

Not Without Your Presence

Message 7/53

Exodus Series

4.24.2022

Introduction:

A. Exodus 33 is a rich passage of Scripture.

1. The struggle for a preacher is to hear from the Holy Spirit to know what He wants to focus upon today.
2. I don't have time to preach everything in this passage, but I do have time to preach everything the Spirit wants to say.

B. The primary focus of today's message is simple:

1. Without God's presence, it doesn't matter.
2. It is my prayer that, when this sermon is over, that all of us will desire to live out our week in God's presence and then we will seek Him and find Him here.
3. Because, without God's presence, what we do here today doesn't matter.
4. But when God is present, nothing else matters.

Exodus 33:1-17 (CSB)

THE TENT OUTSIDE THE CAMP

33 The LORD spoke to Moses: "Go up from here, you and the people you brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying: I will give it to your offspring. ²I will send an angel ahead of you and will drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hethites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ³Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go up with you because you are a stiff-necked people; otherwise, I might destroy you on the way." ⁴When the people heard this bad news, they mourned and didn't put on their jewelry.

⁵For the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites: You are a stiff-necked people. If I went up with you for a single moment, I would destroy you. Now take off your jewelry, and I will decide what to do with you." ⁶So the Israelites remained stripped of their jewelry from Mount Horeb onward.

⁷Now Moses took a tent and pitched it outside the camp, at a distance from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult the LORD would go to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp. ⁸Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would stand up, each one at the door of his tent, and they would watch Moses until he entered the tent. ⁹When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and remain at the entrance to the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. ¹⁰As all the people saw the pillar of cloud remaining at the entrance to the tent, they would stand up, then bow in worship, each one at the door of his tent. ¹¹The LORD would speak with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend, then Moses would return to the camp. His assistant, the young man Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the inside of the tent.

THE LORD'S GLORY

¹²Moses said to the LORD, "Look, you have told me, 'Lead this people up,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor with me.' ¹³Now if I have indeed found favor with you, please teach me your ways, and I will know you, so that I may find favor with you. Now consider that this nation is your people."

¹⁴And he replied, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

¹⁵"If your presence does not go," Moses responded to him, "don't make us go up from here. ¹⁶How will it be known that I and your people have found favor with you unless you go with us? I and your people will be distinguished by this from all the other people on the face of the earth."

¹⁷The LORD answered Moses, "I will do this very thing you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and I know you by name."

1. Sin has consequences.

A. Exodus 32 was a great failure and a grave sin.

1. What Israel did several thousand years ago was so bad, people are still talking about.
2. The sin of a golden calf is part of our language and understanding.
3. With every sin, there are consequences.

B. **The greatest consequence of sin is separation from God.**

1. When we receive and accept salvation, sometimes we still have to pay the earthly price of our sin.
2. For example, someone who receives salvation in prison still serves their prison term.
3. The most important benefit of receiving forgiveness is restoring the relationship between you and God.

C. Sin separates, while Salvation restores.

1. **The greatest ramification for Israel was not the plague and the death, but the separation from God and His presence.**
2. God is done with Israel, the text shows.
 - a. He has been cheated on.
 - b. He has been violated.
3. God's love for Israel resulted in miracles, and deliverance, and His protection.
 - a. What did Israel give back to God? Idolatry and adultery.
 - b. So, at this point, God tells Moses He is done.
 - C. God said, I won't go up with these stiff-necked people...

D. Essentially, God is saying "get out of my presence".

1. This reflects another time when sin separated humanity from God: Genesis 3.
2. In the Garden, sin led to separation between God and humanity.

3. In the Wilderness, sin threatened to separate God from Israel.

2. The unbearable news of separation.

A. This announcement made its way back to the people.

1. Although God and Moses are speaking, Moses hasn't gone back up the mountain.
2. It actually appears that Moses and God are having an open conversation that can be heard by others.
3. Because, when the people heard it, they mourned and they took off their jewelry.
4. Mourning expressed their sorrow of our sin.

