

2022 Theme - Extraordinary God + Ordinary People = Transformed Lives

Sermon Series - Transformed Leadership (Moses)

Sermon Title - Transformed Leadership Through God's Presence!

Sermon Text - Exodus 33

Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

Full Sermon Notes

"When I survey the wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride!" Those words just speak volumes! When we do a survey of all that the Cross stands for, all that happened on that tree, and what it means to you and me, it should help us to realize just how much God Almighty desires to have a personal relationship with each of us! I mean, He sent His One and Only Begotten Son and that should help us understand how much He desires to be in fellowship with us! It should cause us to want to live in the very presence of our Lord on a daily basis, not just on Sundays, and not just daily but minute by minute! Let's pray and invite our Lord to teach us this morning how our ability to lead with our lives will be transformed through God's presence in our lives! And let's not forget that today is the 21st anniversary of 9/11 and we know that all of the families and first responders impacted personally by the tragic losses on that day, and the subsequent losses incurred by our armed forces as a result, those people need God's presence in their lives in a special way, so let's not forget them as we pray this morning! Let's Pray!

This morning we're going to look at Exodus 33 and discover three responses people have when it comes to the possibility of experiencing God's presence in their daily lives. Our response to God's desire to be present in our lives affects every area of our lives, but certainly our ability to be Godly leaders! And I need to clarify something before we start. God's presence is all around all of us every day, but that does not mean we realize it or experience His presence. In order to begin experiencing the presence of God in a real and meaningful way, a person first needs to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is done when we admit that we have sinned and need a Savior to forgive us, believe Jesus died for us in order to be our Savior and then place our faith and trust in what Jesus did on the cross by calling upon the Name of The Lord for Salvation! A person who does this is then adopted into the family of God and given the opportunity to experience the presence of God in their daily lives. The decision to accept Christ as Savior and begin a personal relationship with God is a "one and done!"

In a similar way, God had chosen to save the Israelites from Egypt and when they chose to obey His instructions and follow Moses out of Egypt, they were saved from their bondage and slavery. God had become their Savior. Their salvation from Egypt was a "one and done!" But now in the wilderness, on their trip to the promised land, walking with God and experiencing His presence was going to require Lordship! Lordship must be in place for fellowship to take place. If He is not Lord then there's sin in the camp and fellowship is broken. Without continued obedience, fellowship and walking with God we cannot experience God's presence or be the Godly leaders in life He desires us to be! You see, the decision to walk in fellowship with God is a daily decision to allow Jesus to be the Lord of your life! What does it mean to allow Jesus to be Lord

of your life? It means to surrender your will, your thoughts, your desires, your attitudes, your emotions and your actions to the Lord! When we do this, the presence of God becomes evident to us and in us! So it's about making a covenant with God and being faithful to the covenant. The Israelites had agreed to enter into a covenant with God. Remember the if/then covenant formula from last week? God said...

Exodus 19:5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,
Exodus 19:6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."
Exodus 19:7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak.
Exodus 19:8 The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

So the people accepted God's plan and will for their lives, at least in word! But in actions, they were not always so faithful. We see this throughout the Exodus narrative. This caused their ability to experience the presence of God to go back and forth. It wasn't God's fault or His unfaithfulness, but the people faltering in their commitment. So the people of Israel went back and forth from resisting God's presence to embracing God's presence and then at other times just witnessing God's presence from a distance. Let's look at our text in Exodus 33 and I'll explain. We'll begin with the fact that the people of Israel quite often lived in such a way that they were...

Resisting God's Presence

Exodus 33:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.'
Exodus 33:2 I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.
Exodus 33:3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

Now there's several things to note in these verses. First of all there was a change in language! Previously God had referred to the Israelites as "My people!" But something had changed. Now God tells Moses: "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt..." And in verse 2 God says "I will send an angel before you..." Previously God had said "My angel," which some believe would have been a direct representation of God's presence and Ryken and Hughes state that...

"many people think that the angel may have been the Son of God himself, the Second Person of the Trinity. But now God would send an ordinary angel to do the job, one of the heavenly rank and file."

Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 1019–1020.

What had changed? The Israelites had broken their covenant with God. If you're not familiar with the story, let me tell you that a lot had happened since God made the covenant agreement with them in chapter 19. While Moses was on the mountain of God receiving the Ten Commandments, the people convinced Aaron to take their Gold Jewelry and make a Golden Calf so they could worship a god they could see. But we all know that while a man may have an idol, and while they may worship it as a god, it is not truly God! After all God had done for them to get them out of Egypt, the ten plagues, the crossing of the sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his army, the pillar of fire by night and the moving cloud by day, and the miraculous provision of food and water in the desert, and they pull a stunt like that? Really? I can see why Moses threw the stone tablets with the ten commandments down. In fact you've got to hear Aaron's explanation to Moses for the golden calf...

Exodus 32:21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"

Exodus 32:22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil.

