

THE CONVERSATION - ENCOUNTER SERIES

By Pastors Dan and Ben

Dan: Good morning Life Fellowship. We are just finishing up this series called ‘Encounter’ where we have spent the last ten weeks going over the tabernacle. And I have to tell you that even though I have been doing this for 20 some odd years, I don’t know when I have enjoyed prepping, studying and presenting a series more than I have enjoyed this one. One of the great things about team teaching and collaborative preparation, which we did for this series, is that iron sharpens iron. And to be able to be with Pastor Ben on this and to kind of go back and forth on some of the ideas, digging down in it to explore it, and sometimes debate a little or argue a little bit, has been really good. It has been good for us at least, and I hope it has been good for you. I hope you feel like you understand the tabernacle in a way that you haven’t understood it in the past, and that it has been a fresh look at it.

So we thought as we were finishing this series up after doing it through most of the fall, and now it is the week before Thanksgiving when a lot of people will start traveling soon for that, and then next week we will start Advent. And what we kind of wanted to do today was take a breath and just have a conversation about the tabernacle. And we thought maybe Ben and I would have the conversation with you all listening in because we have been asking each other questions back and forth, as well as hearing some of your questions, so we have kind of incorporated those into it.

But before we get to that we wanted to do a couple of housekeeping things. First of all we want to talk to you about the rest of the year in going into 2019. We are starting a new series next week. Pastor Ben, why don’t you go ahead and tell about that.”

Ben: “Thanks, Dan. I am not sure how many of you have been part of a church that has gone through Advent, but we are going to be doing an Advent series. It is part of the traditional Christian calendar, and the whole idea is preparing our hearts not only for the Advent season, which is when the first Advent happened when Christ came, but also to prepare our hearts for the second Advent. Most people don’t realize that part of recognizing the incarnation of Christ is not just to celebrate Christmas when He came the first time, but it is also to prepare our hearts for the second coming. We are calling this series, ‘Living the Nativity.’ I am sure you have heard of a living nativity, and we are going to try to do the nativity scene that many people have in their homes for Christmas. And we are going to try and show you what it means to live out the nativity. So for the next five weeks we are going to be looking at all the different aspects of the Advent, the first Advent of Christ, and also looking how it points to His second Advent as well.”

Dan: “I also want to mention this before you talk about the rest of the year because this is one of our core values, how we are doing this. And you can anticipate seeing some of this coming up in 2019 as well, because one of our core values is root and relevance. Bobby often referred to it as ancient and future. There are some things about the church historically that they have done in practice that the contemporary church kind of disdains. And we need to make sure we maintain our connection to those roots. So the celebration of Advent is something that is as old as the church itself. And we want to make sure that is why we are doing it.

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In the Easter season we have something planned that I am excited about as well. I can't talk about it yet, even though when I get excited I want to blab it. I have to have someone kind of pull the reins back for me. But we do have some things coming up like the days of Pentecost and other days throughout the church year that historically have significance in the Christian calendar. So we want to touch those from time to time. Again it is part of what makes Life Fellowship unique, because you can come in here and we have contemporary approaches to ministry. We have contemporary music as well as ancient hymns all in one service. So throughout the course of the year we will have really relevant series, and we will also have some of these touch points with the Christian calendar and that is intentional.

Now as we end the year there is a tradition that we established several years ago at Life, and we are going to keep up, and that is the sacred communion service on the last Sunday of the year. So on the last Sunday of the year, when a lot of people still have family in between Christmas and New Year's, we want to invite you to bring your family members in for that service. There will be limited other things going on, such as child care for just the youngest, so you can sit with your family. Pastor Ben will be leading that service this year, and the whole service will be nothing but a celebration of the broken body and spilled blood of Christ and all that it means for us.

Then we have been working on the first Sunday in January for several weeks and we are so excited about it because we are going to have Vision Sunday, and we are going to talk to you about all the different things planned for 2019. We have all the services planned for 2019 and we will be telling you about the series that we are going to kick off in January. We will have things going on with missions, so we want you to be here and get a glimpse of 2019.

