

Show Me Your Glory

Exodus 33-34

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The other day I was walking through Sam's Club with my kids, all three of them were in a cart, and as we went up and down the aisles I noticed a unique phenomena: my kids asked me for basically everything that they saw. Daddy, can you get me that watermelon? Daddy, can you get me that TV? Daddy, can you get me that inflatable bounce house? Daddy, can you get me that slide? Everything they saw, they wanted, and they asked me to get it for them. When we get older, we realize that in most of our relationships, we can't just make requests of people constantly. Give me this, give me that, gimme, gimme, gimme. That's not how relationships work. However, on occasion, when you have a relationship with a strong foundation, you can make a big ask every once in a while: Can you take my kids for a few days while we go on a 10-year anniversary trip? You can't do that every year, but with good friends, once a decade, it's possible. Can I borrow your car while mine is in the shop? You can't do that every week, but with a good friend, every once in a while, you can make that ask.

We are kicking off a new series today, I am so excited about it. These next six weeks are all centered around one of the boldest, most audacious requests ever made in Scripture. There is a time in Moses' life, when is having a conversation with God, and they are in a bit of a negotiation, and then in Exodus 33:17 we read:

"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."

So, Moses is standing there like, wonderful, God is saying yes, he has granted all of my requests. Now it's time for me to give him the ultimate pitch, now is the time for me to make the biggest ask of my entire life. And here it is: What did Moses ask God for: not for wealth, not for fame, not for power, not long life, not for anything that could be used in a self-serving way, instead in 33:18 Moses said: "Now show me your glory." In other words, more than anything else in the world, God I want to see you, I want to know you, I want to comprehend you, I want to soak in your splendor and majesty, I want to appreciate you and delight in you.

We need to understand what God's glory is in order to grasp the essence of this. Glory is a word that means weightiness, it means magnitude, it means something is substantive. Usain Bolt is the fastest person to ever live. He's also a daddy. Here's a picture of him with his little girl. Like all dad's, you know he runs around the yard with his little kid. Like all little kids, you know she challenges daddy to a race. And like all dads, I'm sure that when Usain Bolt runs a race with his little girl, he runs at her pace, and either finishes right ahead of her or right behind her, he constricts his capacity in order to meet her on her level. But if she said, "Daddy, let me see how fast you REALLY ARE." She would see the fastest man who has ever lived take off like a lightning bolt, leaving her jaw on the ground and her soul quaking with shock and awe. Don't hold back, show me all your power!

That's what Moses is saying to God. Take off the kid gloves, don't water it down, don't dumb it down, don't take it easy on me any longer. I don't just want the cloud and the fire and lightning, I want to see you, in all your glory, in all your splendor, in all your beauty. I love this request. God, if I could ask for anything...I want to see you. And here is why this request matters so much, and why I want to encourage this to be the heart cry not only of our church this summer, but of every individual in our church. In order for us to live the life God has called us to live, and in order for us to carry out the mission that God has placed on our life, we need to see him and know him and we need to have an intimate relationship with him. Moses didn't know this, but he was getting ready to lead a million people in the wilderness for 40 years. He was going to be tested and tried in every imaginable way. He was going to write the first 5 books of the bible. He was going to change the history of the entire world. And before any of that could happen, he needed to see God. Can I speak to you for a moment and remind you: God has something great in store for your life. God wants to use you in profound, significant, and life changing ways. God wants to do something through you in the future that requires you to know him better than you do today.

And so the most pressing, the most urgent, the most helpful of all requests we can make right now in our lives is to call out to God and say: God, show me your glory.

This is true for every one of us, whether you just graduated high school, whether you are getting ready to get married, whether you are getting ready to welcome your first child into the world, whether you are getting ready to start a new job, or new career, or new ministry, or whether you are well into your retirement years... For everyone of us, God has something that lies ahead of us, and we need to know him better, know him more in order to fully step into that. When I was in my twenties I had the chance to be mentored by a wise and godly man who was in his late 80s. I would drive to his house to meet him at 6am every Wednesday morning and we would spend about 90 minutes together, talking about faith, he was mentoring me. This man had been a seminar professor for decades, he had spoken all over the world, he had written books that had sold many millions of copies, in terms of Christian maturity and accomplishment, he was at the very top of the ladder. Even though he was so advanced, during the time I was meeting with him, this man in his late 80s, was working on memorizing all the songs in the book of Revelation. When I asked why he chose to memorize these songs, he said, one day, before too long, I'm going to be in heaven with God, and when I get there, I don't want to have to waste any time learning the songs, I want to fall on my knees and start worshiping him right away. No matter where you are at in life, there is always something God wants us to do in the future that requires us to know him better than we do today, so the most pressing request we can ever make is to say: "God, show me your glory!"

