

Preaching from the Book of Exodus

Exodus in Outline

From a preaching perspective it might be helpful to divide the book into two parts:

Exodus 1:1-19:1—From Egypt to Sinai

Exodus 19:2-40:38—Encamped at Sinai

Narrative action dominates the first section of the book with such memorable scenes as Moses and the burning bush, the plagues and the crossing of the Sea moving the action forward at break-neck speed. Israel begins in Egypt but will wind up at the foot of the mountain of God at the beginning of chapter 19. In between Egypt and the Mountain lies the wilderness. Israel will encounter the desert and the challenges it brings. Can Israel learn to trust God even in the dire conditions of the desert?

The second section of the book takes on a completely different tenor and pace as the people of Israel settle in for a long stay (roughly a year) in the wilderness of Sinai and at the foot of the mountain. Hear both preacher and the congregation will encounter meticulous instructions and laws pertaining to life with a Holy God and with each other. Highlighting this section are such important pieces of scripture as the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20), instructions for (25-31) and the completion of the Tabernacle and Priestly garments (35-40) and the story of the Golden Calf (32).

As preachers of the word of God we will want to pay attention to the shifts in scenery and the different types of genres in these sections. We will want to help our congregations enter into this story in order to encounter this God who continues to call us into the divine presence so that we might experience life in relationship with the Lord.

Part One: Deliverance from Egypt

Exodus 1—Israel in the House of Slaves

Exodus 2-4—The birth and commissioning of Moses

Exodus 5-11—The Lord and the gods of Egypt

Exodus 12:1-13:16—The Death of the Firstborn and Passover

Exodus 13:17-15:21—The Journey to and across the Sea

Exodus 15:22-19:1—From the Sea to the Mountain

Part Two: Encamped at Sinai

Exodus 19:1-7—On Eagles' Wings

Exodus 19:8-20:21—The Mountain of God

Exodus 20:22-23:33—The Book of the Covenant

Exodus 24—The Covenant Inaugurated (Blood and Banquet)

Exodus 25-31—Sacred Space and Holy Garments

Exodus 32-34—Standing in the Breach

Exodus 35-40—As the Lord Commands

Major Themes that Emerge:

1. *Salvation*—God saves, redeems, delivers, rescues, guides, provides, heals, fights for and forgives Israel throughout the book. All of these words or phrase are different ways of talking about the saving power of God. Even when Israel sins (ch. 32) God remains with them. One of the more memorable ways Israel expresses the saving power of God is in the Songs of Moses and Miriam in chapter 15. The Lord is a warrior and the divine Hand and Arm are powerful enough to defeat the Egyptians and bring Israel into the land of promise, even to the dwelling place of God.
2. *Covenant*—In Exodus 2:24-25, God remembers the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In that covenant, the Lord bound the divine self to this particular people and God must be faithful to the promise. In 19:1-7, the covenant moves to another level as God brings Israel to the mountain and enters into a relationship with them. God has been faithful to Israel, bringing them out of bondage in Egypt. The laws that follow this initial covenant ceremony are the expectations and obligations being placed on Israel to see if they will also prove faithful. By the end of the book, God is dwelling with the people in the Tabernacle.
3. *Worship*—at the heart of the request for Pharaoh to let God's people go is that they be allowed to go into the wilderness to worship their God (4:23). When Moses and Aaron arrive back in Egypt and gather the elders of the Hebrews in order to tell them why God has sent them and that the Lord is concerned about them, they respond by worshipping (4:31). They bow down and worship again after Moses gives instruction for keeping the Passover (12:27). After they cross the Sea and look back and witness the dead bodies of the Egyptian army, they fear the Lord and place their trust not only in God, but in Moses as well (14:31), then they sing a song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (15:1-21). Finally, the detailed instructions regarding the tabernacle and the priestly garments in chapters 25-31 reflect an ongoing concern to worship God properly and obediently.
4. *Holiness*—As Hoses 11:9 puts it, *For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you*. God is distinct from us human beings, but has chosen to dwell among us (see the Tabernacle materials in 25-31). Furthermore, God is not like any other god (see the plague narrative in 5-14). God is separate and distinct from any other being in heaven above or on the

earth below or under the earth. As such, the Lord is a Jealous God who demands obedience and loyalty (Exodus 32, 34:14). God will brook no rival and he does call this particular people, Israel, into an exclusive relationship. In order for God to live with Israel special provisions must be made for the space in which the Lord lives (tabernacle) and only certain people at certain times may approach God (priests (24, 28), calendar issues (23). In Exodus 33-34, Moses desires to see God's glory, another way of talking about holiness in Exodus. God allows Moses to see the divine back, but even Moses cannot look upon the face of God and live. Finally, the book concludes with the glory of the Lord descending on the tabernacle signifying the divine presence dwelling with the people. The glory, or holiness, of God is so strong that even Moses can not enter the sanctuary (40:34-38).

5. *Creation*—T. Fretheim has highlighted this point by pointing out the connections between Exodus and Genesis, in particular the beginning chapters where the Hebrews are “fruitful and multiplying,” in accordance with the divine command in Genesis 1. He also argues that the Pharaoh as an anti-creation agent and represents the forces of chaos. God wills blessings and life; Pharaoh's decrees lead to servitude and death. Even the crossing of the Sea is given a cosmic setting. God controls the wind and the sea and leads the Israelites across the “sea canyon” on dry ground. Wind, sea and dry ground are all important words in Genesis 1 as well. Even the completion of the tabernacle is couched in creation language as Moses “finishes” the work and “blesses” the people (39:42, 40:33), much in the same way as God did at the end of seven days of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:4. The tabernacle itself may even be seen as creation in microcosm, a new creation where God and human beings can live together as in the Garden. As Matthew Schilimm, *This Strange and Sacred Scripture: Wrestling with the OT and Its Oddities*, p. 133, states, “The tabernacle and temple suggested that God is nearby, eternal, precious, majestic, worthy of praise, and clothed in splendor.”
6. *Divine initiative and Human Agency*—Perhaps no other book in the Old Testament stresses the partnership between God and humans more or better than Exodus. God responds to Israel's cry as they experience the oppressive measures of the Pharaoh, but the Lord summons, invites and finally commands Moses to go to Pharaoh and make the official demand. During the oppressive measures of the Pharaoh to slow down the population explosion of Hebrews in chapter 1, it is the Hebrew midwives who “feared the Lord” and refused to carry out his orders to kill the Hebrew baby boys. In chapter 2, it is the mother and sister of Moses who thwart the plans of the most powerful man on earth and save Moses from death by building a “mini-ark” and ensuring that Pharaoh's daughter will find him and raise him, but only after he is weaned by his Hebrew mother. The prophetic chain in Exodus 7:1-2 states that Moses is the mouth of God. God even says, “I will make you like God to Pharaoh.” After the

crossing of the Sea, the people place their trust in the Lord *and* Moses, the servant of the Lord (14:31). When Moses' father-in-law advises him to delegate some of his judicial duties to trustworthy men, he states that his advise is equivalent to God's commands (18:23). There are, of course, limits—Moses can not see the face of God (33:20) and he can not enter the tabernacle when the Lord's glory descend upon it in 40:34-38—but, God is pleased to work with and speak through this human agent.

Homiletically Speaking:

Suggested starting point: Exodus 19:1-7

1. Pivotal point in the story—arrival at Sinai, just experienced deliverance at the Sea, about to receive the Ten Commandments.
2. Covenant initiated—this passage expresses both what God has done for Israel—brought them out of Egypt on eagle's wings-- and what the Lord expects Israel to become—a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.
3. Looking back, pointing forward—since Exodus is such a large book, it might be helpful to have an initial sermon that allows your congregation to get a lay of the land. I find it helpful to preach an overview sermon (forest) before looking at the individual trees, this passage allows you to summarize how they got there quickly and anticipate what is to come while highlighting the importance of the moment.

Be selective: Exodus **1-40**

Unless to want to do a year, long series, which is possible, you will want to select either passages or sections of the book to preach from.

For example, you could do a series on the Ten Commandments, covering one commandment per week. Or, you could do one sermon on the Ten Commandments as a part of a 10-12 week series over the entire book. Here you would discuss their role in the Lord's establishing expectations in the newly initiated relationship between God and Israel. Same principles would hold true for the Plagues, Wilderness Wanderings, etc.

You could divide the book up into two or three major sections and plan a corresponding number of series over a three to five year period. You would most likely need to announce your intentions to your congregation so expectations are clear.

One possible series over the book of Exodus might look like this:

1. Israel's plight and God's response—Exodus 1-2
2. The Call and Commissioning of Moses—Exodus 3-4
3. The Lord and the gods of Egypt (including the Pharaoh)—Exodus 5-11

4. The 10th Plague and the Passover—Exodus 12-13
5. Passage through the Sea—Exodus 14-15
6. The Wilderness Period—Exodus 15-18
7. *God Proposes to Israel—Exodus 19:1-7
8. The Mountain of God—Exodus 19:8-25
9. The Ten Commandments—Exodus 20
10. The Book of the Covenant—Exodus 21-23
11. The Blood of the Covenant—Exodus 24
12. Holy God, Holy People, Holy Space—Exodus 25-31
13. Divine Disclosure and the Prophetic Vocation—Exodus 32-34
14. Building and Erecting the Tabernacle (Putting It All Together)—
Exodus 35:1-40:33
15. When God Dwell Among Us—Exodus 40:34-38; John 1

Pay attention to Genre:

Narrative—stories dominate the first section of the book of Exodus and occur sporadically in the second half (24, 32-34 and 40). As Thomas Long reminds us in his book, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, pp. 66-86, “Stories are so abundant in Scripture precisely because the biblical writers were both artists *and* theologians.” Narratives allow us to delve into the theological principles surrounding the nature of God and the free will of human beings. Exodus invites us to probe the meaning the hard heart of Pharaoh and tie it into Paul’s discussion of Pharaoh’s heart in Romans 9:17-21. Both Long and Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, pp. 188-226, advise us to consider following features when developing our sermons:

1. Characters and characterization—the characters themselves and their development are very important. Is there a physical description of the character? What do they say? What do they do (or don’t do)? Are they evaluated in any way? Does their character change in any way as the story develops? E.g., Moses in Exodus 3-4 vs. Moses in chapters 32-34.
2. Plot—the book of Exodus has a plot, which implies movement. The story begins in Egypt and ends in front of Mount Sinai. How did they get there? What happened along the way? Were there any conflicts or tensions that had to be resolved? How were they resolved? What are the scenes or episodes that move the story along and what is the plot within them? Plots have beginnings, middles and endings. Can you identify them in the story you have

selected for a particular Sunday? Can the plot line of the story inform the shape of your sermon?

