

Title: Show Me Your Glory
Text: Exodus 33.1-34.9
Theme: The glory of God in mercy
Series: Exodus #50
Prop Stmtnt: While God will show his glory in judgment if he has to, he LOVES to show his glory in mercy.

The day began like any other day. You awoke, got up and began to think of what you needed to accomplish for that day. And for a moment, for a brief moment of time, you forgot all about the previous day's catastrophe; and then, like a wave it hit you. Your adrenal gland jolted you awake with a shock that immediately made your heart feel like the pounding of tympani. You had hoped that it was all a nightmare that would be gone when the sun rose on a new day, but it wasn't. This turn of events was the new reality that you had to face. Like an anvil on your chest, a vice on your heart and the return of that familiar throbbing in your head, you bowed your neck, lowered your posture and resigning yourself to this unwelcome and unresolved problem, you now wondered how you would muddle through this day. For the children of Israel, chapter 33 was like waking up in the nightmare. They had to be rubbing their eyes in bewilderment as the consequences of their actions began to settle upon them. How did we get here? What happened to us? Everything that they had worked for, was now about to be lost, and their own future was hanging by a thread.

Read Text: Exodus 33.1-11

In the climactic scene of Tolkien's, Return of the King, Gollum, deep in the heart of Mt. Doom, in the land of Mordor finally captures the ring of power as he falls to his destruction. The ring that he worshiped bound him to its fate. The story of Sméagol in this epic movie is a classic and compelling illustration of the truth that has been staring at us, right in the face.

We become what we worship either for destruction or restoration. That is, you become so united to that which you worship, that you will share in its future. And since all idols are bound for destruction, if you worship them, you will share in their fate. When Moses returned to the camp and found the children of Israel worshipping a golden calf, he immediately gave them a taste of the future. He ground the idol into a powder, scattered it into the water and made them drink it. Here is the reality of idolatry. It is nasty, bitter and destructive. But, while the children of Israel become a case study in destruction, Moses stands as a contrast by experiencing all that they could have become. God's plan was to have a people with whom he could relate like a friend.

Moses in contrast to the children of Israel. At this point in the story, it appears that they have forfeited all that God had provided for them. They made a trade. They exchanged the glory of God for a cow.

Chapter 32 ends like a cliffhanger. The tension of God's unsatisfied justice going to battle against the offensive sin of the Israelites leaves us with little hope for them. Moses

has put his life on the line. He stands between God and Israel, begging God to take his own life if that would spare Israel. God is moved by Moses' request and for the time being, his justice is stayed. But there will be consequences. But even the consequences have a purpose.

1. **Consequences are given to drive us to Repentance.** (33.1-6)

A. **Expelled!** (1)

Leave this place. (the place of blessing became a place of sorrow) You cannot stay here (in my Presence) any longer. They are being expelled from the place that was a taste of Eden.

B. **Abandoned** (2-4)

- a. I will send an angel
- b. I will not go with you
 - i. You are stiff-necked
 - ii. I might destroy you

This means that they are going to be like all of the other nations, expect that an angel will at least make sure they get into the land, but after that, they are on their own. Instead of the Presence of God, they will have his Absence. Have you ever just wished that God would leave you alone? Have you ever resented his call on your life because you feel responsible to obey his commands and feel trapped by his expectations? Have you ever just wished that you could live "free" like all those people who are going to hell? The reality of that was now, just starting to settle down upon the children of Israel. Sin is like that. The woman, who several months ago made the decision to drive drunk and killed 4 kids near Macomb Mall, only did what thousands of others have done. Driving with one too many – come on, what is the big deal? It takes a long time for the reality of sin to settle in, and for Israel, the cows were starting to come home, if you know what I mean. If God does not go with them that means they are no longer a special treasure, a kingdom for his glory, or a holy nation. It means that there is no covenant and therefore no Ark of the Covenant. Without his presence it means that there is no tabernacle, no holy of holies and no glory cloud. What is God saying here? Leave my presence before I pour out upon you what you deserve. Leave my presence and go away. I am not going with you. You have found another god that you prefer, let him protect you. Of course, he wasn't even able to stand up to Moses, who ground him into powder, so he may not be real good to protect you either. But, you picked him.

