

SHOW ME YOUR GLORY

EXODUS 33:18-34:9

INTRODUCTION:

I just finished reading this week a wonderful book by John Piper, a Baptist pastor in Minneapolis, entitled, Desiring God. Dr. Piper sets forth the proposition in his book that reflects a statement in the old Westminster Confession. In that confession, God's purpose for man is defined as, "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Dr. Piper puts a different wrinkle into that confession. He changes it to read, "To glorify God by enjoying Him forever." It is the burden of his book that we glorify God most when we delight in Him, when we enjoy Him forever. If you are looking for an example of a human being who learned how to delight in the Lord, I would point you to Moses, the servant of God.

The intercessory prayers of Moses and his on-going conversations with God are a reminder to us that God is a Person. Moses was not talking about God, but rather he was talking to God. He was not speculating about the existence of some great First Cause, rather he was interacting with a living, holy, eternal Person. There is a special kind of knowledge that is made possible when two persons are relating to each other. The Jewish theologian Buber calls this an I-Thou relationship. It is this kind of knowledge that we find reflected in the interaction of Moses and God.

The third major petition that Moses presented to God is very revealing. He prayed, "Show me your glory." This was a step beyond his petition to know "the ways of the Lord." The glory of God is the manifestation of His essence. Most of the revelations of

God in the Old Testament were within a cloud, or in some situation where the essence of His being was not fully revealed. Moses is praying to go another step in his relationship with God and to know God more intimately than he has ever known Him before.

Obviously, it can be assumed that it is not possible for God to know us more intimately. He knows everything that could ever be known about us, even the number of the hairs on our heads. He knows more about us than we know about ourselves. But there is always room for growth in our knowledge and understanding of Him. I want us to explore together this petition of Moses and to see its implications for our walk with God today.

I. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS LIMITED.

We need to make this confession up front. Even a Moses is ready to make this confession. Without question, Moses knew God as well as any human being that has ever walked upon the planet with the exception of the incarnate Christ, the God man, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is in a category by Himself when it comes to knowing the Father. But Moses had gone further than anyone had ever gone before in his knowledge of God, yet he was ready to confess that his knowledge was limited.

1. Our desire to know Him places limits.

It is a cause for shame that we have to make this confession, but it is true. Our desire to know God results in limits upon our knowledge of God. Most of us know Him just as well as we desire to know Him. It is only those in whom He is able to awaken a deeper desire that ever move on to a deeper knowledge of Him.

Moses stands in sharp contrast to the congregation of Israel. Even though they stood with Him at the foot of Mt. Sinai, they were not praying for God to show them His glory. They were perfectly content with their limited knowledge of God. It would be fine with them if God never taught them another lesson about Himself. But this man Moses, the servant of God, has moved beyond the desire of his own people and finds in his heart a compelling desire to know God more intimately. This gives us the genesis of the petition that we are considering.

2. Our capacity to know Him places limits.

We must be clear about this; there will always be limits on our knowledge of God. No matter how deeply we may desire to know Him, we will never know Him fully—at least not in this life. Even to the petition of Moses God had to respond within limits. You will remember that He said to Moses, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I pass by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen." When God did make the revelation to Moses, this is exactly what happened. Moses was not allowed to see the face of God—only His back as He moved by. The explanation for this is simple—even a Moses in all of his spiritual maturity and sanctity does not have the capacity to look on the face of God. No mortal has the capacity to look upon the face of God. So, it really doesn't matter how much you know about God, you still know only in part. It does not matter how much of God you have seen, there is more that you have not seen. I have often used the analogy that if we could compare our

knowledge of God to what might be known of God, it is like comparing a thimble to the Atlantic Ocean. We have thimble-size knowledge of the infinite and eternal God. Our vision of His glory is always a limited vision.

II. A DESIRE TO KNOW GOD MORE INTIMATELY IS ENCOURAGED.

This encounter between the servant of God and the sovereign God Himself is in the Holy Scriptures to encourage us to cultivate a desire to know God. Such a desire is appropriate for a creature like us.

1. Our need encourages a desire.

Need was primary in the motivation of Moses. He was keenly aware of his own finite humanity. He knew that there lay before him a super human responsibility. He sensed that the only way he would ever be adequate for the responsibilities he was being asked to carry was to have a deeper knowledge of God. It was that deep, deep sense of need that caused him to cry out, "Lord, show me your glory."

