

Text: Exod. 30:22-33, 37:29a

Title: "The holiness of the holy oil"

Time: 4/16/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: One of the wonderful features of God's plan for the tabernacle is the way it includes many object lessons that help make ethereal truth more concrete for us.

I have found this teaching principle especially helpful when it comes to preaching in elementary chapel at Trinity Christian School. It is easier for me to preach for the high school chapel than it is to preach for the elementary school chapel, because much of Scriptural truth is difficult to bring to the level of a first grader. Teachers gifted in this area can do that easily. I have to work at it, and object lessons have been a great help.

In our passage this morning, we have yet another tabernacle-related object lesson that does exactly this. It illustrates ethereal and ineffable truth with something concrete, which can be easily described with words for our better understanding. The ethereal and ineffable truth God wants us to know about is holiness, and the concrete object lesson He uses to define holiness for us is an ointment of blended of spices and olive oil.

So, we can say that this passage is not merely about oil, but about the holiness of the holy oil, and I want us to understand three things about holiness with the help of this oil, which God designed for the ministry of the tabernacle.

I. Holiness is beautiful (vv. 22-24).

Illustration: This oil is very much unlike the oil on the bottom of the garbage can filled with rotting fish. We might say that oil is oil, but if we stop to think we will admit that some oil is beautiful and some oil has an ugliness about it, especially when it comes to olfactory differences.

Application: Our passage is clear that this tabernacle holy oil was designed to smell very nice. It was to have a beautiful aroma.

So the first thing about holiness we learn from this oil that smelled very beautiful is that there is an important relationship between God's holiness and creation's beauty. Holiness and beauty are related in the same way that holiness and morality and holiness and truth are related.

The Apostle Paul touches on this truth as he gives instruction for a godly thought-life in Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

When it comes to reality, God decides what is true and honest vs. what is imaginary and a lie. When it comes to morality, God decides what is just and pure vs. what is unrighteous and immoral. And when it comes to beauty, God decides what is lovely and what is of good report vs. what is unlovely and of ill repute.

God has aesthetic taste. He knows what is beautiful and what is ugly. This holy oil of the tabernacle was to be beautiful oil, and we should aspire to worship the God of the tabernacle, who today is the God of true churches, in the beauty of holiness.

With the romanticism of the Enlightenment, our culture has lost our understanding of the connection between God's holiness and the beauty of His creation. Holiness is transcendent, and so is beauty, but today we have been taught to prefer the vulgar.

In 2021 the American Council of Christian Churches passed a helpful resolution on this topic titled, "God's Sovereignty Over Beauty." Here is the first paragraph of that resolution: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth'; 'and God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good' (Gen. 1:1, 31). What God created was beautiful in His eyes. He not only made creation's wonders, but also beheld its extreme goodness. Beauty was a part of the goodness He saw.

"Noah Webster defined beauty as 'an assemblage of graces, or an assemblage of properties in the form of the person or any other object, which pleases the eye. . . . By an easy transition, the word beauty is used to express what is pleasing to the other senses, or to the understanding. Thus we say, the beauty of a thought, of a remark, of a sound, etc.'

"Creation's beauty is both real and perceptible for the Lord and those made in His image. Because the Creator perceives beauty in His creation as its Divine Sovereign, standards of beauty are absolute. Things are beautiful to the degree that they please the Creator's eyes, ears, and omniscient understandings. Opinions about beauty that disagree with this standard are mistaken."

That is not how the world believes beauty works, is it? For the world, beauty is still in the eye of the beholder, but that eye does not belong to God. Instead, it belongs to the self. It is not God who is sovereign over beauty according to this view, but rather my own opinions about beauty sit on the aesthetic throne of my life.

But as believers who are called to understand and pursue holiness, it is very important that we let God be God when it comes to what we believe is beautiful and less so. This holy oil is designed by God to teach us that holiness is beautiful in His eyes. We must aspire to worship Him in the beauty of ho-

liness: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2).

## II. Holiness is for anointing (vv. 25-28).

Illustration: Just like oil must be applied before it can provide lubrication or hydration, so this oil was designed by God to be applied in order that people and things may become holy. It is a picture of holiness in this way in that holiness is one of God's communicable attributes, one He shares with us.

It is especially the work of the Holy Spirit that applies the holy blessings of our salvation in Christ to our lives. As believers we know the Holy Spirit as our Paraclete, the one called alongside to be our help. Jesus taught us who He is in John 14-16. The Amplified Bible translates the Greek word *paraclete* there as "Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor – Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby)."

