



Show Me Your Glory

Series: The Wonder of Worship

Exodus 33:18-34:7

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This text that I am going to preach from this morning is actually the next text in our Wednesday night study of the OT, but as I was studying for it, I realized that it was a text that really the whole body needed to hear and especially as we closed out the worship series last week. So think of this sermon as an epilogue or an afterward to the sermon series, like you would have in a book.

For those of you who have not been with us on Wednesday night, let me try to set the scene for you. Moses, as most of you know, was the leader of the Exodus of the nation of Israel, God's deliverance of his chosen people from the oppression and slavery of Egypt. God had delivered them from bondage by a series of miraculous judgments that He brought upon Egypt – the plagues – capped off by the Passover. The stated purpose of the Exodus was that God would make His glory known and that Israel would be His people and worship Him as Lord. We see a number of awesome scenes in the Exodus – the Pillars of Cloud and Fire of God's presence, the parting and crossing of the Red Sea, the destruction of Egypt's army, manna from heaven, bitter waters made sweet, meeting with God at MT. Sinai... amazing stuff.

This text takes place after one of the worst moments in Israel's history. During the time when Moses was on MT Sinai for forty days and nights, receiving the instructions for the tabernacle and receiving the Ten Commandments written in stone, Israel rebelled against God. They returned, in their hearts, to the gods of Egypt and enticed Aaron – and Aaron went along with this as a willing participant – to make an idol for them to worship, a replacement for God. He made for them a golden calf and they corrupted themselves by worshipping this idol as if it were God. God was furious, justly angry, and He sent Moses down off the mountain to deal with them. Coming down the mountain and seeing the scene of debauchery, wickedness and sexual immorality unfolding at the foot of the mountain,

Moses broke the 10 Commandments indicating how Israel had broken covenant with God. He crushed and burned the idol and made the people around the golden calf drink the ashes mixed with water. He sent out the Levites to quell the rebellion against God and ordered them to kill all who would not immediately stop their sinning. 3000 were killed by the sword that day. He brought a plague against the people and threatened to remove His presence from them forever.

Moses pled with God to be gracious to the nation, to grant them forgiveness they did not deserve, to remain with them as their God and for the nation to remain the chosen and peculiar possession of the Lord. He interceded persistently and tirelessly for the people. And God had answered His request. He promised to remain with the people and to be their God despite this terrible sin and to renew the covenant with them that they had broken.

And in this text this morning, we see Moses' heart laid bare yet again. Having secured God's promise to be with the nation, he asks of the Lord, "Show me your glory." Get the heart of Moses here. There is a burning desire in the heart of Moses to see God in all of His splendor, to know Him more. He longs for more of God, for a greater understanding of the Lord, for a greater revelation of His person and character. He sounds like Paul when he wrote in Philippians 3, ***"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 3:7-14, ESV) Like Paul, there is a burning passion in the heart of Moses, a unrelenting desire, a hungry longing to know God more, to know Him more personally and more completely than he does right now. And that causes Moses to make:

A Bold Request (18-23) Read verse 18 with me again: ***"Moses said, "Please show me your glory.""*** (Exodus 33:18, ESV) We are all familiar with that word "glory." It is a word that speaks of God's majesty and grandeur, of His infinite awesomeness, His "weightiness and

worth.” God’s glory are all of the wonders of His divine person – His holiness, His love, His grace, His mercy, His wisdom, His knowledge, His power, His justice, His holiness, His immutability, His compassion, His omniscience, omnipotence, His anger, His wrath, His kindness, His patience, all of His attributes – put on display. This is what Moses wants to see – a full display of the person and majesty of God. He had already beheld something of God’s glory throughout the Exodus, yet Moses knew there was more to see. Moses wanted a vision of the essential nature of God.

This kind of dogged pursuit of God, this kind of “holy dissatisfaction,” if I can use those words, is to be admired. This longing for an intimate, personal encounter with the Lord ought to mark all of our hearts. It’s a request that comes from a sincere heart, but it is far more than Moses could ever endure. That’s why God answers him as He does. Look at this.