This probably should be one of the biggest Sundays of the year because everyone will be back from the holidays, so go ahead and mark that one on your calendar. The first Sunday in January you want to be at Life Fellowship for Vision Sunday. It is going to be a great day and we are excited to be able to share some of the things we have planned.

Obviously in all honesty when Ben and I started working on this series this summer we had no idea it was just going to be the two of us teaching. So this has been a fall of transition as you all know. There has been an elephant in the room, with you probably wondering what is going on and where are we going from here. But what we are doing is going Sunday by Sunday, stepping by faith, and the Elders and the staff are working together in making plans.

And this morning I wanted you to learn a little of Ben's story and how he ended up here, and our past connection, because not everybody knows this. And some people that do know about it may have the wrong impression of some things. So I want Ben to tell you how we know each other and a little bit of his background.

Ben: I have known Dan since I was 15 years old, believe it or not.

Dan: He used to swim in my swimming pool in Florida.

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Ben: “Don’t tell the other stories. I am not going to take a lot of time, maybe about five minutes, just to give you a background. My mom and Julie, (Dan’s wife) grew up together in the same church in West Palm Beach, Florida. And then my family and I would go down to visit my grandparents in West Palm Beach, and because my grandmother was a part of Dan’s church many times we would go to his house.

Then when I was in Bible College I wanted to do an internship and who doesn’t want to spend a summer in Florida? I was from Pennsylvania so who doesn’t want to spend time in Florida in the winter time? Obviously I loved this guy and I wanted to spend a few months with him. So we spent three months together when I interned under him at his former church in Florida. And then later when Dan moved to Charlotte in 2000 he was looking for a youth pastor.

Dan: And here is a secret. When you come on a new church staff you get to make changes, so I changed the youth pastor position so I could hire Ben because that is how much I believed in him.

Ben: So we got connected again. Obviously after working with him for three months I realized that it was really important for a young guy starting in ministry to work under the right kind of leadership. I loved Dan and I trusted him because we align so much in our values even though we are very different. The core of what we believe was aligned and so I worked under Dan for six years at Northside Baptist Church as his youth pastor. Then we split ways in 2006, because after about five years into the church where we were serving I felt God calling me into church planting.

When I got that call from God it was on a February evening during a Sunday night church service. It was a long story, but I went home that night and told my wife, who was eight months pregnant with our third child, that God wanted us to start a church. That wasn’t the best idea to do at that time. She asked me what that meant, and did that mean I was quitting tomorrow. And I told her that I didn’t know, but that we needed to pray about it.

We prayed for three months, and I studied and researched everything I could find on church planting. And I came to the conclusion that the best way to church plant was to take an existing group of people and resources from one local church and plant out of that. But here was the problem - every pastor I knew wanted more people and money not fewer people and less money. So how was this going to work?

Even though Dan and I had a great relationship I knew God wanted me to leave there and go plant a church. So Dan and I went out to eat at Zipotes in the University City area and I will never forget sitting across the table from him there. As I sat there I was wondering how I was ever going to bring this up to Dan, when he suddenly turned to me and said, ‘*You know, Ben, God has been working in my heart to start a church out of Northside. Would you be interested in doing that?*’

It was just one of those God moments that He orchestrated. So we were sent out of Northside to plant a church and that is kind of where our paths parted until this past spring when God brought us back together. I won’t go into all of it, but I just wanted to let you know how

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God has orchestrated the events of bringing Dan and I back together. And to let you know that I have known Dan for 25 plus years, and I have a lot of love and respect for him.

Dan: Two quick stories: I had no part in Ben actually coming to join Life's team. He met Bobby at a meeting somewhere, and then Bobby asked me a few questions about him. And of course I love Ben like a brother, so the next thing I knew Bobby came in my office one day and said, '*Hey, I think I am going to bring Ben on staff to help us plant churches and do some teaching and so forth.*' And I was like, '*Yes, that's exciting.*' So I had no part in hiring Ben but God in His sovereign foreknowledge and wisdom allowed it.