3. Repetition—when words or phrases are repeated that usually means they are important. For example, note how the Hebrew word *'avad*, “to work, serve or worship,” is used in Exodus 1-7:

1:12so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites¹³ and worked them ruthlessly (*'avad*).¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

4²² Then say to Pharaoh, “Let my son go, so he may worship (*'avad*) me.”

7¹⁶ Then say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship (*'avad*) me in the wilderness.

What we quickly learn from these first few chapters is that Israel is freed from its service to the Pharaoh in order to serve (worship) the Lord. The question for us is the same, who or what will we serve? I believe Jesus had something to say about masters as well.

4. Theology—narrative provide an excellent opportunity to explore the character and nature of God as well as the divine-human relationship. The book of Exodus provides one of the classic passages that helps us understand the very essence of God’s character:

34:⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

However, in the very same chapter we learn another quality of God, “¹⁴ Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” Same chapter, be we encounter a different depiction of God. This complexity reminds us of the need for humility when trying to depict God and the need for lots of prayer as we attempt to preach these words and stories about God and the divine dealings with human beings.

Law—the legal codes, commands and instructions appear more prominently in the latter half of the book with the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant serving as the clearest examples (20-23). With regard to instruction or laws (such as Passover or gathering Manna), the typical chain is the Lord speaks to Moses who, in turn, speaks to the people. These sections are usually imbedded within the narrative framework. Elizabeth Achtemeier. *Preaching from the Old Testament* (pp. 93-108), provides some helpful guidelines for us when approach these legal texts and attempt to preach them to our congregations:

1. Ancient Israel did not see the law as a burden they had to fulfill in order to receive God's acceptance; rather it is a gift of God's grace.
2. The *torah*, or law, of God provides guidance for us in order that we might live in relationship with a holy God.
3. We might remind our members that how we live our lives reflects how we feel about God. Either God is Lord or not. "Our obedience is an integral part of our faith." p. 98
4. Our obedience reflects our gratitude to God for the freedom the Lord has given us.
5. We cannot and should not apply all specific laws to our society. We do not live in an ancient Near Eastern culture.
6. But, Israel's laws do reflect God's will for creation, especially for the New Israel. Examples might start with reflection on Exodus 22:21-27 and care for the poor. The preacher might want to compare this passage with the teachings of Jesus or even the book of James.
7. We certainly want to help our congregations make the connections between the laws or instructions in the OT and Christian worship. Great example here is the Passover feast (Exodus 12-13) and Lord's Supper.

On Eagle's Wings

Exodus 19:1-7

Exegetical Observations:

1. Exodus 19:1 marks the beginning of what many scholars believe to be the largest section of the Pentateuch—Exodus 19-Numbers 10—where Israel is encamped at Sinai.
2. We might look at Exodus 19-Numbers 10 as the “centerpiece” to the Pentateuch as a whole.
3. One of the ways we might read Exodus is to view Exodus 1-18 as the “what God has done” section of the book and Exodus 20-40 as the “what God expects from Israel” half.
4. What has God done?

God has ensured Israel's survival—Exodus 1

The Lord has heard the cry, remembered his covenant with the ancestors, taken notice of their plight and provided a means for their deliverance (namely Moses)—Exodus 2-4

God has demonstrated His superiority over the Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt by means of the signs and wonders that we call “plagues”—Exodus 5-10

Yahweh has set apart Israel as his firstborn and “passed over” Israel's firstborn—Exodus 11-12

The Lord has brought Israel out of Egypt—Exodus 13

God has delivered Israel from both the Egyptian army and the Red Sea—Exodus 14

God has led Israel through the desert and provided for Israel's need of water and food—Exodus 13-18

5. On eagle's wings:

Borne Israel up out of the house of Egypt on eagle's wings—this image occurs in several places in the OT. Most notably:

Deuteronomy 32:10-12

In a desert land he found him,
in a barren and howling waste.
He shielded him and cared for him;
he guarded him as the apple of his eye,
like an eagle that stirs up its nest
and hovers over its young,
that spreads its wings to catch them
and carries them aloft.
The LORD alone led him;
no foreign god was with him.

Psalms 17:7-9

⁷ Show me the wonders of your great love,
you who save by your right hand
those who take refuge in you from their foes.
⁸ Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings
⁹ from the wicked who are out to destroy me,
from my mortal enemies who surround me.

What does God expect?

"if you obey my voice and keep my commandments"—

1. God's expectations flow out of the *relational character of God* and the divine feelings toward Israel.
2. It also highlights the initiating activity of God—"I did" precedes what I want you (Israel) to do and to be.
3. Obedience is also a reflection of love

What is Israel to God?

"a treasured possession"—out of all the nations Israel has a special status (*segullah*)

Because "all the earth is mine"—reason why God can make this claim on one particular nation. Fretheim notes this as a part of the "creation theme."

What will Israel become?

A Kingdom of priests and a holy nation

What does a "kingdom of priests" entail?

1. Priests served as mediators—just as the priest mediated between the people and God, so Israel mediates between God and the nations. One might also think of Abraham's call in Genesis 12 and the Priestly blessing in Number 6. Israel is meant to be a blessing to the world.
2. Holiness implies some sort of distinction or set apartness. One might think of Israel's request for a king in 1 Samuel 8 when they want to be "like the other nations" as a reason they need a king.

Sermon 1 Outline: On Eagle's Wings

- I. A (Long) Pause in the Action—Israel *camped***
- II. Surround Sound—the *called* to him from the mountain**
- III. What God Has Done:**
 - a. List the items mentioned above in a narrative style**
- IV. What God Expects—If you *obey* me and *keep my commandments***
- V. What We Can Become—"you will be"**
- VI. Called into Relationship—exclusive devotion/loyalty/faithfulness**

Sermon #2: Chain Reaction—Exodus 1-2

²³ The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God **heard** their groaning and he **remembered** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So **God looked on** the Israelites and was **concerned** about them.

Exegetical Observations:

1. Lots of "news" in this chapter. A new generation of Israel emerges. Tied to the ending of Genesis and the genealogical list in chapter 46.
2. A new Pharaoh emerges who does not know Joseph. Unfamiliar or unwilling to acknowledge God's saving activity through Jacob's family.
3. This new generation in Exodus 1 ultimately is the generation that rebels and dies in the wilderness (see Numbers 11-25). The generation that is born in the wilderness is the one that enters and possesses the promised land. In Judges 2:6-10, a third generation arises that does not know either the Lord or what he had done for Israel. An opportunity to discuss the difficulties of moving from one generation to the next one.
4. In many ways, the Israelites are fulfilling creation commands of Genesis 1. They are, "exceedingly fruitful," "multiplying greatly," "becoming numerous" and "filling the land." (Genesis 1:28)
5. Consider also the promise made to the ancestors regarding descendants being as dust of the earth or the stars in the heavens (Genesis 13:16;15:5)
6. Israel is a threat and must be dealt with. Oppressors are easily threatened (dread) and must deal ruthlessly with the threat in order to keep the balance of power in their favor. Note the emphasis on words like "ruthless" and "harsh" or "bitter" in 1:11-14.

7. Pithom and Rameses (1:11) are store cities, places where military and other types of supplies might be stored in case of attack. Hyksos invasions from the direction of Canaan might play an important role in the strategy of building these cities. As preachers, we need to be aware that Egypt controlled Canaan at this time as well (Amarna letters).
8. Hebrew midwives—Shiphrah and Puah—depicted as wise, “fear the Lord” and crafty. Resort to deceit and outright disobedience to thwart the plans of the Pharaoh to have baby boys killed. (See also Rahab who uses deceit and cunning to thwart the plans of the king of Jericho.)
9. Pharaoh grows even more desperate as Hebrew threat becomes even more pronounced—1:20-22.
10. This chapter can be divided into three major parts: (1) the birth of Moses; (2) the flight of Moses; and (3) God’s response to Israel’s suffering.
11. The word “see” play a pivotal role in this narrative (vv. 2,5,11,25).
12. The opening verse highlights the Levitical background to Moses as both his father and mother are from that tribe.
13. Vv. 1-10 continue the storyline of women who subvert the power and authority of the Pharaoh (Moses’ mother, sister and Pharaoh’s daughter).
14. Moses’s name means, “to draw out” in Hebrew, but “son of” in Egyptian.
15. Moses’ dual citizenship allows him access to both the word of the Egyptians as well as the Hebrews.
16. Moses’ action of killing the Egyptian places him squarely on the side of the Hebrews. The Hebrews’ speech anticipates the future role Moses will assume among the Israelites as both Judge and Ruler.