So, here it is. Everything that happened in the first 31 chapters, the rescue of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, the success of the children of Israel against all odds, the return of Moses, the plagues, the Passover, the plundering, the Red Sea, the water from the rock, the manna, their first military victory, the law and the instructions about the tabernacle are all in jeopardy. Everything is about to be lost. This is not simply a story for Sunday

School, this is a colossal catastrophe! Now God has spoken. This is not a turn in the road; this is the end of the road. No God, means no future!

C. **Uncertainty** (5-6)

At this point things do not look very good at all. But then, just as he did in 32.10, God opens the door. He lets them know that he has not yet made up his mind. He says, "I will decide what to do with you." Do you know what that is? That's a test. Will you believe me? Will you believe that I love you and care for you and want to heal you and lead you and provide for you beyond your ability to even imagine? You just rejected me, but I am giving you a chance. Will you repent? The people stripped off their ornaments. This was not a time to show off. This was not a time to draw attention to oneself. This was a time for humility. This was a time for recognizing that you have nothing to offer to God but that you are completely at his mercy. And yet, why would God even give them this chance to repent? Does it really matter if they repent? Would God actually forgive them? If he did, why would God do that? What stops him from just wiping them out? Why is God so patient?

We all struggle with grasping different aspects of the character of God. This is what I struggle with. Some of you struggle with God's Sovereignty in salvation and you wrestle with election, predestination and calling. I don't. It was like, one day the lights just all came on and I got it and have never looked back. Some of you struggle with God's sovereignty over evil. How can a good God ordain bad things to accomplish his will? I don't struggle with that and it is not because my life has been shielded from tragedy or betrayal. In fact, this truth has been a rock for my feet in those days. But I struggle with this and I know that many of you don't. How can God be so merciful to these people? He's righteous and just, how can he be so patient? Now, do not misunderstand me, I am eternally grateful that God is merciful. If I was God, I would wipe me out – know what I mean? So, here after this enormous rejection of him and betrayal on the part of the people, God cracks open the door of hope by saying, I haven't yet decided what I am going to do with you. It remains to be seen, based on how they respond.

So, what will the people do? Will they repent of their sin and cast themselves completely on his mercy, believing what he said about himself that he is a merciful God, or will they give up and say, that it is no use, he has already made up his mind, it doesn't matter what we do? Listen very, very carefully. The children of Israel just bowed down to an idol. An idol is something that you trust in for ultimate security. An idol is what you believe in, instead of believing in God. Idolatry, therefore, is misrepresenting the character of God. When you refuse to believe what God says about his mercy, and you refuse to repent of your sin and appeal to him, you are guilty of idolatry because you believe in a misrepresentation of who he actually is. Some of you refuse to believe that God will forgive you and you think that repentance will not do any good, so you might as well keep on sinning. Here is what this text is screaming to us: God will show his glory in judging sin if he has to, but he LOVES to show his glory through mercy. Therefore, (make this very important connection in your mind) repentance is a gift from God that

enables him to show his mercy which is what he loves and longs to do. Take the gift! It will not be offered forever.

Now, in verses 7-11 we have a little break in the story. In order to understand what is about to take place, we need a little background. So, we are given an explanation of the little tent of meeting, which was used by Moses until the Tabernacle was constructed. This tent is where Moses used to go, outside the camp to meet with God. And, at this point he had to go outside the camp, because if God came inside, there would be some serious problems. But notice verse 11. Do you get that? Moses and God would sit in there and talk!!

Now, when I read that, I want to say, “holy cow!!” but in light of the previous chapter, that obviously would not be a very good idea right about now. But, I hope that the truth of verse 11 just grabs your heart and won’t let go. I, not only marked that verse in bright pink, but circled that in fluorescent green, because this is what God made us for. He made us to relate to him as a friend with a friend. He designed us to need him. He made us for him. He loves to talk with us and enjoy us and has provided the way for that. The contrast could hardly be more glaring. What Moses (as a person) experienced in this tent was what Israel was supposed to have experienced (as a people) in the Tabernacle. God’s plan was to live in the middle of all the people, so THE God, their God, their friend would be right there in their midst, providing, protecting, and relating! And they traded that in for a cow. But, if God was going to crack open the door, Moses was going to bust it wide open. What happened to the insecure, can’t talk in front of people, Moses – now? He’s going to the mat with God because God gave him the chance!

