

Title: Show Me Your Glory – pt.2  
Text: Exodus 33.18 - 20  
Theme: The glory of God in mercy  
Series: Exodus #51  
Prop Stmtnt: While God will show his glory in judgment if he has to, he LOVES to show his glory in mercy.

Read Text:

Wrestling with some of the raw realities of living in a sin-cursed world is hard and exhausting. Daily irritations with others, frustrations with our own lack of discipline or the disappointments of broken promises can all contribute to a sense of angst or unsettledness. And yet, many of these are manageable as long as they don't pile up all at once. Sadly, there are things that happen that are very, very hard to bear and almost impossible to comprehend.

This week, I was asked to do the funeral for a 14-year old boy. 14-year old boys are not supposed to die. They most certainly are not to be murdered, as he was in his sleep, by his step-father. His mother was killed, his step-brother was killed and his step-father, who committed these acts, then turned the gun upon himself. Once again, we are hit by an act of evil that will forever impact a family. Many of you have your own stories of tragedy and betrayal. You have, like many, attempted to look into the human psyche and have tried to imagine what kind of a thinking process could take place that would drive such horrific actions? You look at your family and other people and you wonder, could someone do that to me? And then, if you dare to continue to think about it, you are frozen with the fear that perhaps, you, even you, if pushed hard enough were capable of doing something like that. And try as you may, some of you cannot imagine that at all. Your mind shakes itself in unbelief as you look at your children and cannot put yourself in those shoes. It is beyond your grasp, at this point in time, it is beyond your ability to even consider, and you think to yourself, I could never do something like that, yet you struggle with the reality that the man who did this, probably said the same thing to himself. Jeremiah 17.9 (*"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*) is a biopsy of the human heart and it reveals the ugly truth that is so difficult to face. There is unimaginable evil that resides within human nature. Do you know what God's Word is saying? There is unimaginable evil that resides in you. The same seeds that take root and grow into acts of unspeakable violence are the same seeds that reside in each heart. That is both humbling and necessary for you to grasp. But it is also necessary for you to know, that there is more to the story than that. If all that we had was a diagnosis of the problem, we would only have our sense of doom confirmed. But, thank God there is also a remedy. If you bore as deep as you can into the human heart, you will find atrocity that will most certainly crush your spirit and steal your joy. However, as stunning and inexplicable as the human heart is, if you bore as deep as you can into the heart of God, you will find a mercy and compassion that is far more stunning and infinitely more inexplicable. This text is one of the reasons we confidently state that Jesus is a bigger Savior than we are sinners.

When we consider the magnitude of Israel's sin in Exodus 32, we have taken the first step to understanding the magnitude of God's mercy. Moses understood and expected God's justice. He never questioned the intensity of God's righteous wrath. He knew that Israel's sin was so obnoxious, and so offensive that God would surely respond. He did not see the judgment of God and ask why. He saw the sin of the children of Israel and wondered if anyone would survive. So, when he goes before God and pleads for the people, I don't think that he really thought that it was going to change things. But it did! God said, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." (33.17) This is what we are learning: *While God will show his glory in judgment if he has to, he LOVES to show his glory in mercy.*

I believe that Moses is at this point so overwhelmed with God's response, that Moses makes this bold and audacious request. "Now show me your glory." When Moses asks this of God, he is tying several things together. Remember that 1) the Covenant that was established in Exodus 24 had already been broken by the people. The Covenant had a Law-Giver (God), subject (the people), sacrifice and a fellowship meal. It was in that first fellowship meal that Moses and the leaders of Israel "saw God, and they ate and drank." (Exodus 24.11) The text there in Exodus 24, goes on to describe that what they saw of God, was basically the floor on which was standing. They could not lift their heads up any more than that. Since here in Exodus 33, Moses is attempting to re-affirm or renew the covenant that was broken, I believe that when he asks God if God could show him his glory, he is asking for evidence that the covenant has been re-established and to let him get a glimpse of God's glory as he did before, but this time, even closer! This time, Moses wants an assurance that God is not going to leave. Now before we go on I want you to see something. There is a pattern here that is seen all throughout the Bible. This pattern is:

1. God is the covenant creator and keeper.
2. People are covenant breakers and liable for judgment
3. God provides atonement so that people can be forgiven and restored.

This happened in Eden. This happened with Noah. It is repeated in Nehemiah 9, Jonah 4, and Hosea. But what happens in specific points in the story is also part of the big story itself. This pattern is the big story. When we open the NT, we read of the "the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" and immediately realize that God is keeping his covenant with Abraham, Moses and David, which built upon the covenant he made with Adam. In spite of the fact that his people have sinned and are under judgment, God is providing the ultimate atonement that will result in the greatest rescue and an epic and universal restoration. That is why that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet. This is my Father's world. The battle is not done. Jesus who died, shall be satisfied and heaven and earth be one. So, once again, here in Exodus 32-34 we are given in this scene a taste of the storyline of the Bible. Creation/covenant, fall, redemption, and restoration is right here. The covenant that was broken is being renewed (re-created). The basis of this renewal is the promise of God. The promise of God is based on the character of God. When we make promises, we try to find something bigger than us in an attempt to show how important this is. So we come up