Exodus 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'

Exodus 32:24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

Amazing what people will do to try and cover their own sin! That's not at all what happened, Moses was not a happy camper and neither was God! So now you can see why the change in language. But even with all of the horrible things the Israelites did, God still said this...

Exodus 33:1... "go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.'

Exodus 33:2 I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

Exodus 33:3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey...

This says something about God right there! He had made a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and so He was still going to keep His part of the covenant. He was still going to give them the promised land, because God keeps His promises! But there were potential consequences. There was a major change in the trip to the promised land itinerary. An itinerary is a trip schedule with the places, the times and names of passengers. The passenger list had changed. God said,

Exodus 33:3 ...But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

Exodus 33:4 When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments.

Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.'"

Exodus 33:6 So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.

Folks, this doesn't mean that God has trouble controlling His temper. It means that He is a Holy, righteous and just God. God knew that if He were in the presence of sin, His righteous justice would strike out against it and the people would be destroyed. It was for their own good and protection that He was thinking not to go with them. This proclamation was certainly distressing to the people and they began to mourn. But think of how this had to break God's heart! Why? Because His greatest desire was to be present with the people. Remember, He wanted them to be His people and He wanted to be their God. Commentators Ryken and Hughes weigh in on this topic...

"God had given the Hebrews instructions to build a sanctuary so that he would reside among the people. They instead made a calf as a physical representation of gods being with them. Now Yahweh threatens to remove from them the true symbol of his presence."

Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 1020.

And what's this about the ornaments? Most historians and Bible scholars believe these were actually trinkets associated with idol worship. The people were just so reluctant to let go of the ungodly parts of lives and let Yaweh God be LORD of their lives. This reminds me of the rich young ruler in the New Testament who walked away saddened from the presence of Jesus because his wealth was his god and he simply wouldn't let go of his idol. The children of Israel were sad too and probably scared to think of traveling through the wilderness to the promised land without God's presence. But they had shown over and over again that they were reluctant to let go of their idols.

Martin Luther said, "Whatever man loves, that is his god. For he carries it in his heart; he goes about with it night and day; he sleeps and wakes with it, be it what it may, wealth or self, pleasure or renown."

Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 1020.

It has been said that "Being stiff necked leads to sore fellowship with God!"

How many times do you and I resist the presence of God in our lives? Maybe we resist God's presence because when He is present it shines a light upon our sin, our disobedience, our selfishness, our pettiness, our pridefulness, or our unfaithfulness with our promises to God! I

don't say those things to discourage anyone here! I want you to know that if you are willing to admit that God hasn't been Lord of your life and you have resisted God's presence as a result, God is not mad at you! He is sad for you! He wants you to know that He is waiting with open arms to welcome you back into fellowship with Him. Remember, if you've ever confessed your sins and asked Him to be Your Savior, He won't break His commitment to you and you are still His child and He is still your Heavenly Father. That's the part of the relationship that cannot be altered. But the fellowship part of the relationship, which brings about the experience of His presence in your daily life absolutely depends on your willingness to allow Him to be your Lord. And that requires for you to confess your sins, not for salvation, but for restoration of fellowship! Listen to God's heart...

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

That's what can happen when we stop resisting God's presence in our lives. Sometimes God allows us to see in others lives what we could have in our lives if we would let go of sin and begin to live under the Lordship of Christ daily. God certainly allowed the Israelites to be in a position of...

Witnessing God's Presence

Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp.

Exodus 33:8 And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent.

Exodus 33:9 As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses.

Exodus 33:10 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.

This is so interesting. Moses has his own personal tent of meeting to fellowship with The Lord! But others could go to the tent to inquire of the Lord. This just goes to show God's amazing grace and mercy. When Moses would go into the tent the people watched and witnessed! It was still an impressive sight to see God's presence coming down to meet with Moses. Moses had met with the Lord long ago at the burning bush, but then he went up to the Mountain of God to meet with God and to receive the Ten Commandments. But now, God comes down to meet with Moses within the pillar of cloud in which God cloaked Himself! I believe that this cloud was in part to protect the sinful people from the immense holiness and righteousness of God. Although we know that God's ultimate desire was for the people to turn away from their sin and idols so He could meet personally with them as well. We know this because eventually God would have

the people build a tabernacle in the midst of their encampments. Within that tabernacle was a veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place where God's presence, the Shekinah Glory was displayed. But we now know that God's ultimate plan was to do away with the veil and to meet with people directly and not just through Moses or a High Priest. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom to allow those who had been washed in the Blood of the Lamb and set free from their bondage to sin, to be able to fellowship directly with God, like Moses did. But that had not happened yet and so the people would stand at the entrance to their own tents and just look off in the distance and witness Moses experiencing the very presence of God. I can only imagine how they wished they could have been in Moses' shoes. In fact our text says...

Exodus 33:10 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.