“And he said, “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. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”” (Exodus 33:19–20, ESV) God knows the longing of Moses’ heart and He knows that it is good, but He also knows that Moses does not know that of which he asks. And so we see in God’s response to Moses both a subtle, but significant, change.

Rather than a full-on revelation of His glory, God tells Moses that he will make His “goodness” pass before him and that He will proclaim to Moses his “name.” That is a subtle change, but significant. God’s goodness is not His glory; it is not the full manifestation of the divine majesty, but it is an essential part of His majesty. Moses is not going to be exposed to the full intensity of the divine radiance, but God will give to him all that he can handle. He will give to Moses an experience that he will never forget, a lesser vision of God accompanied with the unfolding of the name of God, God telling Moses of His nature and essence, but a vision of God in all of His splendor is off the table. Moses simply could not gaze on the ineffable glory of God – His face –in his own sinful flesh, and live.

The reason that God would only show Moses His goodness is because anything more would destroy him. If Moses, a finite and sinful man, were to see a complete revelation of God in all of His eternal glory, it would be so overwhelming that it would destroy him. ***“Man cannot***

see me and live.” As Augustine said, **“no one living in this life can see Him as fully as He is.”** God was willing to reveal to Moses as much as He could bear, but there were limits. He will give to Moses a “mountaintop experience” but it would be passing; it would be transient in nature, yet it would be enough to satisfy his soul and a vision for which he would be grateful the rest of his earthly life.

Notice too, Moses will receive this blessing owing only to God’s grace. **And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.** This vision, this experience, would be strictly a gift of God’s mercy and grace. God would do this for Moses because He chose to. No one can explain why it is that God does what He does, either at the level of saving mankind who is in rebellion to Him or at the level of the individuals to whom He gives such special blessings. This experience would be unique to Moses, differing from the way God showed his favor to Abraham, to David, to Elijah, to Daniel, to Ezekiel or to Isaiah. No one else got to behold God like this and God tells him how He will do it.

“And the Lord said, “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.”” (Exodus 33:21–23, ESV) This entire description is filled with anthropomorphic language – hand, back, face and understanding exactly what Moses saw is nigh unto impossible. But the main idea is that in order to prevent Moses from being fully and fatally exposed to the radiance of divine glory – His face, the Lord promises to place him in a cleft, a fissure, a cave, on the top of the mount which God will cover or shield in some way, with his “hand,” whatever that looks like – as He makes his glory to pass by. And Moses would be allowed to see God’s “back,” the after effects of the Lord’s glorious presence. That was all that Moses could handle seeing in His flesh. An analogy to this, a picture of this – though albeit not a perfect one at all – would be a category 5 hurricane. No one can stand in the face of a hurricane, can they? You take cover; you hole up somewhere when a hurricane passes by. But once it has gone, you can go outside in the rain, the leftover of the huge storm that just went by and looking around at the after-effects, you know this was no small summer shower, right? The after-effects, though they are not the glory of the storm reflect the glory of the storm.

In this, we are very much like Moses. We can behold, we are given spiritual eyes, as Paul says to see **“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** (2

Corinthians 4:6, ESV) But even in this, is **“we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”** (1 Corinthians 13:12, **ESV)** As much as we can see of the Lord, as much as we can comprehend of the Lord right now, we know there is something far more to see, something far more to behold. We talked about it last Sunday. **“(We) will see his face, and his name will be on (our) foreheads. And night will be no more. (We) will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be (our) light, and (we) will reign forever and ever.”** (Revelation 22:4–5, **ESV)** But like Moses, that should not diminish our desire to know our God and the Lamb as much as we can right now. We should long for God to show us as much of His glory as we can presently bear. This is a great request and in order to prepare for this, God gives Moses

A New Set of Instructions (34:1-4) Before Moses can ascend Sinai again and behold God’s display of His goodness and the unfolding of the divine name, there are some preparations that he needs to make. **“The Lord said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.”** (Exodus 34:1, **ESV)** God is not chastising Moses for breaking the first tablets of the 10 Commandments that God provided for him, He is just simply stating a fact. Still, there remains the question as to why Moses was commanded to make the new tablets for the Law. Is there significance to this? I think there is. I have no doubt that Moses would have labored to try to make these new tablets as close to the original as he could, but they were not identical. And that’s the point. Though the broken relationship between God and Israel had been healed, there still would have remained a reminder of what had happened and of what God had to do to forgive them and renew the covenant.

