

## Exodus 33:12-23

<sup>12</sup>Then Moses said to the Lord, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people.’ But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.’” <sup>13</sup>Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people.”

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. <sup>16</sup>For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.”

<sup>17</sup>So the Lord said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

<sup>18</sup>And Moses said, “Please, show me Your glory.”

<sup>19</sup>Then God said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” <sup>20</sup>But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” <sup>21</sup>And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup>So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, show me Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. Amen.

**God is gracious, compassionate and full of goodness!**

- I. In giving us His grace and rest through faith.
- II. In leading us in His way.

## Introduction:

Leading up to our text today, something very prominent and shocking from Bible History had just taken place. The people of Israel had gotten disgruntled and impatient with the fact that Moses had not yet come down from the Mountain. (He was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the 10 Commandments from God) Just one chapter prior to our text today, is the account of Aaron making the golden calf for the people to worship, a jarring and manifest display of idolatry by God's people.

Can you imagine being Moses, not to mention God in this scenario? What a disappointing scene. From what I've been able to figure, it had been roughly three months, maybe a little more since God had led Moses and the people out of the land of Egypt. The whole assembly had just been an eyewitness to God's amazing power. He parted the Red Sea, brought water from the rock, manna, quail and many other miraculous signs as well.

God wanted to wipe the people off the face of the earth because of their sin, and start fresh by making a great nation out of Moses instead. But right away, humble Moses pleaded with the LORD to NOT destroy them, and our merciful God relented. **God is gracious, compassionate and full of goodness!**

But then this happened, **“So it was, as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain”** (Exodus 32:19). This verse makes me wonder what Moses thought was actually going on when the LORD told him the very same thing not that long ago. I guess sometimes we have to see things with our own eyes to realize the seriousness of it.

Nevertheless, after destroying the calf, feeding it to the people, and having the Levites kill 3000 unbelieving men to defend God's honor, “Moses returned to the LORD and said, **“Oh, these people have sinned a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin – but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”**

This blows me away, Moses, just like the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, is asking God to send him to hell in place of all those who sinned against God. If God was unwilling to forgive the people, Moses was asking to be punished in their place. Talk about having the heart of Christ! What a wonderful encouragement to all Christians and especially pastors.

But having a heart like Christ doesn't mean that Moses or any of us can do what Jesus did, does it? Praise be to God that He sent His one and only Son, the God-Man, to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin, Jesus made the sacrifice that only He could make! For those here, those who sinned against God, those who were hardened in unbelief, rejecting God and the promised Messiah as well, God says this of their fate.

**“Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.”** The LORD would blot out those who were impenitent, those unwilling to look to God for forgiveness, they would be condemned.

Everything we have heard so far is the context that sets up the reason, why Moses, once again, is pleading with the LORD. He was pleading with Him because He knows that **God is gracious, compassionate and full of goodness!** Moses understood and trusted God, as should we, that He would be faithful **in giving us His grace and rest through faith.**

Here is a good place to state the reminder that our heavenly Father loves to hear our prayers and He even commands it. He wants to hear from us always and often. This is how our Scripture text starts out, with Moses praying and petitioning the LORD on account of himself and the people.

Moses was praying, because he and the Israelites had recently received some disappointing news from God. Because of the previously described idolatry, where the people worshiped the golden calf, God had said to Moses and the people, **“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”** **“And when the people heard these grave tidings, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments”** (Exodus 32:3-4).

We get a glimpse here of God's burning anger over sin. If you consider the ten commandments, and not only Israel's inability to keep them, but also our own, it ought to give us a proper reverence and fear of God. It shows us how much it grieves him when we sin.

In this instance, the major sin that is highlighted is idolatry, it's a grave sin against the first commandment, but I wonder how many other commandments were being broken in conjunction with it that day? But, if you think carefully, if we break the first commandment, failure in every other commandment follows, because we have made ourselves or something else our god.

What are some of the ways then, that we, in our everyday life break the first commandment? It's a good question to think about. It's good to examine ourselves by looking to God's commandments, if we do this, we can see our own personal failures, this is a healthy thing for a Christian to do. It reminds us just how much we need **Jesus**

If we look to Luther's Large Catechism, for instance, for more insight into the first commandment, he gives us a wonderful explanation of what it means to have another god.

It's easy to restrict our thoughts of idols and false gods to the obvious pagan examples we hear about in the Bible. Maybe a small statue of Baal comes to mind or some little set of "household" idols that represent other false gods, but idolatry isn't quite that simple.

***"A god is that to which we look for all good, and where we resort for help in every time of need; to have a god is simply to trust and believe in something with our whole heart. As I have often said, the confidence and faith of the heart alone, make both God and an idol. . . . Now, I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that particular thing is really your God.***

So with that in mind, what do our hearts cling to? What golden calf do we end up dancing and singing around on a regular basis? Luther goes on to give many examples. First of all, Mammon, which is money and all the things and possessions of the world, this one, he says, is one of the most common on

earth. It would be impossible to be breathing and not be guilty of trusting in this false god at one point or another.

Our idol might be our learning, wisdom, power, prestige, family, or honor. Our intellect and our learning can get us into trouble can't it. Maybe we've acquired a college degree, a masters or even a doctorate, read all sorts of books, maybe we know the contents of the Bible inside and out, but if our intellect gets in the way, our sinful reason, we often fail to trust God's Word with the childlike faith our Lord Jesus speaks about in Matthew 18:3, He says, **"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."**

Speaking of children, maybe our idol is our children. As parents it's awfully tempting to think that we can take care of our little ones better than the LORD, and our worries and our decisions often reflect that. How about the other end of the spectrum, our parents, and loving them too much, might that be our idol? Maybe it's keeping that high position at work no matter the cost.