They were just seeing Moses and His encounters with God and it caused them to stand in awe and worship! Just like when you see others who are walking with God and who have peace even in the midst of terrible trials and tribulations! What's the difference? God's presence! Having been in ministry now since I was licensed to preach at the ripe old age of 17, I've walked with some folks through some of the most difficult trials life can bring. I've witnessed some of those people so completely trust God in the midst of their tragedy that while I know they were hurting deeply, the strength, the comfort, and the very presence of God was so evident that the joy of the Lord was tangible! As I witnessed the presence of God in their life it caused me to want grow in my faith so that when it's my turn to deal with those kinds of challenges that I won't have a "hope so" kind of faith, but "a know so" kind of faith that God's presence will always be there for me, in good times and bad! You see, it's one thing to witness God's presence in the life of another person and it is surely inspirational, but it is quite another thing to experience His presence in your own life! Instead of just witnessing the presence of God in others we should do as the writer of 1 Chronicles instructs...

1 Chronicles 16:10 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

1 Chronicles 16:11 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

1 Chronicles 16:12 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

1 Chronicles 16:13 you his servants, the descendants of Israel, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

1 Chronicles 16:14 He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

1 Chronicles 16:15 He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations,

What is the prophet Ezra telling us in this passage? We should have hearts that seek the LORD, His strength, and His face in such a way that we start...

Embracing God's Presence

God graciously gives us a glimpse of His interaction with Moses in that personal tent of meeting. Look at our text...

Exodus 33:11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

Face to face is describing the closeness and intimacy of their interactions, and does not mean a literal face to face, because we'll see in a moment that no man could literally look upon the face of God and live. Again, it has to do with the overwhelming righteousness and holiness of God and the overwhelming wickedness and sin of man. And at the time, the sacrifice of Jesus had not yet happened that would allow man's sin to be cleansed, covered and forgiven by the Blood of Christ so that man could look upon the very glory of God! But make no mistake about it, Moses was in the very presence of God and was having a very personal conversation with God. It says "as one speaks to a friend!" In fact let's read on...

Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.'

It's fascinating, but in the Hebrew Moses actually begins this sentence with the word "see." Some translations leave this out, and while it doesn't critically affect the meaning, we miss out on the fact that Moses was having a very honest conversation with God and was saying,

"Well, you see Lord, it's like this: You've been telling me, 'lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom You will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.'

It may be that Moses is, in a roundabout way asking God this: If You're not going on this trip, who's going to go with me. I mean You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.'"

Here's a major thing to remember: You don't have to worry about scaring God away with your honesty. He loves honesty and can handle all of your questions, and I do mean all of them! He's a big God! You need to know that your experience of God's presence will grow by leaps and bounds when you come to understand that you can talk to God about anything, any subject, any question, any doubt, any fear, any disappointment, any hurt feelings you may have in regards to God. He can take it as long as you're honest. And I would encourage you to then give God a chance to respond, remembering that His responses can be found in His Word which is available 24/7/365! And I love what Moses says next...

Exodus 33:13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you..."

Moses asks for God to teach him His ways so that he could know Him even better and continue to find favor with God. How would our personal leadership be transformed if we were willing to humbly ask God to teach us how to know Him better? How much more effective? How much more Godly? How much more forgiving? How much more loving? And the list goes on and on! The Psalmist said...

Psalm 86:7 When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.

Psalm 86:8 Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.

Psalm 86:9 All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

Psalm 86:10 For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.

Psalm 86:11 Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

And by the way, I love the boldness of Moses' next statement. He had noticed the change in language from "My people" to "the people," so he reminds God of this...

Exodus 33:13 ... Remember that this nation is your people."

God didn't get mad at Moses. In fact God responds very positively...

Exodus 33:14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

What a sigh of relief that must have been for Moses. I imagine he was also pretty excited to share the good news with the Children of Israel. But Moses follows up God's promise to go with him with a statement and a question! I think our attitudes should reflect Moses' sentiment...

Exodus 33:15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.

Exodus 33:16 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?"

Exodus 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

Exodus 33:19 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.

Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Exodus 33:21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock.

Exodus 33:22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Exodus 33:23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

This morning you need to look at where resisting God's presence has gotten you! Stop resisting His presence or just witnessing His presence in other's lives. Embrace God's presence in your own life and realize when you do God will cause all of His goodness to pass in front of you and His mercy and compassion will be poured out upon you! Make the decision that you're not taking another step without Him! Make the decision to daily seek His Glory and experience His Goodness! Desire His leadership in your life and live in constant pursuit of Him to teach you so you can learn His ways and live in His presence. Desire God's presence to the point of not wanting to go anywhere or do anything without His presence.

No matter how often you have resisted God's presence in the past, if you are willing to no longer resist I can assure you God is either ready to begin a relationship with you by becoming your Savior or if you are a child of God and not walking with God, He is ready to restore fellowship with you so you can experience His presence in your daily life. The Psalmist put it this way...

Psalm 103:7 He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:

Psalm 103:8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Psalm 103:9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;

Psalm 103:10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Psalm 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

Psalm 103:14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

Let's pray!