God goes on to say: **“Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.”** So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone.” (Exodus 34:2–4, **ESV)** Moses gets ready and sets out for the summit of Mt. Sinai to see and hear a vision of God that he would never forget.

God Comes Down (5-7) Pick it up in verse 5: **“The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.”** (Exodus 34:5, **ESV)** Moses goes to the top of the mountain and still God must descend to meet with him. He is the great God and

no matter how high we may reach, He still must condescend to meet with us. Never forget that. For us to have any communion with God, He must infinitely condescend to meet with us – He is God; we are creatures. He is enthroned in heaven; we are on the earth beneath. He is infinitely holy; we are not. He has to condescend, which makes the condescension of Christ for our redemption all the more amazing. So God comes down in a cloud and what is amazing is that almost nothing is said of God’s appearance. Moses wanted to see God’s glory, but instead of telling us what he saw, he tells us what he heard.

“The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”” (Exodus 34:6–7, ESV)

The revelation of God here became central to Israel’s understanding of who God is and what He does. We hear its echo all over the OT. Let me just give you a few texts so you understand what I mean.

“But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 86:15, ESV)

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.” (Psalm 103:8–9, ESV)

“Rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.” (Joel 2:13, ESV)

This revelation of God became central in Israel’s understanding of God. So what do we see here? The Lord begins by proclaiming first His Name – Yahweh, the Great I Am, I Am Who I Am – and then He gives definition to that name. And I want you to notice something very significant. Did you notice, that of all the characteristics and qualities that Almighty God could have focused on, of all things that He could have chosen to say about Himself, God talks about His glory, about His goodness, in relational terms. He does not speak of omnipotence, omniscience or omnipresence; He speaks about how He relates to us. God is a

relational God. These words are relational and personal words, experiential words – words you can only rightly say about those whom you know.

He is the God who is merciful and gracious – God speaks of His mercy, that deep and tender feeling of compassion that is aroused by the sight of weakness or suffering in those that are dear to us or need our help. God is a merciful Father. He loves His own, those who He has chosen. And He will never forsake them as evidenced by the fact that He is willing to renew the covenant and the fact that He has been willing, in Christ, to pursue us and to save us.

He speaks of His grace – *Grace* is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him. We see God's grace depicted most fully in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the grace of God is in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Adam and Eve received grace after the fall, God acted with grace toward Noah and preserved him in the flood. He showed grace to Abraham calling him out of a pagan culture and introducing Himself to him. He gave grace to Jacob and wrestled him into submission at the river Jabbock. He graciously preserved Joseph in his trials in Egypt. We see God's grace toward Israel here. And we know of His matchless grace to us in Christ. God is all about grace.

God is slow to anger. Literally He is “long in the nostril.” He is not quick to judge. He takes a long time before getting angry. It is as if He takes a long, deep breath as He deals with sin and holds His anger in check. In other words, God puts up with a lot. It is not that sin doesn't matter; it is that God is patient and longsuffering with man. But when He acts, he does it righteously and deliberately.

God abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness – the idea there is truthfulness. God is stressing that his relationship with His people is one of unending love, a loyal love that is never diminished or exhausted because it is founded on God's character, not our loveliness, but it is a love that is characterized by the Lord's leading his people in the truth, in the right way, in the way of blessing and the way everlasting. It is relationship founded on His faithfulness to His promises and His faithfulness to the truth.

And this love is for thousands. The love of God spreads far and wide; it lasts from generation to generation. God maintains His love. He protects and preserves it. His love endures forever to His people. And, in His love, He forgives the repentant and broken. He forgives iniquity – that turning away from what is right and good, the learned sin of generations. He forgives transgression – the willful violation of the terms of the covenant, the betrayal of relationship to Him. He forgives sin – moral failure. God forgives and it is good news to us that he does.

