

HOLY DOGS
A Devotional Meditation from
Exodus 25:1-27:19; 1 Kings 5:12-6:13; Ezekiel 11:14-16; John 2:18-22, 4:21-24;
1 Corinthians 3:9-16, 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Revelation 21:1-3
Albert J. McCarn
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Some of the best life lessons I have learned have come from my dog Blue. Blue can never take the place of my wife and children (although we joke about that), but she holds a unique place in my heart. She's my buddy, my constant companion, and a fountain of joy to my soul. Not that she's perfect; she's got a mischievous streak, and she could use some better discipline and training than I can provide, but that doesn't change the fact that Blue is My Dog. She's special to me above all other dogs. There's something holy to our relationship, which sounds strange in the context of a dog, but it's one of the lessons Blue has helped me understand.



Blue has been my special friend ever since she came to live with us as a pup.

The Bible has a lot to say about holiness. It's not exclusively a Jewish or Christian concept. Cows are holy to Hindus, for example, and Mecca is holy to Muslims. There are even secular forms of holiness. We refer to the "hallowed halls" of higher learning, justice, and government because they are set apart from common institutions. Families reserve the good china for holidays because those days are set apart from the ordinary days. We set aside vintage wine for special occasions because it is of such high quality and cost that it's just not right to drink it like common table wine.

Holiness even extends to relationships. My wife introduced this truth to me when we entered into holy matrimony, pledging that we were set apart to one another. Our children brought me to a new level of appreciation for special relationships, being my own offspring whom my wife and I helped mold into godly adults. Then Blue came into our lives and brought a new perspective on holy relationships. My wife and I are co-equal partners, and elders to our children, but with Blue it's different. She is totally dependent on us for everything, and unable to contribute much to our relationship.

We chose Blue, but I'm not sure if she wanted to be chosen. She had endured a hard life on the street as a young pup before she was taken to the animal shelter. There were many cute puppies there, but none of them caught my attention as she did. It took some special handling to help her understand that. She didn't know what it was to have a loving home, nor what it meant to be someone's special friend. Having no frame of reference for such things, she couldn't understand why these humans were interested in her, so we had to be gentle in bringing her into our home. Once she knew she was safe and secure, then we could teach her the rules of the house and the ways we could all enjoy our holy relationship.

Holy is what our Creator is and what He wants us to be. We are made for His enjoyment, but we cannot fulfill that purpose until we are made ready. It's a purification and maturing process that won't be complete until the end of the ages. In the meantime, we have some work to do to live as holy vessels He set apart for Himself.

This is the pattern of scripture, as we see in the detailed instructions about how to build the Tabernacle. God redeemed our Hebrew ancestors from Egypt when they couldn't redeem themselves. They may not have known they needed to be redeemed, nor had any frame of reference for the kind of redeemed life the Creator intended for them. That may be why He told Moses to have the people collect a special offering to build the Tabernacle. The gold, silver, and bronze, blue, purple, and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, oil, spices, and precious stones had specific purposes, which God explained this way:

Have them make a Sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them. You are to make it all precisely according to everything that I show you—the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all the furnishings within—just so you must make it.
Exodus 25:8-9 TLV

It's all about where God will establish His Presence among His holy people. At first, it was in a holy tent. Half a millennium later, it was the Holy Temple, as God explained to King Solomon:

As for this House which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes, execute My ordinances and keep all My *mitzvot* [commandments] by walking in them, then I will establish My word with you, which I spoke to your father David, I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.
1 Kings 6:11-13 TLV)

John carries this theme to the ultimate conclusion in Revelation:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city—the New Jerusalem—coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I also heard a loud voice from the throne, saying,

“Behold, the dwelling of God is among men,
and He shall tabernacle among them.
They shall be His people,
and God Himself shall be among them
and be their God.
He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes,
and death shall be no more.
Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer,
for the former things have passed away.

Revelation 21:1-4 TLV

This speaks to a glorious future when all creation is restored to what God intended at the beginning. That's why John says later that there is no Temple in the new Jerusalem because God and the Lamb are the Temple (Revelation 21:22).

We might ask why God established such elaborate procedures to build a holy tent, and then a holy building, knowing that in the end there would be no need for such structures. I believe it is to help us understand what holy means, and then what we're supposed to do to partner with God in establishing His holiness throughout this earth.

This is not a works vs. grace issue. We are already set apart as His holy vessels by His grace and mercy in the work of the cross. Now we have the obligation to do our part, empowered by His Holy Spirit, to complete the process. This is what Paul means when he tells us about being the temple of the Holy Spirit, a concept he draws directly from the covenant of redemption our Creator established with Israel:

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What harmony does Messiah have with Belial? Or what part does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement does God's Temple have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God—just as God said,

“I will dwell in them and walk among them;
and I will be their God,
and they shall be My people.
Therefore, come out from among them,
and be separate, says *ADONAI*.
Touch no unclean thing.
Then I will take you in.
I will be a father to you,
and you shall be My sons and daughters,
says *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*. [LORD of Hosts]”

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 TLV

Until this purification process is complete, the world sorely needs the visible presence of the Living God to be manifested in Jerusalem, the place He chose to put His Name. That is why we should pay attention to, pray for, and, if possible, help our Jewish brethren in rebuilding the Temple. Yet even after it is built, we must remember that the Temple in Jerusalem is only the place where heaven meets earth. Heaven then gets carried to the four corners of the earth in the people of God, who function as little sanctuaries of the Most High wherever they go. I think that's what Yeshua meant in His declaration to the Samaritan woman:

But an hour is coming—it is here now—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people as His worshipers. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:23-24 TLV

Worshiping God in spirit and truth means living as the holy vessels He called us to be. When we do that, we help Him in His desire to dwell among His people.