B. True mourning and repentance must impact both our hearts and our minds.

1. We must not only know that we have sinned but feel that we have sinned.
 - a. It's much like someone saying they are saying it.
 - b. If their countenance doesn't demonstrate what they are saying, then it doesn't carry the same weight.
2. True repentance impacts EVERY part of us.
 - a. When we repent, it changes everything about us.
 - b. That's why I'm not the biggest fan of people doing "repeat after me" prayers at church.
 - c. Repentance is much more than speaking, it changes every part of me.
3. That's because sin and salvation impact EVERY part of us.
 - a. Sin and salvation are not mere intellectual exercises.
 - b. Our sin and salvation does not only affect our minds.
 - c. But it also affects our bodies and our souls (mind, will and emotions).

d. At the end of it all, God resurrects not merely our minds but also our bodies.

e. Therefore, repentance and salvation should not only be with our mind and our words, but also our bodies and our emotions.

4. Jesus came to save EVERY part of us, because sin condemned every part of us.

C. It was important that Israel not only SAY they had sinned.

1. They also FELT the weight of their sin.

2. Then they demonstrated their repentance.

3. This repentance was demonstrated by the removing of their jewelry.

a. It was with their jewelry they made the calf.

b. Where did their jewelry come from? Egypt.

c. In Egypt, jewelry represented self-adornment and social status.¹

4. The removal of their jewelry reminded Israel of their sinfulness, and of their sinful status.

a. Far from having it all together, at this moment, Israel recognized that she was far from perfect and far from holy.

b. Could it be possible that you are still carrying around some of your "jewelry" from your sinful seasons?

1. Maybe you've ground up and burned your golden calf but you are still keeping the necessary ingredients around, just in case!

2. After God deals with your heart, what use to be acceptable may no longer be acceptable.

¹ Carpenter, Eugene. 2012. *Exodus*. Edited by H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick. Vol. 2. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

3. Israel wore their Egyptian jewelry through the Passover, and through the Red Sea, and through flowing of water through the rocks.

4. But there came a point where they weren't permitted to wear it anymore.

5. The giving up of the jewelry was an easy sacrifice:

a. Because it was necessary in order to keep God's presence with them.

b. This is where we turn next.

3. God's presence is what made Israel special.

A. Verse 3, God said He will not go with them because they are rebellious.

1. Here's why that is a big deal:

2. Quote: Yahweh's assertion is clear; the tabernacle will not be built, the vestments will not be made, the holy nation and the kingdom of priests will not become a reality. Israel will merely be another people (cf. 33:15–16). The sacrificial systems and the festivals will be impossible, for Yahweh will not be there to receive his people and their sacrifices. There will be no ark, no mercy seat, no holy of holies.²

B. There was nothing special about Israel.

1. What made Israel special was her relationship with God.

2. It was the promises, the covenants, and the presence of God that made Israel special.

3. Without God's presence, Israel was just any other tribe in the Middle East.

C. God's presence and favor is the difference maker.

² Carpenter, Eugene. 2012. *Exodus*. Edited by H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick. Vol. 2. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

1. This is true for you and I.
2. This is true for our country.
3. This is true for our church.
4. Without the presence of God, we cease our right to exist.

4. God's presence was the most important thing for Moses.

A. Moses was so desperate for God's presence, that He refused to move or go without Him.

1. After God seems to relent, God says He won't go with them.
2. They could have the promised land,
3. They could have the victory.
4. But they couldn't have God's presence.
5. Moses knew that without God's presence, they were nothing.

B. **When you have tasted of the Great, the good will never satisfy.**

1. Moses had been in God's presence.
2. Moses met God at the burning bush, and then stood in His presence at the base of the Mountain.
3. Moses had just spent 40 days with God up on the Mountain.
4. **Moses knew what it meant to be in the Lord's presence, and wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.**

C. In fact, the Presence of God was so important, that Moses built a temporary tent called the Tent of Meeting.

1. Before the Tabernacle was constructed, Moses still wanted to meet with God.
2. The presence of God was so important to Moses, that he would do whatever it would take to make sure that God's presence remained with Israel.

D. Reaching the Promised Land, without God's presence was unacceptable.

1. Winning over our enemies, but without God's presence, is not enough.
2. Having good music or a nice sermon isn't enough, without God's presence.
3. Having a beautiful family, or a successful career is no substitute for God's presence.
4. **No people, no matter how religious they are and for whatever reasons, can be a people of God without the Presence of God.**³

Apply: What does this teach us as believers?