17. As often the case in the ancestral narratives, Moses finds a wife at a well. We read of Moses' association with Midian and Midian's priest Reuel (not Jethro). Moses' wife's name is Zipporah and his son, Gershom—son named by Moses to reflect his alien status.
18. V. 23 marks a significant transition in the storyline as the Pharaoh of chapter one is now dead and a new Pharaoh has ascended to the throne.
19. God finally enters the picture directly in vv. 24-25. As in many places in the Old Testament, the biblical writers depict God through the use of verbs:
- a. God *hears* Israel's cries
 - b. God *remembers* His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - c. God *sees* them
 - d. God *took notice* of them
20. Now that Moses is in Midian and God is concerned about the plight of the Hebrews, God's calling and commissioning of Moses is next.

Sermon Outline: Chain Reaction

- I. A Man Meets a Woman—Moses' parents**
- II. A Mini-Ark—birth of Moses leads to the hiding of Moses**
- III. Look What We Found—Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses**
- IV. Dual Citizenship—Moses in both Hebrew and Egyptian houses**
- V. On the Run—Moses kills the Egyptian and flees to Midian**
- VI. The Rescuer—Moses rescues daughters of Jethro at the well**
- VII. On Alert—God enters the story**

The Call and Commissioning of Moses—Exodus 3-4
Excuses, Excuses: Sermon #3

Exegetical Observations:

1. This is one of those places where you could have an entire series based on these two chapters alone. You will have to make decisions with regard to how you approach it or divide it up.
2. We begin with Moses as a shepherd. A metaphor for kings/royalty and perhaps a sign of the future leadership role Moses will assume—Israel as a flock.
3. Horeb/Sinai: alternate names for mountain of God.
4. Burning bush—appearance of God (**theophany**) often associated with fire (Genesis 15; Exodus 19; 1 Kings 2; cf. 1 Kings 18-19).
5. God announces who he is and Moses is afraid—also afraid in 2:6; note theme with Jesus and his disciples are constantly afraid. Moses responds by taking off his sandals and hiding his face.
6. Holy ground—a God who comes down (condescends) to meet humans where they are. In this case, the intention of God is to “rescue” or “deliver” Israel (2:24-25). So, we have an example of God coming down to his people in order to bring them up (3:8). See Philippians 2:5-11.
7. Even though God has come down to rescue and bring up, Moses is the one the Lord sends. God wants and prefers to use human agents to do the divine will. So, God is a God who sends (may want to compare with Great Commission in Matthew 28 or Jesus sending the apostles in Acts 1).
8. God is the God of the ancestors—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus, Moses is linked to his past. The God who promised in Genesis is ready to fulfill in Exodus.
9. Note the verbs in 3:7-10:

- a. I have seen the misery
- b. I have heard them crying
- c. I have taken notice (their suffering)
- d. I have come down (a) to rescue and (b) to bring up
- e. I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them
- f. I am sending you

10. When God tells Abraham to “go” in Genesis 12 and 22, Abraham goes. When God tells Moses to “go” here, Moses hesitates.

11. In light of God’s statement, Moses asks a question, which becomes an excuse or an attempt at disputing God’s commissioning of Moses. The following table itemizes the excuses:

Moses’ Excuse, Protest or Reason	The Lord’s Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who am I? 2. Who are you? (I don’t know your name) 3. They Won’t Believe Me 4. I Don’t Speak Very Well 5. I don’t want to go (send someone else) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I will be with you 2. The Divine Name (YHWH) 3. Three signs 4. I made your mouth 5. Anger, Aaron, you are going

12. The divine name Yahweh gets its start here with the phrase, “I am who I am” or “I will be who I will be.” Based on Hebrew verb of being *hayah*. So, God does not give Moses a name to tell the Egyptians when he appears before them. Perhaps to avoid having the divine name used as a part of a magical incantation. Perhaps to remain a bit elusive or to avoid the wielder of the name having power over God. Note the similar scene in Joshua 5:13-15 where the commander of the army of the Lord refuses “to pick sides.”

13. Perhaps the name has something to do with the ongoing presence of God in the life of Israel (and the New Israel). Fretheim, p. 63, suggests that this

verbal form means, "I will be God for you. The force is not simply that God is or that God is present but that God will be faithfully God for them. God can be counted on to be who God is."

14. When in Egypt Moses is "to say" two things to the Israelites and their elders: The Lord has sent me and the Lord has appeared to me. This is a sending text: 3:10,14,15, 16.
15. 3:18-20 introduces the signs and wonders that will be displayed in Egypt and before the Pharaoh. Nevertheless, God already knows the Pharaoh will not let Israel go. Only by compulsion, not of his own will, will he let Israel go. The
16. 3:19 and 20 emphasize the "hand" of God. Also will be prominent in the "song of Moses" in Exodus 15. God's hand represents strength or power. Compare place of Moses' hand in first two signs associated with third excuse.
17. Three initial signs that accompany Moses' third protest:
 - a. staff becomes a snake, then turns back to a staff.
 - b. Hand becomes leprous, then clean again
 - c. Water from the river will turn to blood.
18. 4:18-31 depicts Moses' return to Egypt. Moses takes the staff of God, which suggests he has some of God's power with him.
19. 4:21 provides our first reference to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Glenn Pemberton, *The God Who Saves*, gives a nice summary of the issues in Appendix IV, pp. 345-349, of his book. Pemberton says of the Pharaoh, "His heart was of such a nature (because of a lifetime of choices) that when subjected to pressure regarding Israel, it became hard, stubborn, and irrational. We can describe this process in a number of different ways—Pharaoh hardened his heart, the Lord hardened his heart, or his heart

hardened—but ultimately, what made the difference was the nature of Pharaoh’s heart.” p. 348.

20. In 4:22 God claims Israel as his firstborn son. This claim will become extremely important in relation to the 10th plague, but also in regard to the selection of the Levites as the priestly tribe. See the references to the Levitical heritage of Moses, 2:1, Aaron (3:14) and Moses and Aaron 6:20-26.
21. 4:24-26 depicts one of the more bizarre stories in the OT when Zipporah must quickly circumcise their first born son in order to save Moses’ or/and the son’s life (lives). Here Moses’ firstborn son is under threat, just like Egypt’s firstborn sons will be under threat. Moses’ firstborn son is spared, due to bloodshed (circumcision) just like Israel’s firstborn sons will be spared with bloodshed (Passover lamb). It also highlights the role of a woman in saving the life of Moses (see earlier, Moses’ mother, sister and the Pharaoh’s daughter).
22. Moses and Aaron encounter each other and return to Egypt. They tell the elders of Israel what the Lord had said to Moses and also perform signs. The people respond with worship. See also, 3:12, 18; 4:23, and 12:27. Worship is a major theme in the book of Exodus.

Sermon Outline: Excuses, Excuses

- I. Identification Please-- ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”
- II. The Commissioning-- ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”
- III. The Excuses—see the excuses and response above
- IV. Israel’s Reaction-- ²⁹ Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, ³⁰ and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed *the signs* before the people, ³¹ **and they believed.** And when they heard that the Lord was

concerned about them and had seen their misery, ***they bowed down and worshiped.***

V. What's Your Excuse?

- a. You've Been Prepared for Some Mission.
- b. Minus the dramatics, how has God made it known to you?
- c. What are you using as your excuse not to do it?
- d. God is willing to work with you.

The Lord and the gods of Egypt (including the Pharaoh)—Exodus 5-11
4th Sermon: Who Is the Lord?

Exegetical Observations:

1. From 5:1-6:12, we are confronted with the question that the Pharaoh poses, “Who is he Lord? That questioned, in some measure, is answered in 6:3-8. The genealogy that follows seems to be answering the question, “Who are Moses and Aaron?”
2. Pharaoh’s question, “Who is the Lord,” corresponds with the statement, “I will not let Israel go” and “he would not listen.”
3. Moses’ request is tied to a three-day journey to hold a festival and offer sacrifices—worship—to the Lord.
4. Pharaoh’s second question, “why are you taking the people away from their work,” is an accusation. Tyrants are often easily threatened and often resort to extreme tactics to keep everyone under their thumb. We compare the Pharaoh with Herod in Matthew 2 when word gets back to him a “king” has been born.
5. Pharaoh’s extreme measure means the Egyptians will no longer supply the straw for the Hebrews to make bricks, yet the same quota of bricks will be required of the Israelites. Here we see the chain of command:
 - a. Pharaoh
 - b. Egyptian slave drivers
 - c. Hebrew overseers
 - d. Slaves
6. The king of Egypt also resorts to name calling, referring to the Hebrews as “lazy,” in 3:8 and 3:17 (2x).
7. Overseers are upset with Moses and Aaron, who, in turn, are upset with God. Moses complains that this is why he protested God’s choice of him to be his agent in the first place. Both the overseers and Moses use the term “trouble,” or “evil” to depict their situation.
8. God responds on two levels and uses the phrase, “I am the Lord” four times (6:2, 6, 7 and 8), apparently answering the question of 5:2. The first time, 6:2-26, stresses the relational character of God who “appeared” to the ancestors as God Almighty, but the name Yahweh was not fully known. God will establish his covenant that he made with them and bring the Israelites into the land.
9. The second level, 6:6-8, emphasizes liberating power of God to redeem Israel from bondage. The sequence of verbs begins and ends with “I am the Lord,” Pay attention to these verbs:
 - a. I will bring you out

- b. I will free you
- c. I will redeem you
- d. I will take you
- e. I will be your God
- f. I will bring you to the land
- g. I will give you the land as a possession.

