

July 12, 2009 Temple Baptist Church, Jamestown, ND

TITLE: JOINING IN GOD'S AMAZING WORK, Exodus 35:4-36:7; Numbers 7

Last Monday marked a special anniversary. What was it? 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. July 20, 1969. How many of you remember watching it? **One week and five years earlier was another event that significantly impacts each of us here.** July 14, 1964 marks the beginning of this church congregation. 45 years ago.

Last Tuesday evening, July 21, 2009 will be a significant marker for our church, the date we voted to begin construction on the new facility. When completed we will move from this location in NW Jamestown to an area west of the high school in NE Jamestown.

The TBC family voted to move forward with the project with an **86% approval**. That number would have been even higher but for a provision to secure financing for the project not to exceed \$1 million. *Should we really open ourselves to borrowing this much money?* The figure is based on the amount we have raised (about \$750,000) + the \$300,000 pledged over the next 2 years subtracted from the projected estimate of \$2 million = about \$1 million.

As I shared both last Tuesday and a couple weeks ago, **I don't think we'll have to borrow that much because we haven't factored in new giving, increased giving or any \$ realized from the sale of our current facility.** Those numbers are uncertain and hence the \$1 million figure.

What would happen if people gave and we borrowed only \$750,000? What would happen if people gave and we only borrowed only half of the original amount, i.e. \$500,000? What would happen if we only borrowed \$250,000 . . . or maybe not have to borrow any money at all? Is that possible?

I want to remind you of a story from the Old Testament that seems almost too amazing to be true. It has to do with the initial construction of the tabernacle (called the Tent of Meeting), all the articles associated with sacrifice and worship, the intricate coverings and curtains, and the beautiful and costly garments for the priests.

Let's read about it in Exodus 35:4-36:7. The people bring gold, silver, bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen for the curtains and priestly garments; goat hair, ram skins dyed red and the hides of sea cows for the tabernacle coverings; acacia wood for the poles; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and fragrant incense; onyx stones and other gems for the ephod and breastpiece worn by the high priest.

Chapter 38 lists the amount of gold, silver and bronze contributed. By today's prices the gold was worth over \$25 million, the silver over \$1.2 million. I don't have a way to price the bronze. That doesn't include the acacia wood, the hides for coverings, the costly yarn and fine linen, the gems . . . or the labor. This is simply the value of two of the raw materials.

After it is completed the people have a special dedication service, recorded in Numbers 7. More gifts are given, including gold and silver plates and bowls worth another \$45,000. Add fine flour and oil, 12 young bulls, 12 rams and 12 male lambs (1 year old) for burnt offerings plus another 24 oxen, 60 rams, 60 male goats and 60 male lambs (1 year old) for feeding the throng of people during the festival and you can see that this was a huge celebration. (They fed over a million people!) But that's not all. The 12 tribes get together to give 12 oxen and 6 covered carts as gifts to the Levites to help haul the tabernacle and its furnishings from place to place. That would be like gifting 6 1-ton pickups and 6 covered trailers at about \$75,000 for each of the six units.

Where did the people get all of this? (Audience participation.) A lot, perhaps most, of the gold came from the Egyptians, from whom the Israelites asked for gifts when they left Egypt. But not all of the articles listed come from their plundering of the Egyptians. The silver is collected from the census of the males 20 years old and older.

What I find most interesting is what is stated in Exodus 36:3 and following. Day after day the people keep bringing gifts for the tabernacle. But then the workmen begin to complain. Why? They have too much! **Moses tells the people to stop giving.** Have you ever heard anyone say that they had more than enough for a project? **What would happen if the people overseeing the building would come to us and say we have more than enough?** \$300,000 is pledged by many in the TBC family to be given in the next two years. I believe the other \$1 million could also come in during this time.

Before you make a call for the Jamestown Police Department to pick me up and take me to the south hill, I want to draw your attention to the text. Amazing things happen when God's people are . . .

- Willing

"From what you have, take an offering for the LORD, Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering." Exodus 35:5

Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all it s service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought . . . They presented . . . to the LORD. Exodus 35:21-22

All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the LORD freewill offerings for all the work the LORD through Moses commanded them to do.
Exodus 35:29

Being willing is the first step. The Bible says it starts where? The heart. *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7

The speaker last week at the Sunday service at the NAB Triennial Conference told a story about attending a White Sox game when he was in Chicago recently. He got turned around and parked in an area that made him a little nervous. While he was walking to the stadium a large African-American man with gold chains and jewelry told him he was going the wrong way. Finally, after the third time he listened, and then was given the *opportunity* to contribute to the children's program at a nearby Baptist church.

