

Sunday, July 12

Read

Exodus, Chapter 36

Reflect

I must be honest, I have never read this chapter of Exodus carefully enough to find anything interesting save for descriptions of curtain designs and building frame dimensions. That is what is so cool about God's word – it continues to surprise and inspire! The first part of chapter 36 tells of some skilled craftsmen who have come to help build the new sanctuary for the Living God. I love the way the ESV puts it in verse 2, "...every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come do the work." What a wonderful image! These men were called by God to use the unique gifts they'd been given to help build a house for God, and they came to use those gifts with joy!

But what about those (like me) who wouldn't know the first thing about construction and had no gifts for craftsmanship? They too were able to participate in this exciting new chapter of Israel's life with God through giving of their resources! And they embraced that opportunity. We're told that Moses actually had to tell the people to stop bringing contributions for the sanctuary, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary" (verse 7). The people had to be "restrained from bringing gifts." Isn't that incredible!?

Respond

We are in a time of great uncertainty – not only our health with COVID-19, but with our financial stability, both individually, as a church, and as a nation. This story of the Israelites' overwhelming generosity seems miles away from our current reality, and yet we know that God remains faithful. Sometimes, especially when it comes to money, we give the leftover to God. We figure out what our expenses are and then charitably offer the remainder for the work of the Kingdom. But what would it look like to put God first? What would it look like to give even in the midst of anxiety and uncertainty?

What would it look like if FPC had to reach out to its members to "restrain them from bringing gifts because the material they had was sufficient to do all the work and more" (verse 8)? Seems impossible and yet our God is the God of the impossible – the One who conquered death itself and calls us to follow in radical faith.

Pray

God, loosen our grip on the things of this world. Help us to overcome our driving desire for certainty and control that we might lean a bit deeper into trusting you. Give us open hands and hearts ready to respond to your extravagant grace, and Lord, give us wisdom that we might

discern our gifts, how to give, how much to give, and how to best follow the example of your Son Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.