Last year I was having a morbid conversation with my wife about dying and that kind of stuff. We were even talking about my funeral. Now for me it was speculative, and for her it may have been wishful thinking. (*Laughter.*) I have a lot of acquaintances in ministry and a lot of people have made impacts in my life, but I told my wife that I would like for Ben Rudolph to do my funeral. That is the kind of esteem and love that I hold this man in.

Another quick story is that his grandparents were members of my church, Grace Fellowship, in West Palm Beach. And his step grandfather was one of the crankiest old geezers you ever met in your entire life. I can say that now because he is dead, and because he knew that he was a cranky geezer. But before I could marry Julie he made it very, very clear I had to get his approval. I had to go do business at his house to get his seal of approval before I could propose to Julie. So I just wanted you to kind of get a little glimpse of Ben and I. Truly I just feel so blessed and thankful to be in Ben's life.

Ben: Likewise.

Dan: This is one of the things that Bobby had a vision for that I am really excited about as we move forward here at Life. And that is our approach to church leadership is that we want it to be multi-generational, and we want to come from a variety of angles. As you can tell I am much younger than Ben. No, not really, we have a few years in between us. I am in my 50s and he is in his 40s, and like he said we are quite different people. But at the same time we love the Word. He is good for me spiritually, and I appreciate the way he gets up and asks me tough questions sometimes.

So we kind of wanted you all to get a sense of why we have taught this series on the tabernacle, and then what is going on here at Life with Ben and me. And by the way, Ben is Mr. Social so if you want to grab a cup of coffee with him, or take him out to lunch and get to know him, you ought to do that because he will be a blessing to you. I have been around a lot longer here than he has, so be sure and meet him, because you will be blessed.

Now let's talk about 'Encounter.' One of the questions Ben loves to ask me, he is always doing this to me, so now I am a little prepared for him when he does, but he always comes in and says, '*So Dan, what is God teaching you today?*' or '*What is God teaching you right now?*' And the first time he asked me that question I wondered if he knew something I didn't know about or that maybe God wanted me to do something I didn't know about. I was Mr. Paranoid, but now I know that this is part of his vernacular, and how he explores what God is teaching him. So Ben,

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I am going to throw it at you, ‘*What has God been teaching you personally through this Encounter Series?*’

Ben: I think that is a great question, because one of the things that I think are important for you guys to understand is that when we get up here and preach on a Sunday morning, there is so much stuff that God is doing inside of us. And so it is not just a speech we are preparing, hopefully what we are sharing with you is an overflow of what God has been pouring into us. I will just say this, Dan, over the last couple of months that we have been studying the tabernacle, there are two things that I could say. And that is I have a growing appreciation for the Old Testament, because I think when you study the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, you just see the intricacies of how God has orchestrated the patterns and so forth.

I think sometimes as Christians it is very easy for us to read the New Testament because Jesus is there. And the Old Testament is older, it is a different culture, it is an eastern mindset setting on a western mindset, and sometimes there are layers of culture that have to be broken through. But when I realized how much of the tabernacle pictured Christ I had a greater appreciation of the Old Testament, and a deeper love for Jesus. I think when we see how every single part of the tabernacle points to and models Christ it will just blow us away.

Last week when I was talking about the Mercy Seat I have to be honest and tell you that this was the first time I had ever really studied the Mercy Seat in a deep way. And I can’t tell you how many times I would put down my pen and paper and just worship God while I was studying it two weeks ago. I just had an deep appreciation for the historical narrative that God has orchestrated and that we get to see in His word. So that is what God has been doing in me personally, so now what about you?

Dan: I knew he was going to ask that question. First of all I want to say that that point you made about appreciation for the Old Testament, I hope you all understand how important that point really is. Do you know that there are some leading evangelicals today, and you could go Google search them and find out who I am talking about, but there are some leading evangelicals today who are saying that the Old Testament is irrelevant to New Testament Christianity. And they say we shouldn’t even teach it because it won’t relate to the millennials and so on. And there is a theological term that I like to apply to that kind of teaching and it is this: ‘Hogwash!’
(*Laughter.*)

The Scripture tells us to give the whole counsel of God, and you can see the plan of salvation intricately woven from Genesis to Revelations. And it ought not be dismissed. It ought not be dismissed because we desire to be culturally relevant, we ought to want to be spiritually and theologically sound more than culturally relevant. (*Amen.*) So it is important that we teach the whole counsel.