10. God's self-identification stresses the redeeming, liberating character of the divine self. The seven-fold sequence of verbs may also suggest the completeness of God's activity with Israel.
11. God is faithful to his promises, even when it does not appear so. It is also interesting to note that when Moses tells the Israelites these things, they do not listen. At this point, Moses is right and God is wrong.
12. 6:13-25 is a genealogy that stresses the Levitical heritage of Moses and Aaron. Aaron's name appears first in v. 26, perhaps to emphasize his role as the first High Priest. Korah, who will rebel in Numbers 16, is also a part of this family line.
13. 6:28-7:7 serves as a prelude to the signs and wonders that God and Moses will perform for the Pharaoh. This section highlights the prophetic role of Moses:
- a. Moses will be like God to Pharaoh
 - b. Aaron will be Moses' prophet
 - c. Both Moses and Aaron are to speak

In a real sense the co-authority of Moses is being established. The staff, hand and mouth of Moses are being equated to those of God.

14. As we prepare to shift into the plague narrative, Moses receives his instructions: You are to say everything I command you. An important phrase that emerges in this section is, "as the Lord commanded(s)."
15. With the first sign, Aaron's staff becoming a snake, we are introduced to the magicians who can duplicate the sign. This pattern will persist through the first two plagues.
16. We will not go through the plagues (7:8-11:10) one-by-one. Some interpreters of the plagues narrative have noticed a pattern. The plagues seem to have a certain literary structure where they are grouped into triads. The following 3x3x3+1 pattern is suggested:
1-3; 4-6; 7-9; 10th Plague is set apart
17. **The first triad:** 7:14 Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the river. Magicians duplicate plagues 1 and 2 but can't duplicate the third plague. Point: Yahweh is greater than the Egyptian Magicians

18. **The second triad:** 8:20 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, (4th plague) will make a distinction between my people and your people. Point: Plagues afflict Egyptians but not Hebrews
19. **Third Triad:** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him,” (7th plague) that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Point: Yahweh is incomparable—greater than even Ra the Sun God of Egypt.
20. The gods of Egypt. Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam*, pp. 43-44, has noted several connections between the plagues and the Egyptian gods:

Water to blood	the Nile as the source of life
Frogs	goddess of childbirth, Heqet, head of a frog (foreshadows 10 th plague)
Livestock	Hathor, mother and sky goddess, depicted as a cow
Hailstorm	storm gods, Seth
Darkness	sun-god, Re (Ra)
Death of firstborn	Osiris is god of the dead

21. The pivotal verse in the plague narrative may very well be 9:16, “But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” This verse might provide a good place to build a sermon if you want to do just one sermon for the entire narrative. It ties back into 5:2 and 6:2-8 very nicely. It also anticipates the announcement in 14:4 and 17 that the Lord will gain glory for himself when the armies of Egypt are defeated in the Sea.
22. The 10th plague is set apart from the other nine and split into two scenes with the initial announcement occurring in 11:1-10. The plague itself does not actually take place until 12:29-32. In between these two scenes are instructions concerning the Passover (12:1-28).

Sermon Outline: Who Is the Lord? Exodus 5:1-6:12

- I. Initial Request-- Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’”
- II. The Question and Refusal-- ² Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.”
- III. The Accusation-- ⁷ “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. ⁸ But require them

to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'

- IV. Just a Tad Upset-- ²⁰ When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, ²¹ and they said, "May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."
- V. I Told You So-- ²² Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."
- VI. The Reveal-- ⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸ And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.'"
- VII. The One We Praise: Psalm 105
- ¹ Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
- ² Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
- ³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
- ⁴ Look to the Lord and his strength;
seek his face always.

The 10th Plague and the Passover—Exodus 12-13
5th Sermon: Signs and Symbols

Exegetical Observations:

1. Chapters 12 and 13 of Exodus deal with a number of different items. The varied and alternating bits of material will provide a challenge for preaching. Here is a list of the topics in these two chapters:
 - a. The Passover
 - b. The Festival of Unleavened Bread
 - c. The 10th Plague
 - d. The Firstborn
 - e. Initial stages of the Exodus
2. What does seem to ties these units together is the emphasis on the signs and symbols the different elements have for **all Israel** and how they serve as identity markers for the people both in the present and for the future.
 - a. 12:3 states that Moses and Aaron are to the “whole community,” 12:6 says, “all the members of the community,” 12:21, Moses summoned, “all the elders of Israel,” 12:42, “On this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil 12:47, “the whole community must celebrate it,” 12:50, “all the Israelites did just as the Lord commanded,” 13:1, “consecrate to me every firstborn male. The firstborn of every womb,” 13:12, “You are to give to the Lord the first offspring of every womb.”
 - b. 12:14 This is a day your are to commemorate; for the generations to come,” 12:17, “Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come,” 12:26, “when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean,’” 12:42, “On this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for generations to come;” 13:3, “commemorate this day,” 13:8, “on that day tell your son,” 13:10, “You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year;” 13:14, “When your son asks you;” and 13:16 “it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead.”
3. Note the instructions for the Passover are given to Moses and Aaron. 12:1-20 are instructions from the Lord to them. This is a common pattern in the rest of the Pentateuch. The Lord will give instructions to Moses or Moses and Aaron, then Moses will turn right around give a variation of these instructions to the people. This has the effect of establishing the authority of Moses and making their words virtually synonymous. When the Lord speaks, Moses speaks. When Moses speaks, the Lord has spoken.
4. 12:1-11 instructions and explanation for the meal:

- a. 1st month, 10th day is selection day
 - b. 1st month, 14th day is preparation and slaughter
 - c. meal consists of lamb or goat, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread
 - d. meal is eaten in haste; preparation have been made to leave
5. Brevard Childs, in his commentary on Exodus, makes the following observations concerning the Passover Meal:
 - a. The Passover highlights the redemptive nature of God's dealings with Israel;
 - b. God's saving activity is collective—a shared or common meal
 - c. The eschatological nature of God's acts of deliverance—remembering the past, looking forward to the future
 6. 12:12-13 announcement and details regarding the 10th plague—the blood will be a sign. Role of blood in ancient Near East rituals is important.
 7. 12:14-20 provides instructions for an additional festival that is attached to the Passover—the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It lasts seven days and no leaven is to be found or used in the house during this time.12
 8. 12:21-28 Shifts gears a bit and Moses gives instructions to all the elders of Israel concerning the Passover meal. People respond with worship (12:27).
 9. 12:26 highlights the role of children who ask questions. Effect of extending the Passover meal through the generations. This meal is not just for generation that experienced this deliverance. It is for all generation who are to come.
 10. 12:29-36 the 10th plague occurs and the death of first born strikes the entire land except for homes of the Israelites. Pharaoh sends Moses and the Israelites away.
 11. 12:37-42—gives some details concerning the departure of Israel—600,000 men (See Pemberton's Appendix V, pp. 351-53). Multiple references to unleavened dough tie it to the festival of unleavened bread.
 12. Reference to length of time in Egypt, 430 years, ties it to Genesis 15 and the promise to Abraham.
 13. 12:43-50 contains regulations concerning who may eat the Passover meal suggests that there were other groups who departed with them. Foreigners must be circumcised.
 14. 13:1, 11-16 instructions regarding the redemption of the firstborn. All firstborn are dedicated to the Lord.
 15. 13:2-10 instructions concerning the Festival of Unleavened Bread

Sermon Outline: Signs and Symbols (Exodus 12-13)

- I. A Communal Story-- 12:3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.
- II. A Counter Story-- ¹³The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.
- III. A Formative Story-- ²⁶And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' ²⁷then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped.
- IV. Our Story-- John ^{1:35}The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"
- V. How Does This Story Shape Us?
 - a. Helps us think collectively rather than individually.
 - b. Encourages us to rely on God rather than self.
 - c. Enables us to stand with the oppressed.
 - d. Connects us to the Gospel story—Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

Passage through the Sea—Exodus 14-15
6th Sermon

Exegetical Observations:

1. Though I've divided these sections between chapters, the narrative actually begins at 13:17.
2. 13:17-22 picks back up with the narrative of the departure from Egypt from 12:37-42. New details here include:
 - a. the route of the Exodus—not through Philistine country in case they face war and are afraid
 - b. but, they left Egypt ready for battle
 - c. they take the bones of Joseph with them fulfilling the request the ancestor made of them;
 - d. the pillar of cloud leads them by day and the pillar of fire by night; this form of guidance reassures the people the Lord is always with them.
3. The crossing of the Sea is, in many ways, the defining moment for Israel and their faith in the saving power of the Lord. It is their good new moment. Also note the crossing of the Sea in the gospels with Jesus and the disciples in the boat.
4. The purpose of the crossing of the Sea and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is clearly stated in 14:4 and 17-18: ⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But **I will gain glory for myself** through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."
5. Many creation elements are prevalent in this story:
 - a. Reference to sea brings to mind the deep mentioned in Genesis 1:2. Fretheim notes that this not an accident. Both the Pharaoh and the Sea embody chaos. Genesis 14-15 clearly indicates the Lord's superiority over both.
 - b. Israel will cross through on "dry ground," a clear tie to third day of creation.
 - c. 14:20 states that the cloud brought "darkness" to one side and "light" to the other side. The Egyptians are clearly on the side of "darkness" while Israel experiences light. God clearly distinguishes between the two. Night and darkness also recall the 9th plague.
 - d. The division of the waters in 14:21 also recalls the division of waters in Genesis 1.
6. The final sign or wonder occurs when Pharaoh and his officials "change their mind."