with things such as: I swear on a stack of Bibles (as if more than one makes it even greater), or I swear on my father's grave. As kids we used to say, "cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye" (which really sounded bad). What does God say? When God made a promise to Abraham, he made an oath on the basis of himself, since there is nothing greater. In pursuing the renewal of the covenant, Moses, as the formal representative of the people of God is not only asking God to promise on the basis of himself (show me your glory), but Moses, as the friend of God, is also asking for a closer view of God than he had before. And I believe that he is asking this, because he was so awed by the mercy that God showed in withholding judgment from Israel that Moses realized that as much as he has already found out about God, there is so much more to learn. God is not only powerful and righteous, but this God is compassionate and merciful too! God is so merciful, that he will protect you from himself. That is what is so truly amazing about the gospel. If someone were to ask you - are you saved? What would you say? And if you said yes, and they asked you - "What are you saved from? What would you say? The answer is, we are saved from God. We are saved by God from God. And some of the seed for that truth is planted right here at the end of Exodus 33. This scene is such a powerful picture of his mercy.

1. **God knows what you need is more important than what you desire.** (18-20)

Moses asked to see God's glory. God does not grant him that request specifically because Moses could not handle it. Moses wants to see, but God wants him to hear. God lets him see a little bit, but God lets him hear a lot. God tells him what he is going to tell him because Moses (and us) really need to hear this. Here is what I am going to do: "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name. In other words, it is more important that you understand what I am, than you see how I look. Besides, the gap between the infinite God and finite man is so great, that finite man cannot look upon the unveiled reality of God and live.

Now, here is a good place to go back and look at 33.11, where the text says that "the LORD would speak to Moses face to face..." and here (33.20) God says, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Ok, what gives? Face to face is an expression that has both a literal and a figurative use. In fact, many expressions that are idioms or figures of speech have a literal usage from which the idiom originated. Take, for example, the expression - "off the wall." When you are playing outfield in baseball, and someone hits the ball so hard that it bounces off the outfield wall, you don't always know how it is going to bounce. It is unpredictable. So, when you say that someone is "off the wall" you are saying that they are unpredictable. The literal usage, became a figure of speech that is now applied to much more than baseball. The same thing happened with the phrase "face to face." Today, we say that e-mail is good, texting is helpful, Skype is wonderful, but nothing replaces "face to face." The expression means personal, being close and intimate. This expression is used several times in the Bible (Gen. 32.30; Deut. 5.4; 34.10; Judges 6.22; Jer. 32.4; 34.3; Ezek. 20.35; Acts 25.16; 1 Cor. 13.12; 2 Cor 10.1; 2 John 12) both literally and as a figure of speech referring to personal closeness.

Moses cannot see what he wants to see. He would not survive it. Besides, there is something else that he needs. He needs to know more about who God is. So, God answers Moses request according to what is going to be helpful to Moses. We need to hear God's Word so that we will know who God is. We need to hear how God describes himself, so that we can see, with our hearts, what his heart is. God, in a sense does answer the request of Moses, in that he allows Moses to see his glory by hearing God describe himself to Moses. God wants Moses to see more with the eyes of his heart than with the eyes of his head. Moses needs more than an experience, he needs understanding. His request is not wrong. It is good, but God answers it in a little different way. How does God do that? Now, that is an incredible thought. Do you not find it awkward when you are asked to describe yourself? If you say too little, you are not telling the truth, and if you say too much, you are giving the wrong impression. And since we all have blind spots and do not see ourselves as we really are, we cannot give an accurate picture of ourselves anyway. But that is not true about God. He sees himself perfectly! Now, let's look specifically at what God tells Moses that he is going to say to Moses (33.19).

"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you." Think of that for a minute. The goodness of God is so perfectly good, that we cannot even be exposed to that, without being destroyed. Now, let me give you an example of that. Some of you have a good and godly reputation. Your character and your belief all work together, so that your testimony for Christ is so clear, that some people cannot stand to be with you. They are so convicted by you, that it irritates them. They cannot swear and gossip in your presence. They most certainly do not want to go golfing with you or engage in some other kind of activity where your testimony would curtail their normal lifestyle. Simply put, you make them uncomfortable. If you, in your limited way can make others feel uncomfortable, and by the way, that is not a bad thing, unless of course, you are being harsh and condemning, but if you in your limited way can make others feel uncomfortable, how much more does the infinite goodness of God devastate any mortal man?

"I will proclaim my name, the LORD." Notice that in your Bibles, God calls himself the LORD (translated as all capitals) which refers to the Hebrew name – Yahweh (from which we get the English transliteration – Jehovah). The name Yahweh, comes from the Hebrew word for "being". God told Moses, "I am who I am." He reminds Moses of that, right here. I call myself the self-existing one, because that is what I am. I am perfectly independent. That is, God does not need us. God does not need any part of the creation for anything, and yet he permits and desires us to bring him joy. God is unchanging, unending, undeniable, unstoppable, unbreakable and unshakeable. You cannot fire him and he won't quit because He is! That reality is comforting to the weak, terrifying to the proud and highly irritating to most everyone else. And because He is, that means, you ain't! Not only is he God, but you aren't. And you must rest in that. And you must rest in his Sovereignty and in his right to exercise his God-ness in the manner in which he so chooses.

