruciating conjunction, there and only there God meets with us intimately from above and between. There I will meet with you.

Boy, those words are haunting me this morning. There I will meet with you. It's not just the reference to some geographical, physical place.

There, in the cross of contradiction, in the tension of seeming irreconcilability, there I will meet with you. And I will give you. Do you believe that? Are you a saint who can bear the tension, who loves it, who recognizes the contradiction, who sees it as everything, who will not swallow it down, not look the other way, not drown it out, not be escapist, not flee, see it through, not stop short, not freak out, not hit the panic button, not seek another church, another marriage, another relationship, another flitting thing, as if it's a magical thing and you'll hit the right combination and formula next time.

You love that chorus, Within the Veil, did you guys sing that? Within the veil I now do come, you sing that? Into the holy place to look upon his face. I see such beauty there, no other place, none other can compare. I come to thee, O Lord, within the veil.

You know what my prayer was this morning? I've been up almost half the night. Somewhere between that and this coming, my prayer was, don't allow me to speak this, except from out of that place. Don't let me come before your people and speak to them, except that I have come from out of that place.

How can I speak a word like this, about this, except from that place? What would it be like if we came into our public school discussions and the issues that are carrying our local communities and society from that place? Not as men who are just technically right and got the scriptures to prove it, but come from a heavenly place where there's not only truth, but mercy also, and not just instruction, but the very enablement and the grace to convey it to those who have been up to that moment, unhearing and unseen. The church is that people who can come to the world from that place, within the veil. I see such beauty there.

You know what they've seen instead? Stiff, plastic, the Lord give me words, correct, doctrinally sound Christians who tell them that this, this, and this, and according to the word of God, this, this, and this. And maybe we're right. I mean, I know we're right, but there's something more than right.

It's something transcendent. It's something glorious that God wants in the earth of men who will come in, bring into the world the trailing clouds of glory from the holiest place of all, for God has met with them there and given them words, given them instruction. And they bring it in the radiance and the anointing of the God whom they've met there and only there, waiting for him there.

I didn't even want to get up off my face this morning. I didn't even want to begin to examine the scriptures and begin to write notes until I had a sense that I had waited, that I had met, that God had met me there, that I'd received his word from him there and the enablement to speak it. That's more than Sunday Christianity.

It's going to require more from us, but the issue is more than our convenience. The issue is his glory. It'll reveal something.

There will I meet with you and give. It's not the place of escape. It's the place of reality itself.

If I love God for anything, I love him for everything, but I love him because he is the quintessence of that which is real. He is utter authenticity. He's a real God.

He's true through and through. He doesn't hedge or dodge. I mean, he says things that are so horrendous, your hair goes straight up.

He gives revelation of the nakedness of the greatest of them who fornicate, commit adultery, murder the persecutors. He makes them the chief apostles. He doesn't sugar candy it.

He sets it out there as it is. And this is why the world is dying for the want of this quotient, this kind of reality where we're made for it, where our nerves go and our organs and our stomachs and ulcers and cancers and all those kinds of things because we're not living in the truth, because we sought escape, because we can't stand attention, because there's a pill to take or something to drink or something to turn on that will distract us or dull us. Come on, guys, flush it down the toilet.

Pull out the plug. Face the issues of your life individually and corporately in truth in that place for me to do that. You'll see such beauty there none other can compare within the veil.

So that's the gist of it. Does it make sense? I want to pray. So precious God, I love you for being that kind of a God.

I love you, Lord, that Exodus 25 is not some kind of antiquarian chapter given for those who have a peculiar fascination with the details of the sanctuary, however rich that might be in itself. It's an everlasting revelation. It speaks unceasingly, my God, and you bid us come into that place of which the earthly was only a template, a foreshadowing of the one that is heavenly and eternal and open and available.

Bid this people enter within that veil, Lord, I pray. May we declare war from this morning on, on every subterfuge, every diversion, every escapism which the world wants us to be taken. Give us the grace, my God, to bear the tension before it becomes a glory.

Help us to recognize that these opposites and contradictions are not accidents but your very design and intention for the promotion of our growth, our maturity, and for the revealing more of your glory. Bless this people, my God, I pray. May they be utterly real, full of truth, looking face to face and down also for the righteousness of God and the law of God through the place of mercy.

May they beat it out, may they hammer it out. I rejoice that you said that. This isn't some easy thing poured out.

It's hammered out of one piece. May you have a church, my God, symbolized in all this, in this locality. Thank you and praise you.

In Jesus' holy name. God's people say amen.

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