#1. If it costs you God's presence, the price is too much.

A. Often, we discuss what we can or cannot do as Christians and still go to heaven.

1. The reality is: If it costs me the presence of God, then I shouldn't do it.
2. Because we are all in different levels of maturity, there may be a difference between me and you.
 - a. We call these things "convictions".
 - b. There are certain things that, if I did them, they would be sin for me.
 - c. I don't drink, smoke, or cuss because I have strong convictions that these are not things for me or for others.
 - d. But there are also TV shows or movies, that when I watch them I am aware that I'm not pleasing God.

³ Durham, John I. 1987. *Exodus*. Vol. 3. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

B. As you grow in your relationship with Jesus, there will be things, persons, and places that are no longer good for you.

1. You might have been ok earlier on wearing that "Egyptian" jewelry, but there reaches a point when the Spirit says "stop".

2. We call this maturing.

3. Just as certain elements are acceptable for babies, or for kids, or for teens, there reaches a point where we must put away childish things.

C. When the Spirit asks you to give something up, you have a choice.

1. To tell the Spirit no results in a diminished awareness of the Spirit's presence.

2. Say no long enough, we may be like Samson and not realize that God's presence and Spirit had left

#2. God's presence is the difference maker.

A. The harsh reality is: If we thought we could be successful, happy, and healthy without JESUS, many of us would try.

1. What we don't realize, until it's too late, is that the only thing that matters IS the presence of God.

2. If God's not happy, it doesn't matter if I'm happy or not.

3. If God doesn't approve, it doesn't matter how many followers I have or how much money I have in the bank.

B. **When I'm in the Presence of Jesus, everything else is extra.**

1. Moses didn't want wins, or victories, lands, or anything else IF that meant He missed out on the presence of God.

2. Each one of us is being called to this level of relationship.

a. The Rich young ruler wouldn't give up his money in exchange for the opportunity to follow Jesus.

b. But the other disciples traded careers, opportunities, and livelihoods for that very same opportunity.

3. Jesus doesn't always ask us to walk away from those things, but He does invite us to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness THEN all of these things are given to us."

C. American and the Church must realize that the only thing that makes us special is the Presence of God.

1. When you remove God's favor, we are left with emptiness and futility.

2. If we want to make America Great again, then seek the Presence of God in your life.

a. Invite God's presence into your home.

b. Invite God's presence into your workplace.

c. Seek the Kingdom of God first and foremost.

3. Furthermore, we must move past being easily satisfied.

a. We are so easily satisfied in life these days.

b. This has spilled over into our spiritual walk.

c. When we are content to live without God's presence, we will stop seeking God's presence.

#3. Make plans to meet God.

A. Before Moses went back up the mountain, and before the Tabernacle was finished, Moses prepared a place to meet God.

1. The Tent of Meeting was a place where people, like Moses and Joshua, could go to meet with God.

2. Moses was not a priest, so he couldn't go into the future tabernacle just anytime he wanted.

3. But Moses endeavored to meet with God every time it was possible.

4. And he wanted others too as well.

B. My friend, are you making plans to meet with God?

1. Not just someday when you die.
2. But did you make plans to meet Jesus today? During this service? This evening at bed?
3. Do you have plans to meet Jesus this week?
 - a. Where? House, prayer closet? Walk in the park?
 - b. When? Morning? At night? Lunch break?

C. We schedule what is important.

1. What doesn't get scheduled doesn't get done.
2. Make Plans to meet God!!!!

Close: Today, I've made plans to meet with Jesus here.

A. And those plans involve you.

1. In fact, I even imagined many of you in this altar meeting Jesus as well.
2. This morning, I'm going to ask us all to stand.

B. After I pray, I'm going to ask everyone who will to come.

1. This is for those who are wanting more of Jesus in their lives.
2. This is for those who have been carrying around the makings of false altars and golden calves, and you are ready to throw them away.
3. This is for those who are desiring a supernatural reprioritizing of priorities, families, churches, and personalities.

C. Let's pray, and then let's flood the altars!