I want that to be the heart of our church this summer. I want that to be the core desire of my heart, the core desire of our heart, that we would come to God and say, "Maybe in the past I would come asking for a promotion at work, or more peace in my home, or vindication against an unjust accusation, or more dollars in the bank account... and all of those things may have their place, they all matter... but God, more than I want anything else, I want to know you, I want to encounter you, show me your glory! Charles Spurgeon once said:

"The contemplation of divinity is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold, I am wise." But when we speak of the knowledge of God we find that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, that the eagle eye cannot see its height, and we must solemnly exclaim, "I am but of yesterday; I know nothing."

We obviously know that God's vastness far exceeds our feeble capacities. No one wants to worship a god who is small enough for us to fully grasp or understand. We know we are limited, but when we come to God and say, "Show me your glory." We are saying, "We don't want to stay in the kiddie pool forever. We want to swim in the deep-end and know everything we possibly can about you.

That's what Moses said! And God said yes. Look at the next verse:

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. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." 21 Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 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. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

Moses asked to see God's glory, and God said: I will show you as much as you can bear—if you saw all my glory, you would die, it would be too much for you. It's like a person traveling at light speed, a billion feet per second, the body can't handle that force, we would disintegrate. Our spirit's, in this form, can't handle all the splendor of the Lord, it would unravel us. But God says, I'll cause all my goodness to pass

in front of you, I'll protect you with my hand, and once I've passed by, you can see my back. Now we know that God is spirit, technically God doesn't have a face or a hand or a back, but this is God, speaking in human terms saying to Moses: I'm coming down to your level, and I'm going to show you as much of my glory, splendor and goodness as you can possibly handle.

We skip forward to Exodus 34:5-5 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished." God reveals his glory to Moses by revealing his character to him, revealing his name and what he is like.

Take note that God's first words are The LORD, the LORD. This is God's personal name. This is God's personal name, YAHWEH. Whenever you see the word "The LORD in all capitals, this is the publisher's way of telling you: this is not a generic name for any god or leader or king, this is God's personal name. This name is used over 6,000 times in the OT. This might be like a newly enlisted private in the army, someone who is at the absolute bottom of the totem pole, seeing a four star general pass by...you immediately stand at attention, offer a salute, and of course you address him only as general, which is his official title. Then imagine if the highest ranking member of the army invited you over to his house for a BBQ. And when you arrive you say, "Thank you so much for the invitation." And then he says, "Call me George." Notice how the relationship just changed, it's more personal, more intimate, more relational. That's what God is doing with Moses, saying, "You can call me by my name." Transformational. And God extends the same invitation to us, as well.

After telling Moses his name, he uses six different phrases to describe himself: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love, faithfulness—maintaining love to thousands, he is the God who forgives wickedness but also does not leave the guilty unpunished. We are going to take the next six weeks to look at each of these character traits of God, so we can better grasp his character, better see and appreciate his glory. And we'll look at different interactions from throughout the OT to see how these character traits of God are revealed in his interactions with different people. Today we are going to see God's glory revealed specifically through his grace—God is gracious. It might be helpful to begin with a biblical definition of the word grace. At its core, grace refers to undeserved favor; kindness, blessing, or abundant provision that was not earned. Grace is a free gift. And what we learn here is that God's glory is revealed, both his goodness and his greatness are revealed, through his graciousness—his disposition and desire to generously and lavishly shower us with good gifts.

If we are wise, God's self-revelation of his graciousness will stop many of us in our tracks and cause us to rewire our default conception of God. Many of us have something in our minds that causes us, when we think of God, to see him like a policeman with his car lurking stealthily behind some bushes, always ready to catch someone doing something wrong and punish them for it. Some people think of God as the tax-man, someone who like an angry accountant who analyzes every line, making sure we have reported everything we were supposed to, paid everything we were supposed to, and then, if we were really, really good and made no mistakes, we get a meager deposit added to our account. Some people need to hear this today, maybe for the first time: God's heart is not to scrutinize and punish you, his heart and desire is to lavish abundant blessing and goodness on your life, God is gracious. That's part of what makes him so glorious!