2. **Intercession is made to show us God’s Love** (33.12-17)

This prayer of Moses is more like an argument. But it is not the argument of a rebellious kid being an immature jerk. This is a theologically informed argument. Moses is telling God – I believed you! You’ve been telling me to lead these people – and I have! I’ve been sticking my neck on the line, and I have not had all of the facts. I listened to you out in the desert. I went back to Egypt, but you didn’t tell me about all the difficulties. You didn’t tell me about the Red Sea, or no water and no food, but I didn’t quit on you. You didn’t warn me about this golden calf mess, but I’m still here. And God, I can’t do this by myself, and now you’re telling me that you won’t go with me. Well, if you won’t go with me, I’m not going. You told me that you will give me an angel. I don’t want some ole angel! I want you. After all, they’re YOUR people!!

Listen up, if God ain’t going, it ain’t worth the trip – know what I mean? But angels aren’t bad. And yet, Moses won’t settle for the creation. He wants the Creator. In v.14, God says, ok, I’m going. But Moses is not done – is he? He is not taking any chances and he keeps pounding the point home. It’s like, don’t interrupt me, I’m on a roll. Besides, Moses makes it clear (vs. 15-16) that he has thought this through and he realizes what it would mean if God did not go with them. How would they ever know if they were pleasing to God? What would make them different than all of the other nations if

God wasn't with them? (of course the problem was that they had been acting like all of the other nations).

Once again, God shows that he is not only willing to be influenced by the prayers of his people; it is obvious that this is what he wants. He wants someone stepping up and fighting for his people. Instead of being offended that Moses would be this bold and argumentative in a right way, God is pleased and he lets him know it.

Have you ever wrestled with God like this? Have you ever taken his promises and boldly banked your whole case upon them?

Sometimes coaches will look for ways to bring out of their players a level of focus and intensity that the players themselves may not realize they are capable of. But how do you know if the players are willing to play like that? Imagine that your team is getting whipped pretty soundly at halftime. The coach comes into the discouraged locker room and says, "I see no reason for us to continue playing this game. You are an embarrassment to your families, to your fans, to the school and to the game. I see no other option than to inform the officials that we are forfeiting this game. We are being out-played, out-fought, out-hustled, and out-classed. There is no sense to drag this out. What is he or she doing? The coach is giving you an opportunity to fight for your team. The coach is giving you a chance to step up and take responsibility and show fight and leadership. But, if you don't seize the moment, then it is clear that the coach is right. But, when the team rises to the occasion in an effort to change the coach's mind (who, by the way, wants to have his mind changed) and goes back into the game with a "never-say-die" attitude and play their hearts out, then they will have learned something about themselves.

In responding to God's challenge, Moses takes God at his word, that God is pleased with Moses. So, Moses says, if you are pleased with me, "teach me your ways." (13) I need to know how you think, how you plan, how you work. I want to know you. Now, how do you think God responds when one of his children is asking him that? Are you kidding me?! That is what I have been waiting for? That is what I made you for? Do you want to get God's attention? Do you want to move his heart? Then, let him know that he has yours and you want all of him that he can give you.

And then when God reaffirms to Moses that he will go with them, I think Moses can hardly believe his ears! He asked God to teach him his ways, now he is so thunderstruck by God's promise (which implies forgiveness) that I think Moses now wants to know – what kind of a God are you really? I don't think I really understand you yet. So he asks, "Show me your glory."

Next week, we will look at one of the most amazing encounters that a mortal has had with the immortal God. God was willing to show Moses all that Moses could handle. Moses could not handle seeing God in his unveiled glory, so God allowed Moses to see, where God had been, after God walked by. It is an amazing scene. But the most amazing part is seen in what God says about himself. God's opinion about himself is the

opinion that you need to have about him. What I hope to impress upon you next week is that while God will show his glory in judgment if he must, He LOVES to show his glory in mercy. For that reason, we need to understand and worship God for his mercy. For that reason we need to be merciful people. If you really want to be like God, then you need to be known for mercy. God's love is breath-taking.

3. **God's glory is seen in His Mercy** (33.18 – 34.9)

While God will show his glory in judgment if he has to, He LOVES to show his glory in mercy.

Conclusion

v.17 – Moses pleased God and God did what he requested. Christ perfectly pleased God and therefore, God will respond to his intercession for his own.