Show Me Your Glory

Exodus 33:1-23

Key Verse:33:18 “Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

When Moses wrote down the Ten Commandments and all the words which God had said to him, he stayed at Mount Sinai for forty days. God wrote down his words not only on the two stone tablets, but also on the heart of Moses. Moses prepared his heart to be qualified to receive God’s holy words. So Moses was holy as the Lord is holy. I felt like being Moses in terms of receiving God’s words each Sunday. I knew that my message must not come from my wise and persuasive ideas, but from the power of the Holy Spirit.(1 Co 2:4) In order to receive the Holy Spirit, I should be repentant and holy. This is not only my duty, but also Moses’ duty and the duty of all those who handle the word of God. May God sanctify me by the truth, because your word is truth. (Jn 17:17)

Moses’ duty as a priest was not limited to receiving God’s words, but also included praying for his people. Moses performed priestly prayer for his people. In the previous chapter Moses appealed for God to reconsider his plan to terminate the covenant relationship with his people because they had worshiped idols while Moses was on the mountain. God relented after Moses’ appeal. God changed his mind. Still, the sin of his people remained. So Moses went up to the mountain again to atone for their sin. (30) Even though God relented, the people needed his forgiveness. Moses prayed very earnestly for the forgiveness of their sins. In 32:32 Moses prayed, “***But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written***.” Moses was willing to sacrifice his own life in order to save his people. This is intercessory prayer for sinners. Moses’ prayer reminds us of Paul’s prayer for his own people in Romans 9:3, “*For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race*.” Paul was willing to sacrifice his life if only his people were saved. Moses’ intercessory prayer reminds us of Jesus’ prayer for sinners on the cross, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*.” (Lk 23:34) Jesus prayed for those who crucified him as well as all those who were destined to die because of their sin. Remember that our intercessory prayer for others changes God and saves sinners. These days I join in relay prayer for 30 minutes every day. I have a chance to pray for the whole world, especially for those who suffer from COVID-19 around the world. My prayer seems too small to change the world, but I believe that God hears my prayer and saves those who are dying and suffering. I pray that God may send more prayer partners who will do priestly prayer for the whole world. Amen!

First, God’s presence (1-6) Moses’ intercessory prayer for his people continues in chapter 33. The Lord God told Moses to leave with his people for the land which he had promised to his ancestors. (1) God said that he would send an angel before them and drive out all their enemies from the promised land. (2) But God said that he would not go with the Israelites, because they were a stiff-necked people and that he might destroy all of them on the way. (3) God promised them land, a land flowing with milk and honey, but he would not be with them because they broke their covenant with him. God is like a husband ready to divorce his wife and make a generous material settlement.

What was the response of the people when they heard God’s message? They began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. (4) They were very sad and sorrowful. Stripping off their ornaments expressed their deep sorrow and regret. Then why was the presence of God important for them? Why did they want God be with them? Of course God promised to guide them with the angel until they arrived at the promised land. God promised material blessings, too. But God’s presence meant more than safety and material blessing. It included spiritual blessing. God’s absence meant God abandoned his people. God would break the covenant relationship with them. God would not make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They would not be a treasured possession any more. They would not be a covenant people anymore. This made them mourn.

Men are not satisfied with material blessings only. After the Korean War, South Korea was the second poorest country in the world next to Somalia. The entire land was devastated by the war. But under the strong leadership of President Park, Korean worked hard for several decades, and now Korea is the 11th strongest economic nation in the world. She became a rich country, a role model for other developing countries. They received much material blessing. But today the suicide rate in South Korea is number one in the world. Why? This teaches us that men are happy and satisfied when they do more than just eat and drink, but doing the will of God. We are created into the image of God. We are created to do God’s will and God’s mission. Life is meaningful and truly blessed when we become fruitful and increase in number (Ge 1:28) The Israelites would lose their mission. God would divorce them. They would not become a covenant people anymore. They lost their sonship and birthright because of their sin. This is the reason why the Israelites mourned when they heard that God would not be with them. This was the reason why their ornaments did not make them happy. This is the reason why Jacob took the birthright from his brother Esau and wrestled with God at Jabbok River in order to receive God’s blessing. Man is spirit. Man is mission.

Second, Moses, God’s friend (7-11) Moses pitched a tent outside the camp some distance away. He called it ‘tent of meeting.’ (7) People used to go the tent of meeting if they had something to inquire of the Lord. When Moses went into the tent, a pillar of cloud came down and stayed at the entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. (9) The pillar of cloud was the symbol of God’s presence. God led the Israelites in the desert by a pillar of cloud. (Ex 14:19) God appeared to Moses in a thick cloud at Mount Sinai. (Ex 19:9,16) Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. (10) They feared God and participated in Moses’ encounter with God through their worship. Look at verse 11a. “***The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend…***” It is amazing that God talked to Moses like a friend. How could Moses become a friend of God? In Isaiah 41:8 God called Abraham my friend. In fact, when God visited Abraham’s house, he said to Abraham, “*Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do*?” (Ge 18:17) God was about to tell to Abraham what he was going to do. Friends often share their problems, plans, even their secrets. They share such things because they trust each other. Moses trusted in God, his goodness and faithfulness. Even though God was angry at the sin of his people, Moses believed that God would change his mind. Moses read the heart of God more than anyone else.