But back to answering Ben’s question, I think there were two things that I came away with. One of them was a fresh appreciation for the majesty of God because even in the midst of a desert, in the midst of a time in history where there were no niceties, God gave precise, well defined, intricate ways to signify how majestic He is. We sang that first song this morning about

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the majesty of God, and I was reminded of it again. Every part of creation from the smallest little bug to what He has prepared for us in eternity has God's fingerprints on it, and it points to His incredible majesty, his attention to detail. And I think in our generation and in our culture we have commonalized God to a point that it is blasphemous, and we need to as a prophet in the Old Testament said, "**See Him high and lifted up.**" And when he encountered God he said, "**Woe unto me, I am undone.**" If we could really see God the way that He is and the way that we are, I think we would have a completely different posture before Him.

The other thing that I came away with was just the fresh love I have for God's sovereign plan for our redemption. You know when we messed it up in the Garden He could have snapped His fingers and it would have been as if we had never existed. He could have sent us into outer torment for the rest of eternity. He had all kinds of options yet He chose the most costly one, the forgiveness route, the sacrifice route, the personal pain route, because He has always desired that relationship with Him. From the moment He created us unto the plan of redemption, God's desire is that we encounter Him.

And so when I see these images in the Scripture, I get this picture of the father with this little lamb, and the kids are watching and wondering what their father is going to do with this lamb. The father puts his hand on the lamb's head, he prays, and the sins are transferred figuratively to it. And then the priest slits the lamb's throat in front of the kids. Can you imagine the trauma? And yet this is a picture, the traumatic picture of what God did so that He could put us in a position of reconciliation with Him. What a wonderful gift.

Ben: All right. Now we probably could have preached on longer, kept going with this series.

Dan: For a year.

Ben: For a year. There were so many things that we could have kept preaching on. What were some other issues you wish you could have dove into or addressed a little bit deeper. If you had to preach another sermon, what would it have been on?

Dan: There are a lot of things, but I think one of the aspects would have been by just seeing all the imagery. For instance, there was the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. You had the father bringing his children. You had the gate. All of these things were saying, '*Come to me, come to me, come to me.*' And if I could preach one more sermon I would ask this question, '*What are you and I doing right now that calls others to come to Him?*'

I am stealing Ben's phrase but I love this and I am trying to just keep it in front of my head all the time. '*Who do you know right now that is far from God, but close to you, that God wants you to bring them to an encounter with Him?*' '*Who do you know right now that is far from God, but close to you, that God wants you to use your influence in their life to bring them into an encounter with Him?*' And if I had one more sermon we would talk about that.

Now, Ben, if you could preach one more sermon, what would you preach it on?

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Ben: Yeah, I was actually working on another sermon. When we were first starting this series we didn't know how long it would go, and so there was one sermon that I wish I could have preached, and maybe one day I will, and it is called, 'The Living Tabernacle.'

If you look at the New Testament, one of the things that Paul makes clear is that we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. How many of you are familiar with the story of Acts Chapter 2 and the day of Pentecost? That is where the flames appeared on the believer's heads. Are you all familiar with that story? When the Holy Spirit came after Christ ascended, on the day of Pentecost I have always wondered what that flame represented. And it really relates back to the tabernacle because you have the Shekinah glory, you have the flame that was supposed to be present. And there was the cloud by day and the fire by night, so when the flames were above the New Testament believers' heads what I believe it was saying was we are now living tabernacles. We are living temples. Now the presence of God is inside of us.

There is a great passage of Scripture in I Corinthians, and if I could preach one more sermon it would be on our own personal holiness. I think we got a great picture of the holiness of God in this series, but I think one of the things that maybe we have missed, and maybe we are afraid to talk about, is our own personal holiness. I think that one of the things you and I try to stay away from is being viewed as legalists in any way. Being a legalist is very scary to us.