7. The pursuit of the Egyptian army leads to the first complaint or grumbling in the wilderness—14:10-12.
8. Note the pattern: people cry out to Moses, Moses cries out to the Lord, the Lord delivers Israel. In many ways we are establishing a similar pattern to what we'll see in Numbers 11-25 and the book of Judges. Note reference to the word "serve." Recall initial tug-of-war between serving Pharaoh or the Lord.
9. God responds to Israel's cry. Whether it is in Egypt and the cry is a groan under the oppressor's rod or fear from an enemy approaching God hears.
10. Fretheim notes that in the crossing of the Sea that God works through a natural entity and a human agent, p. 154. In essence, there is harmony between the divine/human/non-human realms.
11. The Warrior metaphor becomes especially prominent as Israel crosses the sea and in the song of praise that follows. How does the Lord fight for Israel? What are the divine weapons used:
 - a. A strong east wind drives the sea back
 - b. Throws the Egyptian army into confusion
 - c. Jams the wheels of the chariots so they cannot turn (Judges 4-5)
 - d. Causes the waters to flow back over the Egyptians, sweeping them into the sea.
 - e. Thus the Lord saves.
12. How does Israel respond (14:30-31):
 - a. Saw the mighty hand of the Lord at work
 - b. Feared the Lord (wisdom)
 - c. Put their trust in the Lord *and* Moses, the Lord's servant
 - d. Sing a song of thanksgiving and praise (15:1-21)
13. In the song the Lord is a Warrior and Yahweh is his name. Warrior metaphor may need to be handled with care in 21st century.
14. Note the boast of the enemy in 15:9:
 - a. I will pursue
 - b. I will overtake
 - c. I will divide the spoils
 - d. I will gorge myself on them
 - e. I will draw my sword
 - f. My hand will destroy them
15. Song ends with reference to God's guiding presence that will bring them to the land:
 - a. Mentions Philistia, Edom, Moab and Canaan. Clearly has Promised Land in mind.
 - b. Dwelling place, sanctuary—no tabernacle or temple yet.

Sermon Outline: On the Brink of Disaster—Exodus 14

- I. A Change of Heart— ⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!”
- II. Between a Rock and a Hard Place— ¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord.
- III. The Triangular Equation— ²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.
- IV. The Fear Factor— ²⁹ But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰ That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹ And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.
- V. Sending Activities-
 - a. Name your fear
 - b. Factor God into the equation
 - c. Turn Fear into Trust
 - d. Meditation on 1 John 4:18

The Wilderness Period—Exodus 15-18
7th Sermon: Trust and Obey

Exegetical Observations:

1. The next section of Exodus brings us into the wilderness. The. which serves as the testing ground for the Israelites. The
2. This section is framed by two passages that emphasize the important roles of listening and doing—the hallmarks of obedience:

15:25 There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. ²⁶ He said, “If you **listen** carefully to the LORD your God and **do** what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.”

18:24 Moses **listened** to his father-in-law and **did** everything he said.

In each story God gives instructions on how to alleviate the crisis. The issue is whether Israel will listen to God’s instructions and do what God command. In each of these stories, Obedience and trust are crucial if the relationship between this God and this people is going to work.

3. Five stories make up this section:

Crisis	Instruction	Response
Bitter water at Marah	When Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood.	He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.
No food in the desert of Sin	“I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.	That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.
No water at Masah and Meribah	⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.”	So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.
War with Amalek	As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he	So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

	<p>lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.</p>	
<p>Heavy workload for Moees</p>	<p>¹⁹ Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ²⁰ Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. ²¹ But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.</p>	

4. The first two stories involve grumbling and Moses crying out to God and God then gives instructions that Moses follows and the crisis is alleviated. After the first crisis we told that these crises will serve as a “test” to see whether Israel will rely on God and do what the Lord instructs.
5. Manna in the wilderness is a test case for obedience as two “laws” are issued to see whether Israel will “listen and do” what God asks them to do. The theme of obedience and disobedience permeates this story.
 - a. The first case involves gathering just enough food for the day—nothing more, nothing less. Some gather more than they need and have maggots in the morning.
 - b. The second case entails gathering twice as much on the day before the Sabbath. In this case, the food wouldn't spoil. Some don't gather enough and get up on the Sabbath to gather food only to find no manna.
6. The third story heightens the tensions by moving from grumbling to quarreling and testing. Masah “testing” and Meribah “quarreling” become

the place names for this event. The third story switches the roles of the tester. Now it is Israel who tests God, rather than God testing Israel. The instruction in this case is to strike the rock and water will come out.

7. The fourth story contains no direct command from God; instead the leaders derive their own plan to defeat the Amalekites. This story may reflect Yahweh war since it is won by unconventional methods, Moses raises his arms and Israel gains the advantage and eventual victory. It also does not include a direct command from the Lord. Perhaps it is suggesting, we humans have the capacity to discern the will of God without a direct command. Whatever the case, once again Israel experiences salvation and deliverance from a crisis—this one military in nature.
8. The final crisis involves a non-Israelite providing instruction to Moses who listens and does what he is told to do by an outsider.
9. Prior to Jethro's instructions, Moses tells him all that the Lord has done for the people. In return Jethro rejoices, praises God and even confesses his faith in this one God, the God of Israel. Jethro's confession is the first in a line of confessions made by non-Israelites in the main storyline of Israel. Other examples include Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute from Jericho (Josh 2), the wisdom of Zarephath (Sidon) to Elijah (1 Kgs 17) and Naaman, the Syrian commander, to Elisha (2 Kgs 5).

Preaching Possibilities:

1. A Survivor's Guide to the Wilderness—focus is on 15:26 and 18:24, which serve as “bookends” to this section—“If you listen carefully . . . and do what is right in the Lord's eyes.” Provide instances from each of the five stories where this principle is in play.
2. Testing, One, Two, Three—this sermon would focus on Exodus 16 and the Manna story. In 16:4 God says, “I will test them.” One could still tie into the theme mentioned above, but use the Manna narrative to show Israel both listened and failed to listen to the instructions Moses gave with regard to gathering the Manna.
3. Surprised by Faith—Exodus 18 and Jethro's confession, “Now I know.” I find Jertho's confession fascinating because it is one of at least four stories in the Primary History of Israel where a non-Israelite confesses faith in Israel's God. See also, Rahab (Josh 2); the Widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17) and Naaman (2 Kgs. 5). This sermon can empha

The Mountain of God—Exodus 19:8-25

8th Sermon: Sacred Spaces

Exegetical Observations:

1. Compared to our previous sections, this one is much shorter. I highlight this passage because it provides an opportunity to talk about a topic we struggle with in our culture today—holiness.
2. When preaching through this story we may want to think about this passage because we live in an increasingly secular world that has little patience, room or imagination for the sacred. We may even want to have in mind the recent movie about concussions and the NFL where one executive makes the remark, “We own one day of the week.”
3. ⁹The Lord said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said.
4. Mt. Sinai is set apart—Holy Mountain--²³ Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.’”
5. Consecrating literally means, “to make holy,” and implies some effort and intentionality on our behalf. Making something holy does not happen by “accident.” ¹⁰ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹ and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.
- 6.
7. Cultivating a church culture that values holiness means we have to prepare for it. ¹⁵ Then he said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.”
8. Finally, reincorporating holiness into the rhythm of our lives means we must take God seriously. This point may well be the crux of the matter; The people all responded together, “We will do everything the LORD has said.”
9. The real challenge for Christians today is holding two primary notions of God in tension—God as love and holy. It might help if we think in terms of both/and rather than either/or.
10. The beauty of this story is that God has consistently demonstrated a willingness to “condescend” the divine self and be/dwell with us human beings. One might also draw from passages of scripture like Genesis 28 and Jacob’s dream, or John 1 and the Logos becoming flesh or Philippians 2:5-11 where the incarnation of Jesus Christ is given wonderful expression in a hymn of divine descent. In many ways, it is the ultimate

mystery; our call is to help our congregations recapture it and make room for it.

Sermon Outline: On the Mountain of God

- I. An Agreeable People--⁸ The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.
- II. Quite a Display--¹⁰ And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹ and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.
- III. Standing in the Breach--²⁰ The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up ²¹ and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish.
- IV. Setting Limits--²³ Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'"

Sermon 9: The Ten Commandments:

Exegetical Observations:

1. The Ten Commandments may be preached either in a series where you cover one per Sunday; or, you can preach it one Sunday highlighting the basic features of the Decalogue as a whole.
2. The “what” before the “why.” Often we ask questions about why we have to do certain things. We may get a, “Because I told you so,” or some other vague explanation as to why we must do something. In the case of the Ten Commandments, God anticipates the “why” question from Israel by giving them “what” first. God has brought Israel out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Because he has done this, he can ask certain things of them.
3. Several interpreters have divided the Ten Commandments into two parts: Commandments 1-4 and Commandments 5-10. The first four commandments can be tied to the *Shema* or Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which commands Israel to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength. The second set of commandments relate to the second greatest commandment found in Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
4. If the above is correct, then the first four commandments emphasize the vertical dimension of our relationship with God. The second set highlights our horizontal relationships with each other and help us live in community with each other. The two sections should not be read in isolation from one another. After all, how can we love God if we do not love our brothers and sisters (1 John 4:19-22)?
5. Glenn Pemberton, *The God Who Saves*, pp. 90-92, discusses two different ways to read and understand the Ten Commandments:
 - a. A common way of reading the Ten Commandments is to understand them as a sort of “perimeter ethic.” In this reading, the Ten Commandments function like boundary markers or “fence posts” designed to keep us inside the field. We’re fine so long as we don’t past the fence markers.
 - b. The second way to read and interpret the Ten Commandments is to see them more as “centering principles.” With this understanding the reader moves from viewing the Ten Commandments as boundary markers to seeing them as centering principles. With this way of reading the Decalogue we are looking for the principle that lies behind the commandment.
6. The Commandments:
 - a. “You shall have no other god before me.” Nearly all interpreters will begin their discussion of the first commandments with some reference to absolute loyalty, or an exclusive relationship. Also noteworthy is the reference to “other gods.” We may not have a statement of monotheism here, but we can be assured that whether