There are countless stories we could go to in the Bible to see God's graciousness displayed, but one of the best places is the opening pages of the Bible, as God creates the world, creates humans, and then tells these humans that the world is a gift for them to both steward and enjoy. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the

sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” 29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

God graciously provided humanity:

- **The gift of life** (We didn’t do anything to deserve life, God just gave us life.)
- **The gift of companionship** (Both companionship with one another, and even more importantly, the gift of companionship with God himself—he walked with them in the garden of Eden and had an intimate, personal relationship with them).
- **The gift of procreation.** (Awesome)
- **The gift of children and grandchildren** (I’ve only been a dad for five years, but nothing has come close to bringing me the joy that my children have brought me. The other day I was with my boy and told Hudson: “You know, I don’t think there’s any other daddy in the world who loves his five year old son as much as I love you.” And Hudson said, “I don’t think there are any other five year old boys in the world who love their daddy as much as I love you. God gave us the gift of those sorts of relationships!)
- **The gift of a beautiful, abundant world.** (From the depths of the painted grand canyon to the snow capped peaks of breath-taking mountain ranges, from standing before the thunder of niagara falls to the serenity of a perfect sunset on the beach, God gave us all of that!)
- **The gift of ruling over animals.** (A few weeks ago the family and I were driving down the road and we saw a turtle in the middle of the street. We stopped so I could get that turtle out of the street. Then I thought, the kids would love to have this as a pet for a short window of time. So we took it home and made an aquarium for it and started feeding it and petting it. We can do that because God told us to rule over the animals. Aren’t you glad that as you are walking down the street, turtles don’t pick you up, take you to their house, and build a little box for their kids to play with you. Aren’t you glad that you get to eat fish and chicken cattle, and that fish and chicken and cattle aren’t eating you. These are gifts that God has given us.)
- **The gift of diverse plant-life.** (Think about redwood and sycamores, tulip poplars, and dogwoods. Think about magnolias, and ginkgos and 300 year old oak, think about roses, peonies, and a field full of sunflowers. Think about watermelons and strawberries, peaches and fresh picked sweet corn on the cob.)

There are more blessings given, but those are just seven highlighted ones in the passage. Humanity did nothing to earn these things. We didn’t merit them or work for them. God just graciously gave them to us.

But God’s graciousness wasn’t simply displayed in the first two chapters of Genesis, when he gave humanity life and gifts as far as the eye could see, it was displayed in the following chapters, once humanity sinned and brought death and destruction to God’s good world. With all that God gave Adam and Eve, there was one thing, just one thing he asked them not to do. But what did they do? They looked at God’s graciousness with a bit of disdain, believed a lie that God was not kind, that he was not loving, that he was not benevolent, that instead of being gracious God was actually withholding from them and deceiving them, and Adam and Eve chose to sin. Now there was punishment and very real consequences to their sin, and yet, even in responding to their rebellion, God’s grace was displayed.

God spoke to the serpent that led them into temptation and said: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). The moment we brought sin into the world, the very moment, God promised to send his son in the world, that he would allow the enemy to strike his heel, which means God was going to allow

his Son to be killed on the cross, but this would be the way that God would solve the problem of sin and death once and for all.

God graciously promised humanity:

The gift of Jesus Christ as our savior. (God not only sent his Son into the world, he sent his Son into the world to die for us, what an unspeakable, incomparable gift.)

The gift of forgiveness for our sins. (Because Jesus paid the price for our sins, we don't have to. The Bible says that when God looks at us, even though our sins are as scarlet, he views us as white as snow.)

The gift of victory over our spiritual enemy. God diminished the power of Satan, and one day, he will destroy him forever.)

The gift of eternal life (we don't just get 20, or 40, or 60, or 80, or 100 years in the world, if we place our faith in Jesus, we will live with him forever. Jesus said he is preparing a place for us and promised to come back and take us to be with him.)

The gift of renewed Eden. (This is the place God is preparing for us, a renewed, recreated world, with sin and death and darkness expelled for ever, and where we reign with God on the earth forever. The greatest ending to the greatest story ever told.)

When Moses asked God to see his glory, he wanted to see who God really was: God not only told him his personal name, he said, "I am the Lord who is gracious." We don't do a single thing to deserve any of this, but in his grace and kindness, he freely lavishes them upon us. His grace comes through what he has provided AND in what he has promised.

When we cry out to see God's glory, he will reveal himself to us. AW Tozer has said: "To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love." That's what this entire series is about. God, we know who you want, but we want to know you more: show us your glory. St. Augustine said:

In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace."

That is our desire: God, call, shout, break through our deafness! Flash, shine, displace our blindness. We hunger and thirst for you. Show us your glory! That man Augustine, was one of the most intellectually accomplished men in the world at the time. He had wealth. He had fame. He had everything going for him. But then he caught a glimpse of the glory of God, he turned his back on the world and found in The Lord what his heart had been searching for along. That might become the testimony of many of us today: We had what we thought was a life we wanted, a pretty good life, a pretty satisfying life, then God showed us glory, and our desire for him outmatches and overrides everything else in our lives.

Listen to what we read in Hebrews 11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Let's be people who earnestly seek him.

AW Tozer has said: The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him. In all her prayers and labors this should have first place."

And let's keep our eyes open to see him.