But I want you to see this in I Corinthians Chapter 6 and this is what Paul wrote to the church of Corinth: "***Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you now know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.***"

I just think that is something that for us as Christians today in 21st century America we have lost a sense and a desire to realize the importance of our own personal holiness. And we have to start asking ourselves if we are expressing in our lives a sense of holiness in the way we talk with one another, the way we talk around the office. Do we have a sense of holiness in the way we dress? And again I am not trying to be legalistic, but there is such a thing as modesty and why people dress the way they do today.

I have to tell you this quick story. I was in Starbucks about a week ago meeting with another person for discipleship. And there were these two teenage girls, they looked like college age girls, that were sitting across the table from each other. And for an hour they were swiping their phones showing each other pictures. I am not kidding, they did not have a regular conversation; all they did for an hour was look at their phones. And I was like, is this what people do nowadays? But what was interesting was all of the poses that people were doing. It wasn't just the girls, it was also the guys in the mirror in their tank tops posing. I was just thinking - what is going on today?

Here is what I heard that someone said about today's younger generation. '*They think with their eyes.*' And we have to be very careful. Dads, it is your job to teach your kids, especially your daughters how to dress modestly. It is important, not because we are interested in

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their external appearance, but because we believe our holiness matters. If we are to help people to encounter God, we have to show ourselves in such a way that we are distinct from the world.

I was talking about this issue of holiness with a friend this week. And he said, '*Holiness is like chocolate chips in chocolate chip cookies.*' Now I love chocolate chip cookies and the chocolate chips are the one thing that are distinct in their mixture. You see chocolate chips do not lose their form even with intense heat. Everything else - the eggs, the sugar, the flour, it all kind of comes together, but the chocolate chips remain distinct, even under intense heat.

I just love that idea of being in the world but not of the world. Listen, if we are not acting holy, if we don't have the same sexual standards as God has in His word, if we are not displaying the holiness of God that is inside of us to a lost world, what is going to be attractive about this God that we worship? So I think that is one sermon on the holiness of God that I would have wanted to do.

Dan: That's an awesome topic.

Ben: Yes, it is.

Dan: You know what I love? I love the fact that we can have that kind of conversation in this church, because you know a lot of churches are afraid to have tough conversations like that as they are afraid people will head for the exits or not return. But you know if you come to church just looking to have your lifestyle affirmed, your decisions affirmed, and your thinking affirmed, then why bother? Part of coming to church is to come into contact with truth, and sometimes that truth pokes you in the eye.

Ben: Let me ask you a couple of questions, because I think when everyone hears about holiness they want to be more holy, so how do you, because you have lived on this earth a lot longer than I have....

Dan: Well, thank you for that. (*Laughter.*)

Ben: How do you live holy without going into the other lane of legalism? What would you say, what advice would you give to us?

Dan: Well, I suspect you asked that question because you know my past, and I know your past as well. We both grew up in environments and cultures that were heavily, heavily legalistic, where we viewed God in terms of a big check list. He loves me when I am good, and He punishes me when I am bad, and I somehow have to earn His favor. So if I am really, really good God will bless me. That is kind of how we both grew up.

By the way the true definition of legalism is that theologically you believe you have to work in order to have salvation. The evangelical form of legalism is that I have to work in order to be accepted by God even if I am saved. And neither one of those definitions are correct. But I will tell you this, and this is something that Paul taught, and that is we have to die daily. The fact is that when we walk in the world, we talk in the world, we work in the world, and we do all these

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different things in the world, we get dust on our feet and we get dust on our clothes. And it is harder for this generation than any generation before.

Ben: Yeah.

Dan: I mean I am glad my kids are adults, because some of you are raising younger kids, and now I worry about my grandkids growing up, because of the temptations, the access to the filthy unholy things is just there constantly. At the same time stop and think about what was going on in the days of the early church, when they had temples that were actually houses of prostitution, where people would bring their children to be defiled sexually as an act of worship. So sometimes we Americanize and we think of the Puritans and so forth, and that's our context of how bad we have gotten since then. But this world is a nasty place and if we are going to survive it, we have to die daily, take up our cross and follow Him.

