

SERMON

Exodus 33:12-23

Seeing the Face of God

Nunawading and Waverley, 18-10-20

Dear friends in Christ,

Moses needed to see **the face of God** to be sure that the Lord would keep his promises to him. It reminds us of how important faces are. Don't we long for the faces who are dear to us but restrictions have kept them distant? Skype and Zoom are good, a telephone all right, too, but to actually be together, to see the face again of someone you are separated from, gives us the emotional fulfillment we require.

Something like this was happening for Moses. The Lord pledged to restore Israel after the episode of the golden calf and their dreadful apostasy. They had broken all the terms of the covenant. Moses was still fearful that God would not be able to tolerate these stubborn people who so easily overthrew Aaron's leadership. And would these rebels treat him the same way? God responded by promising to renew the covenant. He would not reject the people but continue to travel with them, guiding them to **their rest**, the Promised Land. Also, he would support Moses' leadership saying, **I know you by name and you have found favour with me.**

But Moses needed more. He wanted to see God's glory. He was bargaining, wanting to extract a guarantee from the Lord that he was truly his friend and the Lord would do as he promised.

We have the glory of the Lord shining in the face of Christ. **Look, I am with you always**, Christ said. His presence is amongst us in the Lord's Supper, assuring us with his word: **this is my body given for you; this is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.** The Holy Spirit is within us so that we know the Lord is working on us to change our lives. **I am the resurrection and the life**, Christ declares, promising us that he has beaten all our foes, including death. Jesus is our Promised Land because he says, **come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.** But it is hard not seeing the Lord. It leads to doubt, to weakening of faith. Is it all true and is the Lord really there for me and when things keep going against me?

Far from dismissing Moses' request to see his glory, the Lord tried to help him and settle his worries. **I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.** God was going to give Moses a fresh revelation, not of power but of his goodness and loyal love towards Israel. The ultimate display of God's goodness was in Christ who sins upon himself. The statement, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion** has come to us in a real person, Jesus our Lord, who now lives amongst us. A phenomenon occurs but then it passes but the glory of God remains ours because the Lord gives it to us in his Son.

But the Lord was firm with Moses about not seeing his face for he said, **you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.** If everything within the Lord were to be revealed in his face, then his naked power and extreme holiness would be too much for mortals. Like Moses, we have to trust God's word and **walk by faith and not by sight.**

However, he did give to Moses a rear view of himself when he put him in a crevice of the rock. Moses would be able to see the passing glory of God like seeing the tail of a comet. Jesus is our face of God. He said, **if you have seen me, you have seen the Father.** The Lord mediates his being through a person, though a person without power and able to be killed. Still, in the face of Christ, we see the smiling compassion of God, we see his healing power, his forgiveness, his atoning sacrifice, and the gift of his resurrection.

We need to keep returning to this revelation of glory. Why can this be enough? Because it is a glory Christ shares with us, **Christ in us, the hope of glory** as the holy Scriptures tell us. That is how God has made his glory certain for us.