**The Gospel According to Moses**

**Show Me Your Glory**

**Exodus 33**

May 14, 2023

David Taylor

We’re continuing our journey through the Old Testament book of Exodus in our series, The Gospel According to Moses. We are in chapter 33 today, my message is entitled, Show Me Your Glory. Chapter 33 describes the situation Israel put themselves in when they created and worshipped the golden calf. God had shown great grace and mercy toward them, and they so quickly turned away from him. Now God threatens to send them to the Promised Land without him. My Big idea is more than anything else, we need God’s presence in our lives. Chapter 33 can be divided into two sections, a Disastrous word (33:1-11) and Moses’ Prayer (33:12-23).

**A Disastrous Word (33:1-11)**

God promises to send Israel to the Promised Land, but he will not go with them. They are a stiff-necked people who alienated themselves from God (33:3-6). God not going with Israel is an act of judgement and mercy, so that he does not consume them (33:3). The storyline of the bible seeks to answer this one problem, how can a holy God dwell among a sinful people. It is why Adam and Even were kicked out of the garden and why God threatens to send Israel to the Promised Land without him. One commentator said about this passage, *they were still booked for the Promised Land, but God canceled his reservations*. They can have all the earthly blessings God provides but the not blessing of God himself. I sometimes hear people talk of heaven this way. They look forward to the blessing of seeing family and friends but do not mention the blessing of seeing God or being with God. Heaven is heaven because God is there. If you do not long for God in this life, you will be disappointed with heaven, if you end up there. Heaven is primarily about God, God’s presence, being with God (Ps 16:11). This disastrous word leads Israel to repentance, they mourn and do not put on their ornaments, the jewelry they plundered from Egypt (33:4). Another indication of the loss of God’s presence is the tent of meeting[[1]](#footnote-1) where Moses met with God (33:7-11). This is not the tabernacle tent which will be in located in the middle of Israel, but a makeshift tent located outside the camp. Israel, making the golden calf, wanted more of God on their own terms but instead they got less of God. Do not pursue God on your own terms, defining or making a god of your own liking. When Moses hears this disastrous word, he turns to the Lord in prayer again.

**Moses’ Prayer (33:12-23)**

When God tells Moses that he will not go with them to the Promised Land, he makes three requests. The first is, please be with me (33:12-13). He asks the Lord, who is this angel? I don’t know who you’re sending and not sure what this means (12). His request is based on what God has already said. It’s always a good idea to pray based on God’s word. He uses the language of knowing (six times) and finding favor in God’s sight (five times) and asks, please show me now your ways (33:13). This is Moses’ way of saying, would you be with me? We know God by knowing his ways, his laws, and his word. Moses is asking, I want you to be with me, I want to know you. I want assurance you are going to be with me. He's asking to know or grow in grace and knowledge (2 Per 3:17-18). If you have no interest in knowing God’s word, you have no interest in knowing God. If we are not passionate about getting into our Bibles, knowing our bibles, understanding your bibles, it is because (among other things) we’re ultimately not that passionate about getting to know God. And if you don’t the only way to change your wanter is asking God to change it and being in God’s word. God graciously answers this request, I will be with you, and I will give you rest (14). My presence will go with you and when my presence is with you, that will be your rest. There is no real and lasting rest apart from the knowledge that God is with you. That may be why some of you are so restless about your life, your family, and your finances, your work. You don’t really know or believe that God’s presence will be with you. It’s just like with a child. There are all sorts of scary things that a child faces, but if she knows that Dad and Mom will be there, everything will be ok. God’s presence is his promise of protection, provision, and power in your life.

But Moses wants more, he wants God to be with us. His first request is, be with me; his second is, be with us (16). It is an amazing statement, your presence is what makes us distinct. What set Israel apart from the other nations was not where they were from, or what they looked like, but who was with them. I wonder how many of us could really say, this is what makes me/us distinct, God is with me/us. That God knows us and loves us, and that we are his people. For Moses, the journey to the Promised Land without God is unacceptable. It would be better to remain in the desert with God’s presence than the Promised Land without God’s presence. What you need, what I need more than anything else in life is God and his presence in our lives. God graciously answers Moses’ second request (33:17).

Moses is two for two, so he makes his boldest, most audacious, and final request, please show me your glory (33:18)*.* Moses has seen God’s glory in the burning bush, the plagues, the parting of the red sea, God’s miraculous provision in the wilderness, the theophany on Mount Sinai, but he wants more. He wants a fuller picture. He wants to see God like he talks to God: face to face.[[2]](#footnote-2) But Moses cannot fully see God in his glory. We may be able to see and feel the rays of the sun. We may be able to stare intently at a shadow cast by the sun, but it’s not a good idea to stare directly at the brightness of the sun because it can damage your eyes. So, God reveals himself and conceals himself so that Moses will only get a glimpse of God’s glory (33:19-23). The answer to the dilemma of how a holy God can dwell among a sinful people is God’s goodness. God chose Israel to be his people and will fulfill his covenant promises not because of their goodness but because of his goodness, displayed in his name and his character. God is free to be gracious and merciful to whom he chooses, and he freely chose Israel to be his people. God chose Israel despite their sinfulness, God chose to be gracious and merciful to Israel, God chose to make a covenant with Israel, and God will uphold his covenant with them. God will be gracious to whom he will be gracious and show mercy on whom he will show mercy.

**Response**

The goodness of God gives us great assurance. The promise of God’s goodness displayed in his name and his character, specifically his grace and mercy, is for all of God’s people who are struggling, who are weak in faith, we are doubters, to all who recognize their sinfulness and flee to Jesus Christ. You may wonder, how can God love you as sinful as you are. Why would God show his goodness to you, his grace and mercy to you? God’s goodness is his freedom to be gracious and merciful to you despite your sinfulness. God’s word to you today is this, your sinfulness cannot stop God’s goodness to you in Jesus Christ. If you long to see God’s glory look no further than Jesus Christ (John 1:14). All that God is and promises to be for us is found in Jesus Christ. And it is in looking to him that we find all that God is and promises to be for us in Jesus Christ. Make war with your own sinfulness by finding superior satisfaction in Jesus Christ. More than anything else, we need God’s presence in our lives and we find that presence in Jesus Christ.

**Life Group Questions:**

Icebreaker: Tell us your name and describe God in one sentence.

Read Exodus 33 together.

Head

1. What insight or observation did you take away from the message?
2. What is the connection between God’s “name” and His attributes?
3. What clues are in chapter 33 that God distanced himself from Israel? Why did God distance himself?
4. What does it mean that the Lord spoke to Moses’ face to face, as a man speaks with his friend?
5. What does Exodus 33:15-16 tell us about the Christian life?

Heart

1. What has God's presence meant to you in your life?
2. How has God's mercy grace and compassion affected you (Ex. 33:19)?
3. How does Moses’ three prayers challenge your own prayer life?
4. What did God warn Israel about when in the promised land (v.11-16)? How do we apply that today?

Hand

1. How would you explain to children God’s grace and mercy?
2. What is one thing you will do differently this week because of this message or discussion?
3. What is one thing that the Lord is asking you to be aware of this week to stop doing?
4. Where will you serve next Sunday?
1. This is not the tabernacle as it has not been built yet but some structure for Moses to meet with God besides Mount Sinai. In this tent, the Lord spoke with Moses’ face to face, metaphor for direct communication. This is not literal as told that man cannot see God and live (Ex 33:20). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The language of Moses speaking with God face to face is a metaphor of directness, intimacy, face to face communication. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)