We also have to remember that none of us are above sinning. That every single one of us, I don't care how long we have been a believer, or how close we have walked with God at any point in our human existence, tomorrow is a fresh opportunity for Satan to derail us. And I don't think any believer wakes up one day and says, *'Man, today is the day I am going to trash my reputation. Today is the day I am going to bring dishonor upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And perhaps I will do something so colossally bad that maybe I will lose my job or my family in the process.'* We don't do that because Satan is far more subtle than that.

Ben: That's right.

Dan: So we have to be aware of those little compromises that lead us to a position of tremendous failure. And it is just a constant struggle. The Bible says, ***"Take heed where you stand, lest you fall."*** If you enjoy looking at other people's sins, then make sure you watch out, lest you also be overtaken. It is just walking in humility, walking in self-awareness, and walking day by day with this commitment to the Lord.

Ben: That's good.

Dan: Well, let me ask you how do you hope that this teaching series is going to impact our church in their daily encounters with God?

Ben: Yes, I was thinking about that. One of the things that we did over and over again was we kept alluding back to Hebrews, especially chapters 8 through 10. And the writer of Hebrews is explaining how Christ is the better, He is the better sacrifice, He is the better high priest, He is the better temple. He is everything better. And the writer of Hebrews ends this dissertation on the tabernacle in chapters 8 through 10, by saying since all of this is true about Christ we need to boldly approach the throne of grace.

And when it comes to our daily encounter with God, here is what I find, and I mentioned this a little bit last week. I think that for most of us there is a hesitancy to approach the throne of grace. And it is because we know that we have not lived perfect lives, that we have messed up, and that none of us bat a thousand every single day. And so we might lose our temper at our

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kids, or we might do something that compromises our testimony in our workplace, or we might say or do something while we are driving that just doesn't display the heart and mind of Christ. So every day we struggle with sin. We know that we are not perfect, and so every day when we wake up the way the enemy attacks us to remind us of all of our failings.

So one of the things that I think we have to do is we have to fight against that and say, '*I need to run to Jesus every single morning no matter how badly I lived yesterday. No matter how many times I messed up yesterday, I know I just need to run to Him this morning.*' I just think about those of you who are parents, if you had a child that was doing things that they shouldn't do, if they are making some really bad choices, what would you want them to do? Would you want them to run away from you, distance themselves from you, or run to you to get help?

Every single one of us as parents would want them to run to us. And if we in our fallenness, in our own imperfections, have that kind of love for our children, how much more does God have that love for us? He wants us to wake up every day and run to Him. So if there is one thing that I would want us to do every single day it is to run to Jesus, boldly approaching the throne of grace because we understand that we have coverage under the blood of Christ.

So Dan, what do you hope will change in our church or in our people's lives because of this series?

Dan: I think one of the things, and there are several, but one of the things that for me is important is that we get hold of how the gospel is portrayed in this tabernacle, and then we share it. I have been part of this church now for eight years and there are so many great things about this church. I love the fact that this church loves studying the Bible. I love that. I love the fact that we enjoy coming and hearing how to defend our faith. I think that is one of the things that makes this church wonderful, and it is one of the things that attracted me here in the beginning. I love the fellowship we enjoy. I love the worship that we have. I love the balance of this church which is really unique.

But I will tell you what I think is one of our weaknesses. Maybe you need to brace yourself a little bit, but I think sometimes we just have to be honest. I think evangelism is one of our weaknesses. I think for a church this size we ought to be seeing more and more people give their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, follow Him in baptism, be discipled in His word, and go out and reach others for Him. I think it is a growth opportunity we need to be honest about and to talk about.

When we look at the tabernacle it is the gospel. It is the story of what was to come, when the perfect lamb of God would come and shed His blood for us. And it was in the middle of the camp, in the middle of the desert, among God's chosen people, illuminated by God's glory and it was to constantly draw people to the veil. Draw people to the veil where you had to do business with your sins. If they wanted to be reconciled and have a genuine encounter with God, there was a veil moment for every single person. And that high priest would go in and represent the people of Israel one time a year, and on that day God would forgive the people. And he was in fact

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doing it in advance of what He knew was to come when His Son would die and pay that ultimate price.