But there is one more description that we cannot miss. He says that He will **by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.** That has been a difficult text for many to understand. It sounds like God punishes the children for the sins of their fathers, no matter what, doesn't it? The key to understanding these words is to keep in mind the context. In Moses' day it would have been the norm for families to live together in family units, in extended groups that were comprised of three or four generations. The point that God is making is that sin's impact is not limited to the individual who commits it, but it has the tendency to spread to all those with whom he or she comes in contact, particularly the family group to which he or she belongs. When God deals with sin, He deals with it fully – with the original unrepentant perpetrator of sin and with all those who are tainted by it and commit the same sin. God deals with sin fully and comprehensively. He has to because He is God. Moses gets this incredible revelation from God and His response is

Worship (8) Moses response to revelation of God, the only reasonable response was for Moses to worship. When Moses saw this revelation of God's goodness -- that he is merciful, loving, caring, gracious, forgiving -- he quickly fell to his knees and worshipped. **“And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped.” (Exodus 34:8, ESV)** The revelation of God's nature overwhelmed this man. He saw how merciful, long-suffering and patient God is with his children -- including stiff-necked people, idolaters and those who grieved him. Moses was so stirred by this revelation, he fell down and worshipped.

See this beloved, true worship cannot be learned! We can teach people the elements of worship. We can teach people about God and about His Christ. We can preach the and proclaim the gospel, but worship is a spontaneous outbreak, the fruit of faith in God and His Christ-- the act of a heart that's been overwhelmed by a revelation of God's glory and his incredible love for us. Worship like this doesn't come from learning facts about God.

Worship like this only comes from experiencing God. Not knowing about God, but knowing God, personally. Moses experienced God in an incredible way because Moses pushed into God, He pressed into God's presence instead of shirking away. He believed what He saw and heard.

Moses experienced God like that because He had a longing for Him. Do we have that longing for God's glory? Do we long, not only to feel His presence, but to know Him, to know His character, His goodness, His glory? Do we have that desire? We should, because in a greater way than the cleft in the rock on Mt Sinai offered shelter and a vantage point for Moses to experience the goodness of God, we have Christ.

I love the words of the old hymn Rock of Ages. **Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure; Save from wrath and make me pure. Not the labor of my hands Can fulfill Thy law's demands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone. Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to the cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die. While I draw this fleeting breath, When mine eyes shall close in death, When I soar to worlds unknown, See Thee on Thy judgment throne, Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.** We can behold God's glory in Christ.

What you and I need, the thing our hearts are longing for today is that taste of the goodness of God. Every yearning of our hearts is ultimately a yearning after Him. Cornelius Plantinga, who is Dean of the Chapel at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, warns us saying, "I think a lot of people, including a lot of Christians, are secretly tired of God. They hear sermons about God with half a mind. They launch prayers toward God with half a heart. They sing hymns to God with words they cannot recount.... nobody should underestimate the challenge of making God real. ... a good ... sermon ... may have to get through layers of bumper sticker piety, billboard piety, radio and television piety. It must penetrate people who have been so stuffed with the good news of God that the news no longer sounds to them very good or very new. And therefore our hunger has been dulled. And therefore our worship has shriveled."

But I have a hope for West Salem and what worship could be, what our lives would be like, if everyone in it were like Moses, hungry for God's glory. I can envision a time during the week utterly unlike any other time; a weekly corporate appointment with the living God. A room filled with people who from the bottom of their heart say, ***“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”*** (Psalm 63:1, ESV) Where the people are genuinely happy in God, having unfettered hearts of joy, free to say "Amen!" when the choir has carried us to God, or when praise and worship of the congregation has enthroned the King of Kings or when the preacher speaks some incomparable gospel truth, where grudges melt and old festering wounds are healed in the warmth of the joy of the Lord. A time with God where battered saints absorb the strength and power of the Lord, a time where we encounter God together in such a real and unmistakable way that visitors will enter and say, "God is surely in this place and with these people!" O God, how I long for that.

Moses had an insatiable desire for more and more of God and when He asked God to show Him his glory, God gave Moses all He could handle. May we have that same Spirit in us.

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