

Exodus 33:12-23 Please Show Me Your Glory

“Please show me your glory.” These are the words of Moses in 33:18. The context is Moses leading the people into the Promised Land. And in cp. 32 we see Moses on Mt. Sinai where God is speaking with him and giving him all of his commands and instructions for his people, Israel. And then we read in 32:1: **“When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, ‘Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’”** Then God says to Moses, **“Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are our gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt’”** (32:7-8). Then God says to Moses, **“I will destroy this people, and make another nation from you,”** to which Moses pleads with God not to destroy them. (What a beautiful picture of the intercession of Christ!) And God listens to Moses’ pleas. However, there is great judgment as the Levites “strap on their swords” and 3000 people are killed. And then, God sends a plague where many more are killed.

In the meantime, God continues to speak to Moses. Moses goes OUTSIDE the camp, AWAY from this sinful people, and sets up a tent where God speaks with him alone. And when Moses goes out to the tent, the people would watch from a distance as the pillar of cloud would descend upon Moses’ tent. I can imagine all the emotions and thoughts; curiosity, excitement, fear, as the presence of Almighty God fell upon the tent. I think of Gen. 3:8 after the fall of Adam when he **“heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,”** and they **“hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”**

Now, as Moses considers the sin of the people (including himself) he is concerned, to say the least, about the presence of God going with the people. And in 33:15 he says, **“If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us from here.”** And then he says in v. 16: **“For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”** Brothers and sisters, it is very important what we do and how we act (as we’ve from James who says faith without works is dead). But, the world also does many good works. The difference between the people of God and the world is the presence of God. Nothing has changed from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses to David, and to us; If God is not with us, we are doomed! Let’s continue the story.

Look at v. 17: **“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.’”** (Notice here that it isn’t the people who find favor. It is Moses, ONE person, ONE representative . . . and through Moses’ favor, the people also find favor . . . Keep that thought.) At this point, Moses asks in v. 18: **“Please show me your glory.”** Let’s think about this “glory of God” for a few minutes, and ask, *“What was Moses asking?”* For, Moses had already seen his glory. He saw the glory of God at the burning bush. He saw his glory on Mt. Sinai. He saw his glory at the tent. He saw the glory of God in the miraculous plagues sent upon Egypt. He saw the glory of God in the parting of the

Red Sea. He saw the glory of God in the giving of manna from heaven. This is exactly what we read in Exod. 16:6-7 when the people grumbled about not having enough food. It says, **“At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD . . .”** Over and over in the Bible we see the glory of the Lord displayed in his powerful acts. Noah and his family saw the glory of God when God shut the door of the ark and sent the great flood. Abraham saw his glory in a vision when God promised to bless him and his descendants. Jacob saw his glory when he wrestled with God and prevailed. King Solomon and the people saw his glory descend on the temple. Isaiah saw his glory, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. And the seraphim cried out, **“holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”** (Is. 6). On and on we could go, but there is not enough time to recount all these times.

So, what did Moses want when he asked to see God’s glory? Back in v. 10, we see God’s presence in a **“pillar of cloud at the entrance of the tent.”** *“Wasn’t this ‘pillar of cloud’ the glory of God?”* Of course it was his glory! In Exod. 24:16-17 we read: **“The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mt. Sinai, and the cloud covered it 6 days. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.”** What did he want to see? Well, in order to answer this, let’s keep reading through the passage and let God answer. In v. 18, Moses says, **“Please show me your glory.”** And then in v. 19 God says, **“I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”** Now, there is a lot here that I will not comment on today. But notice that God says he will “pass by.” And as He passes by, he proclaims his name and tells Moses about his character of grace and mercy, which is his goodness. And then as God considers what He is about to do, he says, **“you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”** As righteous and humble as Moses was, he was still a sinful man. He could not look upon God and live. Then in v. 21 God says, **“Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”**

With these words, I think Moses knew that he had only witnessed the glory of God in his power and in his presence in a limited way. I think he realized he had seen God in a way that fell WAY short of all his glory, his ESSENCE, his HOLINESS, his PERSON. God is spirit (John 4:4), and God’s presence in the bush, on the mountain, and at the tent was only a snapshot, a likeness Him. I think we are safe to say that Moses wanted to see MORE of his glory, even ALL of his glory. And I don’t know exactly what Moses saw in God’s “back,” but he did not see God in all his glory. He could not. No sinner can. But, what a sight it must have been! . . . But this sight was for a moment. God passed by. The glory was gone. In all the appearances of the Angel of the Lord in the OT, all the clouds and fires, all the dreams and visions, ALL of these were temporary. In all of these cases God merely “passes by.” And in all these cases God’s precious people are longing for God to do it again, to show Himself again. They don’t want him to leave the mountain, to leave the tent, to take away the pillar of cloud or the glorious fire. So, they are always looking forward to another time or another place, and by faith they are looking forward to

a time of permanence, when God does not merely PASS BY. No longer do they have to be hidden behind a rock . . .

Brothers and sisters, today we partake in the most beautiful meal, the Lord's Supper. We eat real bread; we drink real juice. We live out the most beautiful drama. And one of the pictures of this meal is this: God did not merely pass by! He did not hide us in the cleft of the rock! He did not come and show himself in a small way and then leave again! He did not pass by! He is with us: Immanuel! . . . How is He with us? He is with us in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus! John 1:14: **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."** The Son of God took on our flesh. And he says, **"If you've seen me, you've seen the Father"** (John 14:9). And He didn't merely "pass by." He didn't come in the front door and go out the back door not to be seen again. John says he built his tent and set it up in the campground of human sin. He was born. He lived. He ate. He drank. He spoke. He spent time with his friends and his disciples. And He did not sin. He did not have a sin nature as we do. And then he laid down his life as a sacrifice, a substitute sacrifice in the place of sinful men and women and children. And we remember this truth as we take the Lord's Supper: **"This is my body broken for you."** And he rose again, conquering death, ascending back to heaven where he now reigns, until his enemies become his footstool. And you may say, well, *"he has passed by."* But, his presence is permanently with us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! He did not pass by.

This means that if you look unto Christ in repentance and faith, your sins are forgiven! And your sins are forgiven because you see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! Brothers and sisters, we look no further. We are not waiting as the OT saints for that next time God will show himself. We are not waiting for the next dream or vision or miracle or appearance of glory. We behold him NOW. There is nothing that compares to such glory! Brothers and sisters, what Moses desired so greatly to see, we now behold in Jesus Christ. "Show me your glory!"

Let's read together as we prepare to take the Lord's Supper this morning.

Heb. 1:1-4

Pastor: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Congregation: He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Col. 1:15-20

Pastor: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or

rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Congregation: And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

John 1:1-5; 14; 16-18.

Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Congregation: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Phil. 2:5-8; 9-11.

Pastor: Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Congregation: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.