But it was always about the shed blood of Jesus Christ that the high priest, whether he was on the outside doing business with the families, or whether he was on the inside doing business for the nation, the encounter with God, the price for that, was always going to be, and still is today, the fact that Jesus Christ came to earth, loved you and me enough to die for us. And that God was willing to let His Son be the substitutionary payment for our sins so that we could have an encounter with Him that resulted in forgiveness, reconciliation and that restoration of eternal life that God always had in mind for us.

That is the gospel. And there is no greater call, there is no greater message, there is no greater mission that you and I have than to be the instrument of that message to all the world.

Ben: That's right.

Dan: And in a hundred years it is not going to matter how many degrees we got behind our name, how many great books we read, how many great arguments we had on Facebook about our positions. What is going to matter is whether or not the word of God changed the eternal destiny of the men and women, boys and girls. And God has called, God has commissioned us to be a part of that process. Otherwise we would already be in Heaven. As soon as you trust Christ you could already have gone straight to Heaven, do not pass go, do not collect two hundred bucks. Right? But no, God said to accept Him and then occupy until He comes. And what are we supposed to be doing while we are occupying? We are supposed to be about the work of the Great Commission.

So again to go back to that phrase that you use - who do you know who is far from God but close to you that God wants to use you as an instrument in their life to point them to the gospel?

Ben: He said the tabernacle is all about the gospel, and I saw something yesterday as I was reviewing my notes. And I just want to spend a minute on this. The narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection is a picture of the tabernacle. Now follow me. Jesus washes His disciples' feet which is a picture of the Bronze Layer, where the priests would wash themselves before entering the tabernacle. After Jesus washed their feet what does He do? He breaks the bread and has the Lord's Supper which is a picture of the Table of Shewbread. After the Lord's Supper where do they go? They go to the Garden of Gethsemane and pray which is a picture of the Altar of Incense.

After the Garden of Gethsemane Christ goes to the cross and at the cross is where the veil was torn. After the veil is torn Christ goes to the grave and then He is resurrected. The two cherubims are now sitting on either side of the entrance to the tomb picturing the Mercy Seat. Do you see that? Isn't that unbelievable? It is not just Christ modeling each of these things; it is the narrative of the very gospel story that Christ laid out for us.

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I am just telling you that when you see the intricacies of all these you realize that God is just unbelievable, how every human event that has transpired points to something greater than ourselves, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. So one last question, Dan - what is the concern of yours when you teach through a series like this one?

Dan: And this is true in this series and true any time I teach and that is this: that we approach Scripture incorrectly. We approach Scripture in a descriptive fashion rather than in a prescribed fashion. When we approach Scripture in a descriptive fashion what we do is we go, we look at it, we learn, and we go back until we come back again and learn something else. And that is we want the description, we want the information. And there is a part of me as a college professor that I enjoy learning and teaching, but the reason I am teaching my students is not so that they have more information and do well on the tests. The reason I should be teaching is so that I change their lives, that they go do something with what they've learned and take it to the next level ideally.

Prescriptive learning is when you walk out and you say, *'This is what I have learned and this is how it has changed me. This is what I am going to do.'* Descriptive learning hits the head; prescribed learning hits the heart and extends itself through the hands.

Ben: That's right.

Dan: And we talk about head, hands and hearts, and that is important. And please understand I am not for a shallow Christianity that doesn't study the Scripture. I am absolutely for that, but if we become high minded in our knowledge and it doesn't change the way we live, then we have all wasted our time. And we think we are really smart, but before God we are idiots. We are fools.

So that would be my greatest concern. Now you know what the tabernacle is about, but who have you shared that with? Who have you talked to about it? Who have you explained the sacrifice of God for our salvation to? When is the last time you actually shared your personal journey of salvation? And by the way I think it is really important that we don't take for granted, you know we live in Charlotte which is the belt buckle of the Bible belt of North Carolina, but we can't assume that everybody who even would call themselves a Christian really is.