Folks we don't have large men standing over us to encourage us to be *willing*. It starts in our hearts, but amazing things happen when God's people are willing. Amazing things happen when God's people are . . .

- Generous.

The people give over \$26 million in silver and gold alone. Wow! So much material is given that the workmen complain to Moses that there is more than enough to complete the project.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:2-5. **Generosity starts from willing hearts, giving to God whatever it is we have.** Amazing things happen when God's people are generous. Amazing things happen when God's people are . . .

- Faithful.

The people don't just give material things. What else do they give? Labor. Bezalel and Oholiab train men with the right aptitude and ability as craftsmen, but there are others who help. The women who are skilled spin the blue, purple and scarlet yarn, the fine linen and the goat hair.

Some people contribute by spinning yarn, weaving, working with wood, tanning and sewing hides for the coverings of the Tent of Meeting, setting gems, covering the wood frames of the ark, table, altar, poles, posts and bases with gold, silver and bronze; making the mold casts and then making the utensils and tools used in the worship; etc.

They do so willingly. Faithfully. They receive the offerings the people bring to Moses and fashion them into the articles, framing and coverings for the Tent of Meeting, as well as for the priests who will minister in it.

They are faithful, as are those giving the materials. The Bible says, *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.* 1 Corinthians 4:2

In our own building project we've had people give their skills – from Brian contributing hours of his time in developing the site plan, to Todd and Perry Johnson helping with the structural engineering, to Kelly assisting in the financial applications. Those are just a few examples. Although we voted to secure financing not to exceed \$1 million the Elder Board and Building Committee will give their best to make wise decisions so that we NOT borrow needlessly or in a way that prevents us from trusting God. We, in turn, must encourage those given much responsibility and be willing to be part of the solution if there is a need we can help meet.

Amazing things happen when God's people are faithful. Amazing things happen when God's people are . . .

- United.

One of the things I most appreciated about the meeting Tuesday evening was how **people shared their concerns, experiences, faith challenges and questions**. We need to hear from each other as we listen together to our Lord. That's the purpose of the body. I can't possibly hear all that my Lord wants me to hear. I need you. We need each other. The response when we voted was also heartening.

The people work together. I know that this may seem obvious, but it doesn't always happen that way. Some need to lead; some need to teach; some need to do different things; some have the task of supporting those who do the work. But the project involves all the people, men and women. Working together does not happen randomly; it takes the effort of some to direct that effort, just like Nehemiah did with the work on the wall around Jerusalem hundreds of years later.

The Bible says, *The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.* 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27 Amazing things happen when God's people are united. Amazing things happen when God's people are . . .

- Led by the Holy Spirit.

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts . . . And he has given

both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. . . So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the Lord has commanded.” Exodus 35:30-31, 34; 36:1

Verse 2 says that the people are willing, but quality control is also important. **Just because I may be willing to help in a given area in the building construction does not mean I should do things that would endanger me, others, or the plan itself.** We must realize that the reverse is also true. **How many people do we know that can do something but are unwilling?**

The constructing of the Tent of Meeting and all of the worship-related items, including the priestly garments is done by **those whom the Spirit of God gifted for this task.** Each person contributes according as he is willing and able. It is a **spiritual work.** We must not fail to realize that though the new building is a tool for ministry, it is, nevertheless, a work that must be directed by the Holy Spirit. It is a spiritual work.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit. . . From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:3, 4, 16 Amazing things happen when God’s people are led by the Holy Spirit. Amazing things happen when God’s people are . . .

- Working to glorify God.

Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. Exodus 35:21 (cf. vss. 5, 22, 29)

The people were **motivated because this was for the Lord.** *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23, 24 (cf. vs. 17)* Amazing things happen when God’s people are working to glorify God.

Conclusion. Please pray for the progress of the structural engineering work. When that is completed those plans will be submitted along with the site plans to the city for their approval and a permit to begin construction. Pray for speedy approval and for the companies doing the dirt work and footings to be able to begin and coordinate their work soon. Amazing things happen when God’s people give themselves to join God in what He is doing. (Pray.)