- the ancient Israelites believed other gods existed or not, they were to be in relationship with and worship no other god but the Lord.
- b. “You shall not make for yourself an idol (or image).” At the heart of this commandment may lie the concern that making an image of God somehow limits or fixes the Lord in a particular point and time. Perhaps the problem with the Golden Calf is that if that image is associated with that event, could God act in other ways and at other times? Images tend to concretize the objects they represent and lock them into a fixed time and place. Think of the statue of Michael Jordan at the United Center in Chicago. Jordan’s greatness is linked to a particular time, the 1990’s, and place/team, the Chicago Bulls. Isn’t it hard to imagine Jordan in any other uniform? Think also of the reason given for the Northern Kingdom’s failure in 2 Kings 17—their worship of idols.
 - c. “You shall not abuse the name of the Lord your God.” I like abuse (Childs, *The Book of Exodus*) better than misuse or make wrongful use (Pemberton and Fretheim, respectively). This commandment speaks to respect and also reveals how we feel about God. The flippant and disrespectful use of the divine name characterizes our culture today. In ancient Israel the name of God was serious business. Whenever the name of the Lord appears, they would use a substitute word or phrase for it. In Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, he simply refers to the Name that is present there. Neither image nor the name Yahweh is used. Fretheim, p. 228, points out that primary point of this commandment speaks to mission. Do we drag God’s name *down* to our level and through the mud or do we *lift* God’s name up in praise. We must always ask ourselves the purpose of using the name of God.
 - d. “Remember the Sabbath Day, and keep it holy.” This commandment also says a lot about our relationship with God. Two concepts come to the forefront:
 - i. First, the Sabbath Day must be remembered. The busyness of our culture makes this obvious statement necessary. Drive by a baseball or softball field on a Sunday morning or keep tabs of the business that are open and you’ll see that we have basically “forgotten” this day.
 - ii. Second, it must be set apart; that is how we keep it holy. Though in the Christian tradition we don’t distinguish the seventh day from the rest of the days, maybe we still need to take one day a week and rest (note Genesis 2:1-4). (Maybe for preachers it is Monday?) Again, this attention to holiness suggests intentionality. It will not happen by accident.
 - e. “Honor your father and mother.” We may need to realize that in a congregation of people there may need to be some sensitivity with regard to situations of child abuse and we can note the parent’s

responsibility toward. However, that does not mean we should gloss over this commandment. The parent/child relationship is foundation of any culture—not the individual. Perhaps this is the preaching point—in a society that so values the individual we struggle to maintain even the most basic of relationships—parent/child. The honoring or respecting or caring (Matthew 15:4-9) is vital and also indicative of how we feel about God.

- f. “You shall not murder” (Pemberton, p. 94) Confusion abounds regarding the meaning of this commandment. But, capital punishment is upheld in scripture (21:12) and there are plenty of examples in the Old Testament of Israel going to war (Joshua 1-12) and even instructions for war (Exodus 17:8-14; Deuteronomy 7:1-4). Therefore, the gist of this commandment probably lies with notion of murder. This fits well with the high view of human beings expressed in Genesis 1:26-28 and Psalm 8, and the sanctity of life spoken of in Genesis 9:5-6. This commandment highlights the seriousness of Cain’s offense against his brother Abel and Jezebel’s false accusation and murder of Naboth for his vineyard.
- g. “You shall not commit adultery.” Next to the sanctity of life comes the sanctity of marriage. In Genesis 1, God created man and woman in his image. In Genesis 2, the woman is brought to the man and they become one flesh. Perhaps the positive expression for this commandment is faithfulness to one’s marriage and the cultivating of a healthy, sexual relationship with one’s spouse (Proverbs 5:15-18; The Song of Songs also may be helpful). Furthermore, faithfulness to one’s spouse may be a powerful way of reflecting the image of God in this world and maintain the created order that the Lord had in mind when creating. Preachers may want to look in the mirror here before casting too many stones.
- h. “You shall not steal.” Fretheim makes the comment that, “Israel understands property to be an extension of the ‘self,’” p. 235. Expressed positively, this commandment states that we should respect and honor the possessions our neighbors have obtained through hard work. It is very difficult to maintain a healthy communal life if we are taking what belongs to another for ourselves. Furthermore, we should see the belonging of our neighbor, at least in part, as a blessing from God. Don’t we say this about the things we own? “God has blessed us,” is a common expression when discussing the material things. Maybe the same holds true for our neighbor. Stealing, taking what does not belong to us, may well rob that person of their blessing from God. (See 1 Samuel 8 and Deuteronomy 17 for the dangers associated with the monarchy and their penchant for taking things that are not theirs.)
- i. “You shall not bear false witness.” The primary context for this commandment may be the court of law. At stake is the principle of justice, for every one in the community. Justice is not only for the

rich and powerful, it is also for the poor among them. Put positively, we are to be people who speak truth in any and all circumstances (Matthew 5:37). This command, coupled with the commandments not to murder and steal, showcases the wickedness of Jezebel who schemed and plotted and abused her power to obtain the vineyard of Naboth for her husband Ahab (1 Kings 21).

- j. "You shall not covet." This commandment is different in that it begins with the will or heart of the individual and then moves toward the action. Jesus had something similar to say in Mark 7:14-16 when he says it is what comes out of the person that defiles him, not what goes in. This commandment may be placed last to emphasize exactly this point. While laws and commandments are put into place to deter illegal activity, ultimately what matters and what might be the greatest deterrent of all is a heart that is in tune with God--a heart that is content with what one has and so does not desire what belongs to another. Perhaps Paul's words in Philippians might be helpful as a positive expression to this prohibition: 4:11-12 "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Preaching Possibilities:

1. The Preacher has the option here to preach a series of sermons over the Ten Commandments—one per week.
2. I would think one other possibility would be to divide the Ten Commandments into two parts: (1) the commandments that stress the vertical dimension and our love for God; and (2) the commandments that emphasize the horizontal aspects of our common life together.
3. A third option would be to simply do a sermon over the Ten Commandments as a whole. We can also emphasize, as Fretheim does, that when we as human beings fall short in our love of God and neighbor, we turn to the love of God in Christ, in whom the law has been fulfilled.

The Book of the Covenant: Exodus 21-23

Sermon 10:

Exegetical Observations:

1. This section actually begins in 20:22 when the Lord speaks to Moses saying, “Tell the Israelites this...” We have a similar formula in 25:1, which begins the section that has instructions for the building of the tabernacle.
2. The term Book of the Covenant is used in 24:7 and most interpreters ascribe the material beginning with the Ten Commandments and ending at 23:33 to this “book,” or Law Code.
3. This section contains many types of literature but does introduce to us what is known as Case Law. This type of law often begins with “If such and such a situation happens, then . . .” Let’s look at the first category, slaves, to see how Case Law works:
 - a. If a Hebrew buys a Hebrew servant, he must let him go after six years of service (a bit of a sabbatical year principle).
 - b. If the slave comes to his master single (alone), he is free to go alone;
 - c. But if he has a wife when he comes to his master, she is to go with him;
 - d. If the master gives him a wife and she bears children, the woman and the children belong to the master, but the man can go free;
 - e. If the servant decides he doesn’t want his freedom after six years of service, he may declare his intent and have his ear pierced with an awl.
4. The section begins with instructions pertaining to altars and the making of idols (20:22-26) and ends with the promise of divine guidance and victory over the nations who are in the land of promise (23:20-33). The instructions pertaining to idols and altars appear to be concerned with the distinctive forms of worship Israel is to follow that will set them apart from the other nations. The nations worship idols, Israel does not. The nations worship with altars that are “fancy,” Israel does not.
5. Some scholars, see Fretheim pp. 240-241, will divide the Book of the Covenant into two parts: Part I 21:1-22:20 and Part II 22:21-23:33. The first part is dominated by Case Law pertaining to slaves, personal injury and property rights. It bears many similarities to other ancient Near Eastern law codes like Lipit Ishtar and the Code of Hammurabi. The second section is characterized by a more personal investment of the deity. For instance, in 22:24 the Lord says, “my anger will be aroused,” if someone takes advantage of a widow or orphan. These expressions of divine anger or displeasure are noticeably absent in the first half of this “book,” but prominent in the 2nd half.

6. A note on *Lex Talionis*, “an eye for an eye (21:23-25).” While this legal principle may seem a bit barbaric today, it actually provided a measure of fairness in ancient Israel by ensuring that a wealthy person could not simply buy off or purchase his or her way out of bodily damages done to another human being. If a rich man knocks out a tooth or intentionally maims a poor person, then the same should be done to them rather than that person walking away by merely paying a minor fine.
7. 23:10-19 is the first place we encounter a calendar that marks specific days and years as holy and summons the people to three pilgrimages a year—Festival of Unleavened Bread (late April, early May), Festival of Harvest (June) and the Festival of Ingathering (autumn). These festivals follow the agricultural pattern of harvest seasons in ancient Israel.
8. 22:21 and 23:9 both make reference to the people’s experience of slavery in Egypt, suggesting that Israel knows what is like to be a slave and should not treat people as the Egyptians treated them.
9. 23:20-33 contains God’s promise to go before them and to bring them into the land of promise by means of a “messenger” or “angel” (23:20). A little bit later, v. 27, the Lord says “I will send my ‘terror’ ahead and you,” and in v. 28, “I will send the hornet ahead of you.” Interpreters suggest this may be a way of God using human agents (or God in human form) and natural entities to bring Israel into the land, little by little. This scenario certainly resembles what we find in Judges 1.

