

**“Why God Matters”**  
Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20  
November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
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My sermon title is “Why God Matters.”. Yes. God really matters in our lives, but how does God matter to you? Have you ever seriously asked yourself why God deeply matters in your life? This morning, I invite you to find a relevant and meaningful God in your personal life and faith as we continue to reflect upon the Israelites’ communal, intimate God and experience a historical narrative on their God’s presence in the Exodus story.

As we explored last Sunday, life in the wilderness was never easy. The space of wilderness was truly a metaphor of lives’ challenges. In today’s Scripture reading, the challenge that the Israelites had endured was not a short term one, but they had to travel in the Sinai dessert for forty years. In fact, the journey could have been for only 11 days if God would have guided them to use a shortcut. Indeed, the challenge was by God’s purposeful plan for His people. What was that purpose? The Israelites were to be disciplined on how they would learn to give their full trust in God! It was all about time for building trust, the ultimate relationship and friendship with their God.

The Israelites kept forgetting about or grumbling to God and their leader Moses even though God continued to show them His grace and love through miracles and powerful signs. Why did they forget so easily about what God had done for them? This is not a surprise to us! What about your faith? Are you always grateful to God for what you have been given? We know that God exists and loves us always, but we often forget God’s constant presence and grace! Why? Here is a simple but profound truth that our Christian faith shares. The answer is simple. Because we are sinners!

The word, “Sin” is a very significant term in our Christian spirituality. One of the early Christian Fathers, St. Augustine used a Latin phrase, *Incurvatus in se* to describe our human life and spiritual nature, which means “Curved inward on oneself rather than outward”<sup>1</sup> Does it challenge your faith? Do you always turn yourself outward to God when you are to choose your choices between *you* and *God*? In the Old Testament Bible, “Sin” means “transgression”, which means, "to step across" or "to go beyond a set boundary or limit." For example, it is like a case when you play an athletic game and

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incurvatus\\_in\\_se](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incurvatus_in_se) November 3 2017

happen to get off line from the rule boundaries. In the New Testament, the word of “Sin” means, “to miss the mark.” Again, to use a sports analogy, this is an archery term. When you fire at a target and miss the bull's eye, the scorekeeper yells, ‘Sin!’ It means, ‘You are off the mark.’ This view of sin includes the concept of our going in one direction but straying off course to the side and not continuing in the direction we intended to go.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not explaining the concept of Sin to make you feel guilty in your relationship with God. But the concept of “Sin” is like a “soul mirror” to help us examine our original purpose of life when God created us. The concept, “Sin” doesn’t focus on your act of violation and its punishment. Rather, it helps us have a desperate desire and to change our attitude to come back to God “turning ourselves on outward God”. The recognition of our “Sin” helps us seek God’s grace. Friends, remember who you are. As Christians, we don’t believe that God created you and me without purpose. We don’t want to believe that our lives biologically happened to be here at random. Christian faith teaches us that all of us have divine touch and we call it “Image of God, *Imago Dei*”. God’s great purpose of joy and love was given and built in us for the purpose of fulfilling our lives. The journey and purpose of our lives is an adventure to find out how we will grow, flourish and fulfill our lives pursuing the ultimate friendship with God in gratitude.

During the journey in the wilderness, God gave the Lord’s commandments to Moses and the Israelites. The rules and commandments meant specific manifestation of God’s guidance, words of love and instructions that the Israelites had to keep and follow. So the rules were concrete, simple and clear to be understood. I don’t have to repeat and explain to you what they meant to the Israelites. The purpose of the law was needed to control the whole community in unity and spirit as people of God. They reminded the Israelites that God is their ruler, creator and guide. When the Israelites were called out to live together in community continuing their journey in the dessert for forty years, God constantly reminded them of their life destiny, purpose and basic relationship with God. The whole point of the Lord’s commandments was that God will be the guide leading them through the wilderness and surely guiding them to enter God’s Promised Land.

What does it mean for you to keep the Lord’s Commandments in your lives? Remember the Latin word, *Incurvatus in se* (“*Curved inside you*) and know who you really are honestly before God! Change your life direction from being curved to “inward” to “outward” to God and your neighbors growing in your faith. And stick to God and accept Him!

One of the great Greek philosophers, Plato in his book, *Republic* presents a classic illustration of our human nature using the *allegory of the Cave*. His allegorical imagination helps us understand the meaning of life in the wilderness in our faith journey. Many of you might be familiar with this story. Plato presents this story of the Cave comparing with our life. In the story, a group of people have been living chained to the wall of a cave, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall from objects passing in front of a fire behind them. The shadows are the prisoners' reality.<sup>2</sup> The analogy for the fire that cast light on the walls of the cave was the Sunlight behind the prisoners, but unfortunately, the prisoners cannot see behind. Plato and Socrates shared this analogy comparing prisoners with philosophers who break the bonds realizing the shadows were not the true realities and have to move towards to the Sun. But it works for our Christian faith. Imagine that you are prisoners who only see the shadows of yourself, the negative sides and self-centeredness, pride and arrogance in you. That is not your real and true self of God's image of you! You need to take courage and turn around by God's grace and boldly start moving outward to discover the Sun. You need the Lord's commandments trusting in God hoping that you will see your authentic and original purpose and love when you reach the Sun. That is the ultimate friendship with God when you go to heaven! It is like the Promised Land that God had promised Israelites! We Christians are called to march on forward until we all see God and our loved one who has gone before us!

Today, Christian churches all over the world celebrate and remember all our Saints who have taught us the true love of God through their lives. Those are angels, the messengers of God who constantly help us go on our journey. God promised that He will be our Guide leading us to get to the Promised Land but He demands us to trust in Him as we go on in life. Never give up and give your full trust in God! May God bless your journey! Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory\\_of\\_the\\_Cave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory_of_the_Cave) Accessed November 3 2017