

“Your Glory, Your People”

Exodus 33:12-23

January 31, 2020

Twenty years ago last month our country was swirling in a post-election controversy while my wife, Denise and I, were thousands of miles away in another country, Tonga, which was ruled at that time by an absolute monarch. (Not many monarchies today, at the time only 10 absolute—most ceremonial where there is reign not rule)

(Scouting for a mission outreach—seminary built) While there, we were granted an audience with the king! Granted, it was a small third-world country, and in 2006 after this king we met died, Tonga’s gov. changed to something less than absolute monarchy. But there we were, waiting to see the king! Before on palace grounds

given tutorial—don’t address king in the second person, “Do you enjoy fishing? No! Only the third person—“Does his majesty enjoy...?””

Waited in a room until one of his attendants ushered us into the room where the king was seated. Suspense! I was nervous. What would the king say? Would my sweet wife rush up and give his majesty one of her signature hugs and bring his security detail down on us? **Picture (Had a warm and friendly conversation! And it was evident from our conversation that he loved the Lord. Refurbished dilapidated building etc.)**

At one point in the life of Moses the great lawgiver and leader of the Children of Israel, he was waiting to hear from God. Moses was held in suspense. He didn't know what God was going to do or say. And this wasn't a monarchy, it was a theocracy—the direct rule of God, and God's people had just committed a horrible sin.

Background—Moses had been on Mount Sinai receiving the revelation of God's law. While he was in the presence of God, the Children of Israel down at the bottom of the mountain were growing impatient. Where is Moses? Know the story—they called on Aaron the brother of Moses to make an idol. Just think about this. It had been less than 4 and 1/2 months since they had been rescued from Egypt, and less than six weeks since the people all told Moses they would do all that the Lord commanded them (Ex. 19:8). And now, they are insulting the one who in His grace and mercy rescued and redeemed them from their slavery in Egypt! They are dancing in revelry around the golden calf! When Moses comes down from the mountain, he is livid, and has the worst offenders executed on the spot. Then God told Moses, "I will keep my word and send you to the Promised Land, but I will send a messenger with you. I myself will not go with you—or you all may die before you arrive.

The conditions for Yahweh being with his people had been violated. God's people had forfeited the privilege of having God's presence among them. When the people heard God was not going to go with them, they were devastated and

went into mourning. (They had to learn a difficult lesson: If you are going to have God's presence with you, it's going to have to be on his terms, not yours!)

So what does Moses do? Mo goes to a special tent he named the tent of meeting—outside the camp—when Moses approached this tent a cloud of God's presence came down and enveloped him. People had observed Mo. many times going into that tent—verse 11 of Ex. 33 says Moses spoke “face to face” (not literally, but more than likely this refers to something more direct than a dream or vision—more intimate). And this brings us to our text. Mo. is stressed. The people have blown it big time. Moses has three requests as he intercedes on behalf of the people.

(One slide if possible please)

Exodus 33:13 (NASB)

“Let me know your ways that I may know you...”

Exodus 33:15 (NASB)

“If your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.”

Exodus 33:18 (NASB)**“Show me your glory!” (Leave up on screen)**

What I would like to do today is look at each of these requests of Moses, and see if you and I might learn something of value that will help us with our relationship with the Lord.

Let me begin here by saying I love the way these requests reveal the heart of Moses. I love the content of these requests. I love the sincerity of these requests. I love the passion and fervor of these requests. And I’m humbled and somewhat distressed that so many of my prayers seem so shallow by comparison!

Exodus 33:13 (NASB)**“Let me know your ways that I may know you...”**

At first glance we may think this is just a generic request unrelated to anything regarding what has just happened. But look at the verse right before it:

Exodus 33:12 (NASB95)

¹² Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’”

Well if I have your favor God, then let me know your ways that I may know you!

Mo. wants to know God’s plan. Show me God what you are going to do with these people who have so grossly sinned against you. How are you ultimately going to respond in this situation? You can begin by telling me who will bring us into the land. What is Moses after?

The people have sinned. He wants to know what is life is going to look like going forward? Is there really any hope for these stiffnecked, stubborn, self-willed people?

(Reminds me of my second trip to Israel years ago—talking with a Jewish woman—we are such a stubborn, stiffnecked people!)

Some five hundred years later David would put Moses’ words into a song in Psalm 25:4-5

Psalm 25:4–5 (GNB)

⁴ Teach me your ways, O LORD; make them known to me. ⁵ Teach me to live according to your truth, for you are my God, who saves me. I always trust in you.

Years ago at Morning Star we sang a song “To know him, to know him, it’s the cry of my heart; Spirit reveal him to me; to hear what he’s saying is life to my bones; to know him, to know him alone.” I think the request of Moses here boils

down to this. He doesn't just want information *about* God. He truly wants to *know* God.

Do we really want to know God? (Chronological Bible—more than just reading—learn how God works, so you can know him—Denise and kids and grandkids crawling behind them)

We sometimes remain satisfied with the general contours of our faith—God created the heavens and the earth, God loves us, Jesus died for us etc. I kind of think while Moses didn't have access to that last one, he was pursuing every clue he could to find out about the character and nature of this Yahweh who had rescued his people from Egypt.

How did God respond to Moses' first request?

Exodus 33:14 (NASB95)

¹⁴ And He said, "My presence shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

Let's look at Moses' second request:

Exodus 33:15 (NASB)

"If your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here."

I love what Moses says here: It's your presence that makes the whole journey meaningful. It's not worth going to the

Promised Land, if God isn't with us. What good is a land flowing with milk and honey (dates from all the palm trees) without God?

Do you know the Bible tells us in the N.T. 1 Tim. 6:17 that "God richly supplies us with all things to enjoy?" Actually the whole verse reads like this:

1 Timothy 6:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

To enjoy anything without God puts us in a position to enjoy it in place of God—and this itself is idolatry.

Now the final request of Moses:

Exodus 33:18 (NASB)

"Show me your glory."

What is the glory of God? (some trans. presence)

The glory of God is his majesty, preciousness, beauty, richness, radiance, and character all bundled together under the word "weightiness!"

(kavod)

Glory seems to be a synonym for each and every word that expresses the noticeable display of God's being and character.

How does God respond to this request—so graciously—starts with what Mo. can see! I'll hide you in a cave and pass by—you won't see all of me, but you will see what you need to Moses.

And notice in chapter 34 how God shows Moses his glory.

Exodus 34:5–7 (NASB95)

⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. ⁶ Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

Visiting iniquity—“taking account of” verb as used in Exodus 3:16, 1 Samuel 17:18. Both Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 make it clear that children do not pay—in the sense of bear responsibility for the sins of parents or grandparents.

But look at the bigger picture here. Notice how God reveals himself in the middle of this colossal mess of sin. Here is the noticeable display of glory—it is seen in my forgiveness! God shows His

ways by showing compassion on the people we think least deserving of it!

Do you want to see God's glory at its brightest? Look with me at the cross. Mercy and justice.

The glory of God is manifest in the love which takes Jesus to the cross in a total offering of himself to the Father, and in the love of the Father who sustains the Son to the end in loving obedience.

Lesslie Newbigin