Finally, maybe our god is simply me, myself, and I. We know our parents, teachers, pastors, others in authority, they're doing their best to guide and direct us on how to live a godly Christian life, but we often assume we know better, don't we, and we end up listening to our own sinful desires and the lies of the devil instead. How many more examples could we come up with if we thought long and hard enough about it?

The point is, how often aren't we guilty of not only breaking God's first and greatest commandment, but all the rest with it as well. This reminder then is pertinent for today, and every day. I quote Luther again, **"We are to trust in God alone and turn to him, expecting from him only good things; for it is He who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all temporal and eternal blessings. It is he who protects us from evil, he who saves and delivers us when any evil befalls."**

The Israelites lack of patience and confidence with God's plan, and His perfect timing (the same thing we are guilty of on a regular basis), is what the Devil used to temp them to sin, and it was also the reason why Moses was pleading boldly with God in our text to remember His Word and His promises. Listen to his words once again.

**“Then Moses said to the LORD, See, You say to me, bring up this people. But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet you have said, I know you by name, and you have also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”**

Moses is saying, I’m your child LORD, You know me by name, and not only that but You’ve said I’ve found grace in Your eyes on account of Christ! Please forgive my sins and the sins of the people, strengthen my faith and show me Your ways that I might know them better and have rest! And of course, God, who **is gracious, compassionate, and full of goodness**, says yes.

God says to Him, My Presence will go with you, and I will cause you to have rest. God promises Moses, just like He promises us, that He is constantly concerned about us and is also intent **in leading us in His way**, because we are His people! If only we would be so bold more often in our prayers.

Moses hears the LORD, but he wants to emphasize how important it is for the LORD to go with them to the promise land. He says, **“If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?”** God’s renewed promise to be with them made Moses bold, and not only does he want God’s Presence to be among them, but He wants the nations to see it as well, he wants the nations to fear God too! He wants them to see that He takes care of, and protects His people, and has set them apart!

God then again, who **is gracious, compassionate, and full of goodness**, says, **“I will do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”**

The comforting truth that God teaches us in James 5:16 comes to mind here, **“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”**

So Moses with his bold prayers and petitioning of the Father, is given all that he asks for, but he doesn't stop there! He says now, **“Please, show me Your glory”** (Exodus 33:18).

God wants us to pray boldly like Moses did here, don't forget that, God wants us to pray boldly! He wants us to pray and petition Him as much as our own children petition us. When was last time one of your sons or daughters was afraid or hesitant to ask you for anything? Paul records what God wants us to do on a regular basis, **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

Moses was bold indeed! He wants to see God's glory, but there is a problem, and the Father brings it to his attention. He says, **“you cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”** Moses had already been very blessed; Scripture tells us that he was God's friend. He and God spoke face to face on many occasions, but as we see here, God revealed Himself to Moses in such a way that hid His full glory, for that's the only way the God can reveal Himself to sinful, mortal, man without doing him harm.

And God keeps this promise too, He takes Moses to a special place on top of Mt. Sanai, puts him into the cleft of the rock and He passes by, but He protects Moses from the fullness of His glory with His mighty hand. He only lets him see His back, but even that must have been quite the sight.

But let's think about God's glory in another way, how it applies to us. God's glory is His only begotten Son. If you think about it, thousands of people, the disciples especially, were able to see Him face to face in the flesh during His life and ministry on earth. Jesus says, **He who has seen Me has seen the Father**

So Moses saw God's glory in the way described here, but so many more people were able to see God's glory in the Messiah Jesus during His time here on earth, the very Savior that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the whole world.

And we see Him too, we see Him in action in the very inspired word of God. Listen again to the last verse of our Gospel reading from this morning. “This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11). Jesus showed through His

miracles and wonders time and time again that He was and is who He claimed to be, He is God incarnate.

We haven't seen Him physically, but yet we do still see Him in God's Word. What we have in Scripture is a vivid word picture of our perfect, loving, gracious, good, and compassionate Savior, who lived a perfect life for us, died for us, and suffered the torments of hell in our place.

Moses' and the Israelites, their faith laid hold of the promise to come, we, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word, lay hold of the promise fulfilled. Peter even goes so far as to tell us that "we also have the prophetic word made more sure" (2 Peter 1:19)! In God's Word, we have eyewitness accounts of who Jesus is and what He did during His ministry here on earth. We have the Holy Spirit to teach us and give us wisdom and understanding when we hear and learn it. [\[read from 2 Peter Chapter 1:16-21\]](#)

These verses and many other like them confirm that Jesus came to earth and dwelt among us, He lived perfectly fulfilling God's law for us, He died innocently because of us, and He rose victoriously to justify us. Our sin, our rebellious idolatry, our bad decisions, and our constant breaking of His commandments, all of that was placed on His shoulders, and He paid for it with His blood. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God, **"was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed"** (Isaiah 53:5).

Through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we have forgiveness for all of our sins and have become heirs of eternal life. When our last hour comes, and we are finally taken home to be with Jesus, we will only hear the best news possible after our last breath. **"The King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'"** (Matthew 25:34). Praise and thanks be to God, for He **is gracious, compassionate and full of goodness! Amen.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and evermore shall be, world without end. Amen.**