Preaching Possibilities:

1. While many of these laws may seem a bit primitive and antiquated and, as a result, difficult to preach, 22:21-27 may provide excellent fodder for homiletical discussion.
 - a. First, this section speaks to the divine concern for the plight of those who are powerless.
 - b. Next, this section identifies specific groups who exist in our own day and time—the foreigner (alien), the widow, the orphan and the poor and needy.
 - c. This section raises ethical issues that we deal with today—charging interest, collateral, etc. The ethical and moral principles in this section most certainly apply.
 - d. While the punishments prescribed in this section may seem a bit severe to our ears (‘I will kill you with the sword,’ or ‘your wives will become widows and your children fatherless’), they do speak to the seriousness with which God takes these matters and perhaps our lack of concern demonstrates our inattention to passages like this one and that we have not gotten to know God all that well.

2. Other homiletical ideas that come from this section might pertain to God's sense of justice and fairness within the community (21:1-22:20). Again, while a bit "primitive," these laws do provide a way to live together in community.
3. The calendar section in 23:10-19 might be useful in helping a congregation think through their own calendar and develop a certain rhythm to life. What are the significant dates and seasons for your congregation?

The Blood of the Covenant—Exodus 24

11th Sermon

Exegetical Observations:

1. I've highlighted this chapter because of its significance in the story. Ch. 24 begins with God calling Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons and 70 elders of Israel up the mountain for what will eventually culminate in a fellowship meal.
2. In between the call to come up the mountain (vv. 1-2) and the meal (vv. 9-11) Moses spends time at the foot of the mountain with the people of God (vv. 3-8).
3. While at the foot of the mountain, Moses does the following:
 - a. Builds an altar
 - b. Sets up twelve stone pillars, representing the twelve tribes
 - c. Offers sacrifices
 - d. Takes the blood from the sacrifices and splashes half of it against the altar (thereby consecrating it) and the other half he sprinkles on the people—the blood of the covenant
 - e. Reads the Book of the Covenant to the people
 - f. (while reading this section, we may want to keep in mind what is about to happen in ch. 32)
4. Fretheim suggests that the blood-sprinkling does two things:
 - a. It provides atonement for the people (see Leviticus 16; 17)
 - b. It commissions the people for a task
5. On two different occasions, vv. 3 and 7, the people respond to Moses' reading of the commands and words given to him by God with the phrase, "Everything the Lord has said, we will do." Compare with Jesus' statement in the Sermon on the Mount, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice." It is not just about hearing, but doing the word of God that is important and what sets the people of God apart from those who are not.
6. The divine banquet in vv. 9-11 is also a unique point in scripture. Moses and the others go up, no distinction is made here between Moses and the rest of the company. The description of God on the mountain is not unlike what we find in Ezekiel and Revelation. God is certainly enthroned and sovereign, but he is also close and immanent. The one feature of God does not cancel the other (see Genesis 1 and 2).
7. Note here that they "see" God, yet live. They eat and drink in his presence (Psalm 23).
8. Verses 12-18 form a transition to the next major section of Exodus—chapters 25-31 and the tabernacle instructions. Moses goes up with Joshua this time. A cloud will envelop Moses and Joshua only goes part of the way up the mountain. Moses will be on the mountain 40 days and nights.

Preaching Possibilities:

1. One of the primary themes in this chapter is fellowship. God invites human beings up the mountain to experience a banquet. At the foot of the mountain, Moses offers several sacrifices, one of which is a fellowship offering. This particular offering is designed to be a shared meal between God, the priest and the worshiper—a precursor in some ways to the church potluck.
2. In the Gospel of Luke Jesus attends right nineteen meals or banquets, suggesting this is an important theme. Food and faith go hand-in-hand and certain events and days should be marked with celebration. Too often our services are so somber that we miss this element. We may also recall that the first sign Jesus performs in John's gospel is at a wedding feast. The Lord's Supper was also most likely observed in conjunction with a meal as well (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
3. The Blood of the covenant. We also can't miss the connection with blood that is in this story. Without the shedding of blood there is not covenant. This chapter marks the inauguration of the covenant. It involves both God and the divine promises, but also the people and their commitment to do what God has said. Tying these two parts together is the sacrificial offering and the blood.

Holy God, Holy People, Holy Space—Exodus 25-31

12th Sermon

Exegetical Observations:

1. 25:1 begins a new section with the same phrase we encountered in 20:22, “Tell the Israelites, . . .” The section ends in 31:18 with the sentence, “When the Lord finished speaking to Moses . . .”
2. The primary concern of this section is proper worship, especially as it relates to the tabernacle and the priesthood.
3. The reason for the tabernacle is stated in 25:8, “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.” Furthermore, they are to follow the instruction God gives them to a “T”: “Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you,” (25:9, 40; 26:30 and 27:8)
4. With regard to the priests, detailed instructions are given with regard to the priestly garments and to the process of anointing, ordaining and consecrating them. The reason for the garments is given in 28:2, 40: “Make sacred garments for you brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor.”
5. The timelessness quality of these instructions is conveyed in 27:21; 28:43; and 30:21 when we are told these instructions are “to be a lasting ordinance . . . for generations to come.”
6. The building instructions actually begin with the notice that Moses will an offering from the people with regard to the materials needed to make and the priestly garments. We’ll see in 35:1-36:6 that the Israelites are more than up to this task.
7. The tabernacle and its furnishing consist of:
 - a. The ark and its cover (mercy seat)—25:10-22
 - b. The table of the bread of presence—25:23-30
 - c. The lampstand or candlestick—25:31-40
 - d. The curtains, frames and crossbars for the tabernacle—26:1-30
 - e. The curtain that separates the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies and the entrance to the tabernacle—26:31-37
 - f. The altar of burnt offering—27:1-8
 - g. The courtyard—27:9-19
 - h. Oil for the lampstand—27:20-21
 - i. The altar of incense—30:1-10
 - j. The basin for washing—30:17-21
 - k. Anointing oil and incense—30:22-38
8. The priestly garments:

- a. The ephod—28:6-14—two onyx stones with the names of the sons of Israel are engraved in them. Aaron is bear these names a “ a memorial before the Lord.”
 - b. The breastpiece—28:15-30—the breastpiece is for making decisions. It will contain a pouch with the Urim and Thummim in it. In addition, twelve stones are woven into it, one for each of the tribes.
 - c. The robe—28:31-35—the hem of the robe will have an alternating pattern of pomegranates and bells. The bells presumably to enable the other priests to hear the movement of the High Priest while he is in the Holy of Holies since they cannot enter themselves.
 - d. The turban—28:36-38—will have a gold plate attached to it that says, “Holy to the Lord.” He bears the guilt involved in the sacred gifts of the Israelites.
9. Chapter 31 informs us about those who are “inspired” or “gifted” for the task of making the tabernacle. Both Bezalel and Oholiab are “filled with the Spirit of God” and “wisdom.” In this passage, wisdom means talented, skilled, gifted. They will be the artisans who make and oversee the process.
10. Finally, a reminder about the Sabbath. Sabbath, like circumcision (Genesis 17) and Passover (Exodus 12-13) becomes a “sign” by which Israel “knows” the Lord and are thereby made holy.
11. In conclusion, Moses receives the “two tablets of the covenant” inscribed by “the finger of God” (cf. 8:19).

Preaching Possibilities:

1. One might emphasize the spirit of God and how it brings together divine command and human skill (wisdom) in order to complete a task.
2. Fretheim points out that the tabernacle represents a move by God from “on top of the mountain” to a dwelling in the midst of the people. We can compare 24:9-11 with 40:34-38 as well.
3. Fretheim also provides a nice three-point summary of the tabernacle:
 - a. The tabernacle brings a sense of order to worship rather than an “anything goes” mentality.
 - b. The tabernacle provides a tangible aspect to the divine presence. I might add that the tabernacle sections might provide some insight into the value of aesthetics and worship. Those who are skilled, gifted in the arts are called to bring those talents to the making of the tabernacle.
 - c. The tabernacle offers divine assurance of stability in an unstable and threatening wilderness.
4. Sacred Space: this may also provide an opportunity to discuss worship, space, and aesthetics. Is there a place for beauty in our worship space?

Divine Disclosure and the Prophetic Vocation—Exodus 32-34

13th Sermon

Exegetical Observations:

1. Is a piece that begins with an act of apostasy, continues with Moses' intercession on behalf of Israel and ends God's renewing of the covenant. In many ways, Exodus 25-40 mirrors Genesis 1-11's pattern of creation, uncreation and recreation.
2. The golden calf marks Israel's great act of apostasy. Primarily, their sin is disloyalty. The act seems to be initiated by Moses' delay in coming down from the mountain (presumably while receiving instructions concerning the tabernacle). Also notice that they attribute the exodus from Egypt to Moses (God will do the same in v. 7).
3. Rather than building a tabernacle, they build a golden calf.
4. Fretheim, p. 267, highlights the following differences between the building of the tabernacle and the building of the golden calf and the worship the ensues:

Tabernacle	Golden Calf
God's initiative	People's initiative
A willing offering requested	Aaron commands gold
Painstaking preparations	No planning
Lengthy building process	Made quickly
Safeguarding of divine holiness	Immediate access
Invisible God	Visible god
Personal, active God	Impersonal object

5. Ultimately, this section is about two things: What kind of God is God going to be and what kind of leader is Moses going to be. How will this relationship work itself out?
 - a. Throughout this section Moses *intercedes* on behalf of the Israelites.
 - i. Though perhaps tempted to "leave God alone," and become the new Abraham, 32:10, Moses continues remind God of God's past promises, while also challenging Israel to be faithful (32:15-28). He also intercedes at 32:30-31 and 33:12-14.