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Do you understand what this is saying? This is a difficult truth

to really grasp, so listen deeply. *The goodness of God is seen in his sovereign and therefore the perfectly independent use of his mercy and compassion to rescue those whom he chooses.* God's mercy and compassions are expressions of his goodness. His goodness is part of his self-existent being. That is, he independently exercises his mercy and compassion.. God does not have to show mercy. Mercy is his to use as he wants. I cannot demand mercy from God. God says that mercy is his. He alone possesses the divine prerogative to exercise it, if he so chooses. We are, completely and utterly dependent upon the mercy of God. We have no means by which we can control his mercy. Mercy is his alone to use for those whom he chooses.

Now hold the phone! Some of you are jumping to the wrong theological lily pad, and you are going to get wet. Some of you are already thinking that if mercy is God's alone to use as he sees fit to rescue those whom he chooses, and is not dependent upon us, then why do we witness? Why do we send missionaries? Why do we pray? Why do we teach English as a second language, and teach 650 school children every month about Christ, and organize a Christmas Tea, and since the beginning of August work on a Christmas concert and invite people to this? If it is totally up to God and not to us, then why do we bother? Well, not only does this God who Sovereignly exercises his mercy command us to do so, but please, do not forget the entire context for this encounter in the first place.

What is going on here? Moses has just been blown away by the free and independent choice of God to pour out his mercy upon the undeserving and rebellious children of Israel. Moses goes to the mat for them and cries out to God to forgive them and God chooses to exercise his rights as the Sovereign One to be merciful, not because he has to, but because he loves to and because he loves it, when people he knows intercede for people in need because the interceders remind him so much of his own Son, Jesus. God does not have to pour out his mercy, but God loves to pour out his mercy. The fact that God pours out his mercy on one and not on all is not because God is being unfair. If God were fair, we would all be wiped out. That is why Paul quotes this passage in Romans 9, to explain that very point. And when you understand that, you now understand the gospel as God intended for you to see it. If you have trusted in Christ as your Savior, thereby receiving the mercy of God poured out upon you through the merits of Christ, then you are the recipient of God's free and sovereign choice to be merciful to you. You cannot take credit for God's mercy, because it is his to give. But when you see that God has chosen to exercise his mercy for the eternal glory of his name by using your life as a public example of his compassionate heart, when he could have justly used your life as an eternal example of his justice, then God's mercy will wipe you out, even as it makes your heart sing. It is the mercy of God that wipes out Moses. It is the mercy of God that captured the heart of Kurt Allen.

Kurt grew up in the hood of DC. His mom tried to keep him away from so many of the bad influences of life in the streets that she moved completely out of the city. Kurt said, I saw my first cow and I knew that things were way different. But the change of scenery did not produce a change in heart and after high school, Kurt was back on the streets, doing, dealing, selling and running drugs. With that comes gangs. And after an altercation with a rival gang, Kurt was arrested and charged with multiple felonies. He

was looking at 43 years in prison, when the judge for some inexplicable reason reduced the charges and dropped the sentence so low that Kurt only spent a couple of months in jail. He knew that the mercy that he had just been shown was from God, although he did not know God or know anything about him. The kindness of God was already starting to work repentance in his heart. He got out of jail and was at a New Year's Eve Party smoking weed and reflecting on the past 5 years and realized that he had better do something about the mercy of God. Kurt 's words: "I said Lord I feel like I've gone too far in my life and there's no way that I'll believe in you if you don't help me now, so will you please forgive me for my sin, help me to be who I'm supposed to be. I didn't even know what to pray. That's all I prayed. I didn't have anyone lead me to the Lord. No epiphany. I didn't feel any different. I went 3 weeks later to a violation of probation in which I thought I was going to serve at least 5 years. The judge just dropped all of that and I knew it was the Lord so I started to read the Bible. I had a voracious appetite for God's word. (How did you know to turn to the Bible?) Well I thought if I prayed this prayer to the Lord I believing in the Christian God...then the only way I'm going to get to know him is through the church and through the Bible. I just started to read and it all kind of opened up for me. That was New Years Eve 1998. Today Kurt is the senior pastor of a Sovereign Grace church in College Park, Maryland.

The mercy of God poured out on undeserving sinners causes Moses to say, "show me your glory." But, the goodness of God, expressed in part in his mercy and compassion is so deep, so infinitely pure, so blazing in its intensity that no mortal can even stand in the presence of his goodness, unless God somehow protected him.

Do you see now? The mercy of God is a free gift from God that is designed to overwhelm you so much that you run for cover to the only One who can protect you from his just and righteous wrath. Once again, we have run out of time before we have run out of text. I look forward to preaching to you about the place near God, where he stands you on a rock and covers you with his hand. (v.21)

He takes my heart and gives me his.