God treated Moses like a friend, not like a servant. A servant cannot share his master’s secret. In John 15:15 Jesus called his disciples friends. He said, “*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*” This is an amazing promise from Jesus for his disciples and for us. Jesus called us his friends. What a blessing for us to call Jesus friend! “What a friend we have in Jesus! All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!...Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer.” (Hymn: *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*) We should not betray our friend Jesus. Amen! Jesus never betrayed us. Because of the Water Gate scandal Chuck Colson, the aide of President Richard Nixon, stood on a trial. Chuck Colson had stood on the Nixon’s side and defended Nixon to the end. The judge asked Colson, “All people around Nixon blamed him and left him, but why do you insist to defend on Nixon even though you knew that he did wrong.” Mr. Colson replied at the court, “This is because Nixon is my friend before he is my boss. How can I leave my friend when he was alone.” The court room was filled with applause for Mr. Colson. Jesus is our friend who defends us. He is always with us and never leaves us. This is because Jesus is our friend who laid down his life for us. Jesus said in John 15:13, “*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down his life for his friends.”* We must thank God for Jesus who called us friend and laid down his life for us. Amen!

Third, show me your glory (12-23) the Lord and Moses’ friendly talk continues. Moses claimed the Lord should let him know who would go with him and which ways his people should go. (12-13) The Lord answered Moses in verse 14. “***My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.***” God repeated his promise of being with Moses and his people. In modern terms, God said, “I will go with you and take care of your people. Do not worry, my friend Moses!” But Moses knew the sinfulness of his people and the righteousness of the Lord. So he asked the Lord again. “***If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?***” (15-16) Moses again asked for the assurance of God’s presence in their journey. This time he asked for a distinct sign to verify his promise. The Lord answered Moses in verse 17. “***I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name***.” Knowing someone by name means knowing all things about him. Name represents personality, character, and even destiny. Moses was the good shepherd for his people. God knew Moses’ compassionate shepherd heart for his people. Moses asked God not to give up on his people. Moses insisted that God assure his presence. Now this is Moses’ final request to the Lord. Look at verse 18. “***Then Moses said***, “***Now show me your glory***.” What did Moses mean when he asked the Lord to show his glory? A few years ago, one of our church members chose this verse for his New Year resolution. “*Now show me your glory.*” When I asked him why he chose this verse, he answered, “I want to see God’s miracle in my life of mission.” His expectation was admirable. But what Moses meant was more than seeing God’s miracles. He wanted to see God himself. He meant, “Lord, I want to see you! Reveal yourself.”

How did God answer Moses? Look at verses 19-20. “***And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.***” God promised Moses that he would cause all his goodness to pass in front of him. The goodness of God is God’s character and his divine nature such as holiness, faithfulness, righteousness, love, grace, mercy, compassion, and so on. God would show his mercy and compassion on his people as Moses had asked. There are many ways God revealed himself to this world. He revealed himself through his word. He revealed himself through nature. He showed himself through signs and wonders. He made himself known through his chosen people such as prophets and priests. He made himself know to someone special through revelations, dreams, and visions. But, no one saw God’s face to face directly. As CS Lewis said, we can see the world through the sunlight, but can’t see the sun itself because our eyes hurt when we look at it directly.

How can we see God’s glory? How can we see God? It is impossible for sinners to see God directly as God said in verse 20. But what was impossible with men is possible with God. God made himself known to us through Jesus Christ. Through Jesus we see God and his glory. John 1:18 says, “*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known*.” We know the Father and see him through Jesus. Jesus is the Incarnate God. (1:14) He (the Son) is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being. (He 1:3) John said, “*We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” Jesus himself said in John 8:19, “*If you knew me, you would know my Father also*.” (John 14:7)

Today God asks each of us with the same question which Moses did to God. “Hi, Paul. Now show me your glory.” “Hi, Kit. Show me your glory. Hello, Grace, show me your glory.” Now it is our turn to show God’s glory through us. Apostle Paul called the believers in Thessalonians Church, “*Indeed, you are our glory and joy*.” (1 The 2:20) To the eyes of Paul, the converted Christians in the church were God’s glory and his joy. We are God’s glory and his joy. We should be the people with whom God is pleased. This world is filled with unpleasant and despicable things to the eyes of God. But we are his treasured possession and his glory. We should be Noah, which means ‘comfort,’ to the eyes of the Lord. We must live as the light and salt of the world as Jesus said. (Mt 5:13-16)

Now show me your glory! Jesus prayed at Gethsemane before he was arrested, “*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you*.” (Jn 17:1) I want all of us to pray that same prayer as Jesus did. “Lord, glorify us so that we may glorify you.” Moses did not see God’s face. God allowed him to see only his back. (22-23) But he saw God face to face in heaven. The disciples had the privilege of seeing God face to face. We have privilege of seeing God’s glory through Jesus. I pray that we all see God’s glory through Jesus and that Jesus may see his glory through us. Let us pray that the glory of God may be revealed and the name of Jesus may be exalted in us and through us. Amen!