- ii. As a prophetic/priestly figure it Moses' job to "stand in the breach" as the intermediary between God and the people. In fact, Moses is constantly going up and down the mountain, listening to God and giving the word of God to the people. In this section, he doesn't just listen to God he speaks to God on behalf of the people. In essence, when addressing God, Moses' words are intercessory, "Have mercy!" When speaking to the people, he issues a call to faithfulness and a changing of their ways, "Repent!"
 - iii. As a leader, Moses has special access to God, 33:1-11 and 34:29-35. However, there are limits to this access (33:19-23).
 - iv. With regard to the people, he calls for accountability, (32:21-24); loyalty (32:25-29) and is unwilling to simply dismiss disobedience and unfaithfulness (32:19-20).
- b. For God's part, we deal with several different aspects of the divine nature:
- i. God's anger/jealousy—32:10; 33:3; 34:14—"Do no worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."
 - ii. Reasonable—32:14—"the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened." This expression comes after God listens to Moses' initial intercession on behalf the people.
 - iii. Core attributes-- 34:6-7 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the *compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,*⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished (*just*); he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."
 - iv. Renewing/2nd chances—God again renews the covenant with Israel, even after the golden calf incident. 34:10-28 amounts to a 2nd set of commandments and a reissuing of the promise to drive out the nations and bring the Israelites into the land of promise.
- c. Exodus 32-34 depicts the relationship between God and Moses in intimate terms, "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend," (33:11). As friends, God is open to what Moses has to say and takes his contributions to the conversation seriously.

6. Fretheim suggests that by the end of Exodus 34 God has once again to dwell with the people in the tabernacle, though with diminished intensity (compare the banquet scene in Exodus 24 with God's conversation with Moses in 33:19-23 and 40:34-38). In addition, Moses has become the divine messenger (note his shining or radiant face in 34:29-35) rather than the messenger (Exodus 3; 14; and 23).

Preaching Possibilities:

1. The Golden Calf—one sermon idea for this section would be to focus on the making of the golden calf, especially as it is sandwiched between the two Tabernacle sections. We could highlight how easy it is to lose sight of what we really ought to be building.
2. Another sermon topic from this section might be to focus on the role of effective leaders. The role of Moses could be highlighted here as he does not abandon the people nor his responsibility, even when he would be within his rights to do so.
3. The core attributes of God in Exodus 34:6-7 would make an excellent sermon. In many cases God gets a bad rap, just read some of the New Atheists literature. It might be helpful to remind your congregation that when asked to define himself, this is what God has to say about the divine self.

Building and Erecting the Tabernacle—Exodus 35:1-40:33

14th Sermon

Exegetical Observations:

1. It is important to note the flow of the story at this point. Chs. 25-31 give the instructions for building the tabernacle with Moses on top of the mountain with God. Chs. 32-34 relate the great act of apostasy that Israel commits in making the golden calf. Chs. 35-40 pick back up with the making and erecting of the tabernacle.
2. Chs. 25-31 ended with instructions concerning the Sabbath (31:12-17) and chs. 35-40 begin with a reminder about the importance of keeping Sabbath (35:2-3). This admonition links these two sections together and serve as a reminder about the importance of worship and obedience for the people of God.
3. Pay attention to the phrase, “the whole community,” in 35:1-29. After committing the great sin of disloyalty to God in the making of the golden calf, now Israel joins together and demonstrates a generous spirit by giving “more than enough” of their resources to build the tabernacle (36:6).
4. Chs. 35-40 characterize the Israelites as an obedient people led by Moses who does “just as the Lord commands” eighteen times.
5. The general structure of 35:1-40:33: Materials are gathered and individuals inspired to do the work (35:1-36:7); next the tabernacle and all its furniture, curtains and utensils are made (36:8-38:31); following the making of the tabernacle the Israelites make the garments of the priest (39:1-31); the Israelites then bring everything to Moses (39:32-43) who then blesses them; and finally, 40:1-33, Moses sets up and arranges all the items that make up the tabernacle.
6. This section presents Moses and Israel as busy—they are doing, making (the verb made is used at 72 times in this section), obedient activity is the hallmark of this section of Exodus.
7. In 40:1 Moses erects the tabernacle on the first day of the first month, suggesting a new beginning and a new creation. Connections to Genesis 1-2 permeate this section of Exodus. One example, in 40:17-32 Moses erects the tabernacle in seven stages (seven times we are told he did, “as the Lord commands) perhaps copying the days of creation. In 40:33, Moses “finished the work” much as God finished his work of creation in Genesis 2:1-4.
8. As this sanctuary is completed it might be helpful to think of the other sanctuaries that appear in Israel’s story (Genesis – 2 Kings):
 - a. Wilderness tabernacle—Exodus-Deuteronomy
 - b. Shiloh—Joshua 13-1 Samuel 4
 - c. Jerusalem (Temple)—2 Samuel 6-2 Kings 25
 - d. Dan and Bethel—1 Kings 12-13-2 Kings 17, 23
9. It may also be helpful to think of the different times in Israel’s experience when these words might be most beneficial. In exile, after the temple of

- Solomon has been destroyed, these words might assure the exiles that there is still hope for a future sanctuary (Fretheim, pp. 313-14).
10. This section also demonstrates that divine inspiration (Bezalel and Oholiab) works very well with demonstrations of human loyalty. God has inspired 'skilled workers,' but the people are also responding with abundant offering and a great deal of activity that demonstrates their new found loyalty to God.
 11. Obedience is a tangible demonstration of our loyalty to God. If the golden calf sin was the supreme example of their disloyalty to God, then the chapters detailing the making and erecting of the tabernacle serve as the ultimate counter-picture of Israel. They are depicted as over-the-top faithful and obedient.

Preaching Possibilities:

1. "They Gave More than Enough"—this sermon would work well in a number of contexts, especially if there is a need to address contribution or if there is a fundraising effort. It may also tie into the notion of repentance. The offering the Israelites make occurs right on the heels of the golden calf incident.
2. Using Your Gifts—this sermon help members of your congregation think differently about gifts or talents they have that can be directly used to serve God. I know of artists who "draw" the sermon while the preacher preaches. We may think of artisan who have made something and then contributed it to the building.
3. "As the Lord Commands"—this sermon shows how human obedience can lead to aesthetic creations. Rather than always fighting God, what if we cooperating with God. Faithful

When God Dwells Among Us—Exodus 40:34-38; John 1

15th Sermon

Exegetical Observations:

1. In this final paragraph of the book, the cloud and the glory of the Lord are brought together as God “condescends” the divine self and comes down from the top of the mountain to dwell among the people.
2. In this paragraph we have the opportunity to see the merging of the transcendence and immanence of God. In a bit of a paradox, God is both transcendent and immanent, far and near, at the same time.
3. God is pitching his tent with Israel, yet not even Moses could enter the tent. This point is in contrast with ch. 33 where Moses entered a tent to communicate with God.
4. Specific language is used in this paragraph:
 - a. The “glory of the Lord” descends in a cloud
 - b. This cloud “covers” the tent
 - c. It “fills” the tabernacle
 - d. Moses cannot enter the tabernacle because of the preceding two points.
5. This section also highlights the ongoing presence of God with the people by demonstrating how Israel will move in the wilderness.
 - a. Cloud lifts, they set out
 - b. Cloud does not lift, they do not set out
 - c. Led by a cloud by day
 - d. A fire in the cloud by night (burning bush)
 - e. Cloud is in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels
6. This paragraph functions much like 2 Kings 25:27-30 when Jehoiachin is released from prison and sits at the Babylonian king’s table. His release and changing of garments may signal hope for the exiles that they too will be released from prison (exile) and return to the table God sets in Jerusalem. This paragraph provides hope that regardless where Israel is, in the wilderness, in the land, in exile, God is with them. This portable sanctuary reassures the Israelites that their God is on the move and they can worship him wherever. In fact, the temple may have proved more of an obstacle to worship than a facilitator.
7. Reflection on the transition in Psalm 89-90 may also be helpful Psalm 89 depicts the demise of the Davidic covenant and the all the hopes and dreams associated with it. The psalmist raises all kinds of questions and wonders what the future holds. Psalm 90 begins with a superscription that ascribes the Psalm to Moses, perhaps a reminder that worship was possible before David and before the temple. God was acknowledged as king in the wilderness and the people worshiped the Lord quite well without all the trappings of monarchy and temple. Perhaps simplicity and faithfulness are the keys to proper worship—and this can be done

anywhere because God dwells with us. Col. 1:15-20; John 1:14-16; Ephesians 1:23.

Preaching Possibilities:

1. God is With Us—One of the primary points that the tabernacle sections make is that God is portable—or can travel with them wherever they are. This means that God is with them in the wilderness, in the land and in exile. One might think of the ending of Matthew's gospel where Jesus tells the disciples, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
2. Near and Far—the book of Exodus is an excellent place to preach both the transcendence and immanence of God. The mountain embodies God's transcendence and the tabernacle the immanence of the Lord. It holds both in tension.

Exodus 3-4	Exodus 32
<p>3: ⁶ Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.</p> <p>⁷ The LORD said, <u>"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ <i>So I have come down</i> to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the</u></p>	<p>⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses, <u>"<i>Go down</i></u>, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'</p> <p>⁹ <u>"I have seen these people,"</u> the LORD said to Moses, <u>"and they are a stiff-necked people."</u> ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that <i>my anger may burn against them</i> and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."</p> <p>¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, <i>"why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent</i></p>

Israelites out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

¹² And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

4:¹³ But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”

¹⁴ *Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses* and he said, “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you.”¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. ¹⁶ He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. ¹⁷ But take this staff in your

that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

¹³ **Remember your servants**

Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’” ¹⁴ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

hand so you can perform the signs with it."	
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