Application: Our New Testaments teach us that just like the anointing oil was applied to every part of the tabernacle ministry, so the Holy Spirit anoints every part of our lives and ministry as believers assembled in a local church. At least four applications of our salvation to our lives are accomplished by the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us today:

1. Illumination - The work of the Holy Spirit by which the natural man, blind to spiritual truth, is enabled to understand that truth (1 Cor. 2:13-15).
2. Regeneration - The work of the Holy Spirit by which a sinner, spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, is made spiritual alive with life eternal (Tit. 3:4-7).
3. Indwelling - The work of the Holy Spirit by which He calls the spirit and body of a believer His holy dwelling place among men (Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 6:18-20, John 14:20).

4. Sanctification - The work of the Holy Spirit by which He causes the spiritual life of a believer to grow into ever greater Christlikeness (2 Cor. 3:18, Gal. 5:16-26, Eph. 5:17-21).

*Anointing* is the idea behind the word *Messiah* or *Christ*. Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ because He is the One who ministered in a perfect way through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which happened at His baptism.

In the Old Testament three sets of people were anointed with the anointing oil of our passage: priests, kings, and prophets. Jesus Christ is our mediator in His role as priest (Heb. 9:14), king (Rom. 1:1-4; Isa. 61:2b-6), and prophet (Luke 4:17-19; John 3:34).

As the Anointed Prophet, Jesus declared to us the acceptable year of the Lord. He showed us the Father, and He called us to repentance and faith in Him. As the Anointed Priest, he offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins on Calvary. And as the Anointed King, He has promised a final victory over every enemy and the ultimate blessing of His people as He rules over them and with them from Zion some day.

The holiness of the holy oil is for anointing. The Holy Spirit baptized Christ preparing Him for his atoning ministry as our Mediator, and Christ baptized His church at Pentecost, preparing us for the ministry of reconciliation and disciple-making in His name. He was faithfully dependent on and obedient to the Holy Spirit as the Anointed One for us. Are we being faithfully dependent on and obedient to the Holy Spirit for our ministry, having received our anointing from Him?

III. Holiness sets things apart (vv. 29-33).

Illustration: There is a sense in which a baseball field is a holy thing during a professional baseball game. It is a facility that is set apart for a special purpose during the game, and fans who

want to violate that principle are immediately escorted back off the field, charged with a crime, and expelled from the premises.

Application: God feels that way about His holy people and things, His priests especially. In our passage, Aaron and his sons are made holy by the oil of anointing holiness. As soon as the oil was applied to them, they and they only were allowed to administer the service of the tabernacle.

Our New Testament teaches us that every believer is in an important sense a priest who has been set apart as holy for the service of his God. As local church members today, ours is not the Aaronic priesthood, but the Melchizedekian royal priesthood Peter mentions:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

When we trust Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit makes our lives are like that baseball diamond. We are not set apart for baseball, but we are set apart for the work of the holy nation, the peculiar people, and the praise of the one who gave us His light and His mercy.

When we let other things trample into our lives that do not belong there, which hinder the praise of the Lord’s glory, we are corrupting our holiness, and the work God has called us to begins to shut down, kind of like a baseball game that has a bunch of fans running around on the field.

When our holiness is violated through our unconfessed sin and persistent disobedience, the Holy Spirit is grieved and

quenched, love grows cold, churches die in neglect and unbelief, and a nation perishes in its idolatry.

God chose us to make us His holy priesthood. He saved us out of the darkness of the world into the glorious light of His kingdom. Will we embrace what the Holy Spirit has accomplished in us this morning, or are we more determined to fit in with the darkness of the world around us?

Conclusion: One of the observations David makes in Psalm 23, as he reflects on what it means to have all his needs met by his Holy God, who was His shepherd, is that this Shepherd anointed his head with oil. David seemed to understand what a blessing it is to be anointed by the Holy Spirit so as to receive all the blessings of holiness in his life.

Isaac Watts wrote a hymn based on that Psalm, which is a prayer appropriate for those who have been so blessed:

“My Shepherd, you supply my need,  
most holy is your name;  
in pastures fresh you make me feed,  
beside the living stream.  
You bring my wand'ring spirit back,  
when I forsake your ways;  
you lead me, for your mercy's sake,  
in paths of truth and grace.

“When through the shades of death I walk,  
your presence is my stay;  
one word of your supporting breath  
drives all my fears away.  
Your hand in sight of all my foes,  
does still my table spread;  
my cup with blessings overflows,  
your oil anoints my head.

“Your sure provisions gracious God  
attend me all my days;  
oh, may your house be my abode,  
and all my work be praise.  
Here would I find a settled rest,  
while others go and come;  
no more a stranger, nor a guest,  
but like a child at home.”

Do we understand our holy anointing with the Holy Spirit with the help of the oil of the tabernacle this morning? Let's aspire to worship in the beauty of holiness and to live lives that have been touched with the holy blessings of our salvation. What could happen then, when the Holy Spirit is no longer grieved and no longer quenched? What miracles of holiness await our greater consecration to Him?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*