

1 Kings 8:54-66

Come and See. Go and Tell.

All of us have seminal moments that shape the rest of our life. I immediately think of the day I met my wife or when I talked to an ambassador of what would become my alma mater while still in high school. A single moment; a single conversation; a single experience can be enough to shape the rest of our lives.

The consecration of Solomon's Temple is such a moment for the Israelites. Their experience here is to shape the rest of their life. This generation of Hebrews experienced the presence of God. What a seminal moment for them.

Having encountered God, Solomon directs our attention to **rest** (vs. 54-56) which is the deep longing of the human soul and a major theme of Scripture. First introduced in Creation, humans are exiled from rest the minute sin enters the story. We are searching for rest, but all we find is chaos, stress, violence, and fear. One thinker described themselves as neither an early bird nor as a night owl. They were more like "a permanently exhausted pigeon."

The Mosaic code introduced Sabbath Law whereby Israel where to practice rest. But rest is more than a command. After all, how many of us experience fatigue despite hours of sleep? Rest cannot be secured by law or by pills. This is why the Bible describes Sabbath Promise (see Exodus 33:14; Joshua 1:13, 22:4). Solomon sees the consecration of the temple and, with it, the presence of God as the fulfillment of that promise. When God is with his people, there is rest. People who come near to God find rest.

The problem is Rest didn't last long. Israel walked away from God, and thus, chose sin over righteousness. This is what happens when you walk away from the presence of God (see Psalm 22:2, 55:6). This is the universal problem. And it needs a universal solution. The answer the Bible gives is Christ. Jesus encourages us to surrender all our weariness and burdens promising to give us rest (Matthew 11:28-30). The principle we see with Solomon remains the same for us today. As we draw near our Savior, we find rest for our weary souls. Tim Keller assured us prior to his death that "If the resurrection is true, then everything's going to be alright."

Solomon then draws the reader to consider **righteousness** (vs. 57-61). One cannot encounter the living God without being changed. Righteousness is not about rule keeping but honoring an intimate relationship. When I married my wife, I didn't need a list of rules. Love was reason enough to treat her with respect, to be sensitive to her needs, and to put up with her parents.¹ Love sanctifies and purifies.

¹ Tongue in cheek.

When we move away from intimacy with God, we will surrender to sin. The closer we are to God, the more we will grow in righteousness. The farther away we are from God, the deeper into sin we sink. Solomon reminded Israel that God's people reflect God's image. Our love for God should draw us to grow in love. Notice the emphasis on relationship. Resting in Christ stirs the righteousness of Christ.

The New Testament repeats the same. When our identity is in Christ, we grow in righteousness and love (see 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Paul exhorts Timothy to "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, [and] gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11).

Solomon then directs our attention, again, to the theme of **redemption** (vs. 62-66). The passage ends with a series of offerings mirroring the opening scene. That means that the chapter opens and concludes with atonement. It's the blood of the lamb that draws us to the Lord and maintains that relationship.

Thousands of animals were sacrificed. The numbers are hardly believable. What matters is the extent of their dedication. They offer all the best to the Lord. The blood of such animals was supposed to be costly and to be a striking reminder of the depth of their sin. The context of these events is the Feast of Booths. This was a time of remembrance of God's deliverance from Egypt. Solomon sees the consecration of the Temple as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises made when he delivered them. Finally, God has given them rest. Finally, God has made his people righteous. Finally, God was permanently dwelling with his people.

On February 8, 2023, Asbury students remained in the chapel following the morning chapel service for prayer. Worship continued until February 24, 2023. The Asbury Revival was an incredible moment, one we have been crying out for and continue to cry out for. It was so impactful that school officials had to both encourage the outpouring while continuing to function as a school. If it were up to the students, clearly, they would have wanted to stay. Who would want to leave the presence of God? Truth is, encountering God should draw us to the rest of the world.

The text suggests, and scholars concur, that the consecration of the Temple, coinciding with the Feast of Tabernacles lasted for 14 days. We can sympathize with the sentiment. Who would want to leave the presence of God. But eventually, Solomon had to send them home. Here we are, sojourners among exiles. Let it be that having encountered God in Christ, we experience the same as the Israelites – Rest, Righteousness, and Redemption.