Dr. W. E. Sangster shared a page out of his own pilgrimage through his preaching ministry. He wrote, "I felt I had lost God. Spiritual things had become unreal to me. Doubts darkened my mind. I lost appetite for the holy vocation to which I believe God had called me. The conviction grew in my heart that the one thing an honorable man could do would be to give it up. Yet, I wanted God. In those months of awful darkness, nothing was surer to me than my hunger for Him. All the varied wants of my heart had become resolved into the one great cry of the questing soul, 'O that I knew where I might

find him!' One night I had reached the breaking point. My mind was wearing with the effort of pondering these problems over and over again. My heart was sick with hope long deferred. I sat at midnight in the darkness of my study on the border of despair, when a friend came to me with words of unsurpassed comfort. He knew my need, he said, 'You are chasing your shadow: the hunger within you is a mark of His presence.' I know those words will not seem magical to you, but I have no language to describe the affect they had then upon me. To my poor soul, they were the authentic words of the living God. I grasped the truth of what He said. This hunger! — the one consuming passion of my soul—a mark of His presence."

It is our need to give birth to the desire to know Him. Sangster felt it! You may be feeling it tonight!

2. Our knowledge encourages a desire.

What Moses knew of God caused him to want to know more. You must remember that this man had spent forty days alone with God on the top of the mountain. This man had talked with God face to face as friends speak with each other for forty days. And yet, Moses knew that there was something more. So what he knew of God created the desire to know more.

This is much like the experience of the beloved Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul had a face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. With his very own eyes he beheld his glory. And yet years later he write of his desire to know Him—"That

I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death!" Did not Paul already know Him? Yes!

Absolutely! But he knew that there was more to be known of Him. This is what gave Moses the desire to cry out, "Show me your glory!" The knowledge he had of Him gave birth to a desire to know Him more intimately.

III. OUR PRAYERS TO KNOW GOD MORE INTIMATELY WILL BE REWARDED.

Here is an example of a prayer to know God more intimately. It is a prayer to see experientially the glory of the eternal God. There is reason to believe that such a prayer will have its own reward.

1. God delights in revealing Himself.

The writer of Hebrews defines the life that pleases God as being one, "that believes that He is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It would be a mistake to materialize that reward for those who seek Him find. It is better to see the reward as being a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God Himself.

The Apostle John stated in His first epistle, "God is light." What ever else that profound theological insight into the nature of God may mean, it at least means this — it is the nature of God to reveal Himself. Light reveals. God reveals Himself. So, when Moses comes to God with this special earnest appeal, God does not rebuff Him. Indeed God responds to that appeal with a promise.

2. God designs to reveal Himself.

It is best to see the hand of God in everything that is going on in the life of Moses. God has been at work in His life bringing Him to this point. God has a plan for revealing Himself to Moses.

The plan of God was to put Moses in the cleft of the rock, cover him over for a while, and then remove the covering so he could see the divine essence as He passed by for a moment. Then, in that heavenly moment, Moses was allowed to hear the voice of God as God explained to Moses the nature of His own being. He heard the voice saying, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." He would never forget those words. The people of Israel would never forget those words. They keep reappearing in the Psalms and on the lips of the prophets. God had designed things to reveal Himself to Moses at a more intimate level so that He might be better known among men.

Let me encourage you. If you have a desire to know God, do not despair. God will reward that desire with a deeper revelation of Himself.

IV. A GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WILL BE TRANSFORMING.

Moses would never be the same. No one is ever the same when they see the glory of God. There is a transforming power in that encounter.

1. Our worship will be transformed.

We read concerning the response of Moses, "Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshipped, 'O, Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us.'"

Do you see him bowing on his face before the Lord! Worship will never be the same again. Since he knows God better, he is better prepared to give himself in worship to the most high God.

Our limited knowledge of God is our greatest hindrance when we come together to worship him.

2. Our walk will be transformed.

There is a little detail included in the record concerning its impact upon Moses — "When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken to with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him." This was to Moses a life changing moment. It showed up in his face.

Any time you come to more intimate knowledge of God it will affect your face, your feet, your voice, your hands, and your tongue. It will affect all of the ways that you relate to

life around you. Moses would always be the man who had the glow on his face from that day forward.

3. Our work will be transformed.

Once Moses saw the glory of the Lord from the cleft of the rock, there was a new dimension to the way he went about his tasks day by day. He was the servant of the great and glorious God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would never, never be tempted to the empty idols that attracted the people of Israel from time to time. He knew better! He knew God to be the living and eternal God!

Are you ready to begin to pray with Moses, "Lord, show me your glory."? Nothing greater could happen in your life nor in the life of this church than for us to have awakened within us a deeper desire for a greater knowledge of the infinite God.