Ben: That's right.

Dan: You know three weeks ago after I was teaching, I went back to my office and I was met at my office door by a young mother in the church who grew up in a Christian home. She grew up in a church but was just absolutely heartbroken. She was weeping and I wondered if something horrible had happened to her. She kind of composed herself and then she said, *'I want you to know that because we have been studying this, I realized that I knew all of the facts, but I had never genuinely had an encounter with God. And this week I prayed and I gave my heart and my life to Christ, and I am a different person because I learned that through this series.'* And that to me is the desire that all of us ought to have. We always need to remember that God is bringing people into your life on a regular basis that He wants you to share the story of salvation with and to be a testimony of the gospel.

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And then, Ben, as we kind of wrap this up, how do you hope that this teaching series is going to impact our church, from the way we approach worship, to what we do when we leave here?

Ben: I think one of the things is that Pastor Jason has done an unbelievable job at orchestrating the music that mirrors what we are talking about, and I hope you guys have appreciated their lifting up the holiness of God every single Sunday. Here is what I think we have to address. Every Sunday morning when we walk into rooms like this I think sometimes we think more about convenience than consecration. And I think because of our individualism, because of our American consumerism, we are always tempted to walk into rooms like this and hold up a number at the end of the service. That sermon was a 6.5. Or we talked about it on the way home and it was an 8.5 for us.

As opposed to that, when we gather together we need to realize that we are a part of something transcendent here. People are gathering all across the world like this, and people have been gathering like this throughout the last two thousand years. We are part of something bigger than ourselves when we gather here, and it is not about convenience, it is not about what fits my schedule, or what is best for me, or what I liked or didn't like about the service. What this has to be about every time we come into a room like this is understanding that God is the audience, that we are coming together and we are consecrating ourselves, we are giving all of who we are to all of who He is.

And I think that is really our challenge, that we do not come in here with our own ideas of what we hope is done today to make us happy, or satisfied, but that we come in here to lay it all on the line in the way we sing, in the way we listen, and in the way we pray for the glory of God.

As we close, here is what I want to leave you with. What is the application point that God wants you to take away from this series? For some of you it might be about holiness as it was for me. For some of you it might not be just about your own encounter with God, but the way that other people encounter God. Here is what I know, every single one of us has an opportunity to encounter God in a fresh way as a result of what we have learned, as a result of what we have been through over the last ten weeks. And so what I want to do as we close off this service and close off this series is I want us to spend some time in prayer and worship and asking God how He wants us to respond.

I want to ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes right now. If you have been here for any period of time, you know we have stations around the room for communion, there are crosses up here where you can come and pray, and we have a prayer team that is ready to sit and pray with anyone. So I don't know what it is that God will want you to do. I don't know how He wants you to respond today, but what I do want to give you is sixty seconds to just sit and listen to the Holy Spirit about how He wants you to encounter Him as a result of this series. Would you spend sixty seconds just asking God how He wants you to encounter Him differently? (*Silence.*)

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Now let's be obedient to Him. Maybe you have questions about what it means to encounter God personally. What Dan shared about that young mother may be your story too. Maybe you want to know how to encounter God in a real personal way. Again we have people up here in the front ready to talk and pray with you. However God wants you to respond, whether it is coming to the Lord's Table, whether it is just praying in your seat, or whether it is a commitment to share with someone the good news of Jesus Christ so they can encounter God, let's be obedient to keep encountering Him. Let's pray.

Father God, we thank you for today. We thank you for your power, your light, your love, your presence. Father, you are a God who invites us to encounter you daily, moment by moment, Sunday by Sunday. God, this is a transformational encounter. And so, God, I just pray that we will leave here differently, believing that how you want us to encounter you day by day is not in the same way we have been. God, refresh our minds with your truth and may we respond to you right now through these songs, through the acts of worship, through taking the Lord's Supper, and through praying together. Father, I just pray that you will be glorified in this room, that we will consecrate ourselves to you today, and that you would receive the worship from the depths of our hearts. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.