

God Makes Fellowship with Us

☉* **Everything to do...** (vv.3-7)

⚡ **Everything is done.** (vv.8-11)

In the name of Jesus, our devoted Savior, dear committed Christians:

How committed are you to Christ? Even unbelievers frown at a man's infidelity to his wife, or a wife to her husband. Christians try to admonish the sinner, and, as a last act of love, excommunicate the impenitent in order to win him or her back to repentance. Women don't want their men looking at other women. Men won't put up with their women being with other men. When you're the one in the middle of broken commitments, it hurts. But in all the heartache we easily miss something.

What we see in broken commitments and hurting relationships actually mirrors our loss of fellowship with God. He commands us to "*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" (Matthew 22:36), but that would mean thinking about Him all the time and always being aware of His presence. Yet instead of "*walking with God*," all of us can go for hours without even thinking about God, much less praying or praising Him. Attractive things catch our eye. Activities grab our hearts away from worship. Our priorities decompose. Today **God Makes Fellowship with Us**. And we need God to take the lead in this because we have ...

☉* **Everything to do...** (vv.3-7)

Once my brother and some neighbor friends saw a cat die. We never knew why it went into convulsions. Nothing we could do, but stay away. There was no blood, just gut wrenching death. I did not want to see death. When my father would butcher chickens and rabbits to feed our family of nine, I did not want to help. Butchering was optional for me, but not for the Israelites.

The LORD at Mount Sinai had not yet instituted the priesthood of Aaron and all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. By the time those instructions were given in Leviticus, God's people would be sacrificing over a thousand animals a year – sheep, goats, bulls, oxen, even birds. The priests would have to learn techniques that would enable them to slaughter at some festivals hundreds of animals at a time. They would only be allowed to serve from ages 30-50, perhaps in part because of the physical strength they needed to handle all those carcasses. They had to be in super shape to keep the blood flowing.

Without priests at this time in Exodus, Moses "*sent young Israelite men*" who "*offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD.*" The *burnt offering* (עֹלָה) was totally consumed by fire to show the complete dedication of the worshiper to God. The *fellowship offering* (זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים) was more like a family grill out in order to enjoy fellowship with God and each other. This all took place at the foot of Mount Sinai where Moses also set up "*twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.*"

When **God Makes Fellowship with Us**, why so much bloodshed? Wasn't bloody violence one reason the LORD destroyed the world in the Flood? Didn't some nature worshipers drink blood to get energized from the life force of animals? Soon the LORD would command His people not to eat blood in their meat, "*for the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.*" (Leviticus 17:10f NIV) Believe it or not, this is still true in the New Testament. Sin is so hideous in God's sight He says, "*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*" (Hebrews 9:22 NIV84) Blood must atone for sin. It's that bad.

Blood shouts the fact that with God there is no such thing as “a little white lie.” There is no secret sin that God cannot see. Your time on the Internet may not be viewed by anyone else. You might even erase the History. But God sees it all. Even more than your eyes, He knows where your heart has been. What can look so harmless and seem so pleasurable is a wide and easy road to hell. Many are on it today. The devil wants you too. Yet the blood shouts, “*The wages of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23 NIV84) Every sin must be atoned for. Every whisper of guilt must be removed. “*Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy*” (Leviticus 19:2 NIV84), is still God’s will today. God’s law still says that we have **Everything to do...** perfectly, without fail, every time, with a happy heart to have **Fellowship** with God.

‡ **Everything is done. (vv.8-11)**

Twice in this text the Israelites shout back *with one voice*, “*Everything the LORD has said we will do.*” The second time they also add, “*...we will obey*” – literally, “We will listen.” They had heard *the Book of the Law*. So the entire nation swore allegiance to their **Fellowship** with God.

It was a short honeymoon. They were busy, busy, busy doing things for God in their first fund raiser to build the Tabernacle-tent for worship in the wilderness. The plans came to Moses right from God in heaven along with patterns for the priestly garments to show their commitment to God. They saw Mount Sinai ablaze with thunder and lightning, heard the Ten Commandments right from the voice of God. But while Moses was up on the mountain they gave Aaron the high priest, Moses’ brother, enough gold to make a calf. Words are cheap. Moses smashed the Ten Commandment tablets of stone engraved with the finger of God. Then he ground up their golden calf and made them drink it in their water.

Are our sins any less at New Life? Are we home in heaven yet? Our communicant members promise God a lifetime of study in God’s Word. How many have not been to a Bible class since Confirmation? When you go home today, will you remember this sermon? Will you have notes to share with friends and family? If I asked where you’re reading in the Bible these days or what Bible book you’re listening to, could you tell me? Could you share the message in your own words?

Our promises sometimes die before the dust settles on our Bible. But since we only eat food once a week, some of us feel safe to only worship God a few minutes each week, or month, or year. “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,*” and “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” – these don’t fit our “golden calf” mentality. We’re Americans; we’re busy with our stuff. Our toys become our gods of gold or stone, plastic or platinum. Whatever grabs your heart, whatever has your priorities is your God. Why would God ever want to make **Fellowship with us?**

That’s the surprise for Moses and the guys on Sinai! They had seen terror on the mountain filled with smoke, shaking with the thunder of God’s glory. Moses trembled with fear. The people begged not to see that again. God promised to spare them by communicating to them through Moses.

My heart would be pounding: *Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.*” They enjoyed **Fellowship** with God because He chose them.

God is still so merciful and gracious He invites us into His presence by Baptism. He prepares us for His Holy Supper in Confirmation and BIC classes. He wants to keep on preparing us for **Fellowship-Communion** to enjoy His real presence in **Fellowship** with like-minded believers. God washed away all sin with the perfect sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. There’s warning in Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu who would soon die for offering unauthorized fire to God in the tabernacle. They took for granted **Everything is done**. But your personal devotions keep you hearing God’s gracious invitation as **God Makes Fellowship with Us** day by day. He gives us His holiness in Jesus Christ. His love for us increases our love for one another. He strengthens our commitments as He grows our faith by Word and sacrament. Sweet **Fellowship** with God! Amen.