

FEBRUARY 2023

February 1, 2023 Redemptive Suffering

Readings for today: Job 33-36

February 2, 2023 Confronted by God

Readings for today: Job 37:1-40:5, Psalm 19

February 3, 2023 Knowing our Place

Readings for today: Job 40:6-24, 41-42, Psalm 29

February 4, 2023 God Remembers

Readings for today: Exodus 1-4

February 6, 2023 Who is God?

Readings for today: Exodus 5-9

February 7, 2023 God's Sovereignty

Readings for today: Exodus 10-13

February 8, 2023 Saving Faith

Readings for today: Exodus 14-18

February 9, 2023 Immeasurable Distance

Readings for today: Exodus 19-21

February 10, 2023 God With Us

Readings for today: Exodus 22-24

February 11, 2023 A Home for God

Readings for today: Exodus 25-28

February 13, 2023 Soaked in Holiness

Readings for today: Exodus 29-32

February 14, 2023 The Name of the Lord

Readings for today: Exodus 33-36

February 15, 2023 Shekinah Glory

Readings for today: Exodus 37-40

February 16, 2023 Reading Leviticus

Readings for today: Leviticus 1-4

February 17, 2023 Restitution

Readings for today: Leviticus 5-7

February 18, 2023 Holy and Common

Readings for today: Leviticus 8-10

February 20, 2023 Community Above Self

Readings for today: Leviticus 11-14

February 21, 2023 Sexual Ethics

Readings for today: Leviticus 15-18

February 22, 2023 A Life of Blessing

Readings for today: Leviticus 19-22

February 23, 2023 Holy and Healthy Rhythms

Readings for today: Leviticus 23-25

February 24, 2023 The Beauty of God's Law

Readings for today: Leviticus 26-27, Numbers 1-2

February 25, 2023 Strange Rituals

Readings for today: Numbers 3-5

February 27, 2023 Waiting on God

Readings for today: Numbers 6-9

February 28, 2023 Seeing God

Readings for today: Numbers 10-13, Psalm 90

February 1, 2023
Redemptive Suffering

Readings for today: Job 33-36 (audio reading)

There is such a thing as redemptive suffering. Suffering with a purpose. We may not always see the purpose and, in fact, it is often only revealed upon reflection after the fact. But that doesn't mean all suffering is meaningless or all suffering is bad or all suffering is to be avoided. Clearly, the first century believers suffered. Ten of the twelve disciples would be tortured and executed in excruciating ways for their faith. (Judas committed suicide and John, though he suffered, died of old age.) Throughout the first three centuries of the church's existence, Christians were burned as torches in Nero's garden. Thrown to the lions for sport in the arena. In certain regions of the Empire, they were systematically rounded up and killed. This was not only true back then but remains true around the world today. According to Christianity Today, it is estimated that over 70 million Christians have been martyred since the time of Jesus. They suffered and died in places all over the earth. Ottoman Turkey. Nazi Germany. Soviet Russia. Communist China. North Korea. Uganda. Sudan. Mexico. Columbia. And the suffering continues. I have seen it firsthand in Ethiopia and have spoken to eye witnesses from South Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia.

The introduction of Elihu to the narrative represents a turning point in Job. At first glance, Elihu just seems to be piling on. Repeating the same tired arguments of Job's friends. But a careful reading of the text reveals a significant shift. Elihu bursts on the scene declaring his anger at both Job and his three friends. He believes he has something new to offer that has not yet been said. So what is it that Elihu brings to the table? It is the idea that God does allow the righteous to suffer in order to purify them. Perhaps the key passage from this discourse is Job 33:12-30 (MSG)...

“But let me tell you, Job, you’re wrong, dead wrong! God is far greater than any human. So how dare you haul him into court, and then complain that he won’t answer your charges? God always answers, one way or another, even when people don’t recognize his presence. In a dream, for instance, a vision at night, when men and women are deep in sleep, fast asleep in their beds— God opens their ears and impresses them with warnings to turn them back from something bad they’re planning, from some reckless choice, And keep them from an early grave, from the river of no return....” Remember, they had no Bible. No written records. So the Word of God would come to them in visions and dreams. Why? To punish? To judge? To wound? To destroy? Not at all. It’s so that God may turn us aside from our pride and our foolishness and keep us from perishing. This is deeply significant as it adds a new layer of meaning to the story. God does allow suffering but it’s for our good. He uses suffering to purge the pride from us. The pride Job himself suffers from. Yes, Job is a righteous man. Yes, Job is a blameless man. But Job is also a sinful man. Though he has a heart after God, he is not perfect and God will use his suffering to cleanse the depths of Job’s heart.

Elihu continues...“God might get their attention through pain, by throwing them on a bed of suffering, So they can’t stand the sight of food, have no appetite for their favorite treats. They lose weight, wasting away to nothing, reduced to a bag of bones. They hang on the cliff-edge of death, knowing the next breath may be their last. But even then an angel could come, a champion—there are thousands of them!— to take up your cause, A messenger who would mercifully intervene, canceling the death sentence with the words: ‘I’ve come up with the ransom!’ Before you know it, you’re healed, the very picture of health! Or, you may fall on your knees and pray—to God’s delight! You’ll see God’s smile and celebrate, finding yourself set right with God. You’ll sing God’s praises to everyone you meet, testifying, ‘I messed up my life—and let me tell you, it wasn’t worth it. But God stepped in and saved

me from certain death. I'm alive again! Once more I see the light!' This is the way God works. Over and over again He pulls our souls back from certain destruction so we'll see the light—and live in the light!" God not only warns us in dreams and visions and through His Word, he also uses our physical pain for our good and for His glory. If we follow the logic of Job's friends - whom Elihu rebukes strongly - we would conclude that those who suffer deserve it. They should go down to death. But that's not where Elihu lands. His God is not a harsh judge but a faithful, loving Father who ultimately delivers His children from their pain and suffering.

This understanding squares with what Christians have said throughout the centuries. Martyrs facing their death without fear. Saints who endure suffering for the sake of something greater. They all understand God is at work even in the middle of their pain. Not only bringing about His will and His glory but also continuing to sanctify and purify their hearts in the midst of it all. The reality is Job needs to be humbled - and indeed will be humbled - before the Lord of Hosts. This is one of the most important lessons from the Book of Job for all of us.

Readings for tomorrow: Job 37:1-40:5, Psalm 19

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 2, 2023
Confronted by God

Readings for today: [Job 37:1-40:5, Psalm 19](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

I am blessed to be the father of four wonderful children. Each one unique in their own way. Each one different with a mix of gifts, talents, passions, and abilities. It has been one of the great privileges of my life to raise them but like anyone, we've had our moments. I remember when each of them hit about 8th grade. All of a sudden I went from being the smartest person in their world to the dumbest. It happened almost overnight. All of a sudden our conversations were challenging. All of a sudden there was conflict as they began to chafe under our rules. All of a sudden they questioned everything and it was hard to watch them make mistakes I could have helped them avoid. Thankfully, this phase came to an end after high school when all of a sudden I got smart again. ;-)

I thought about some of those conversations when I read God's response to Job this morning. God's knowledge is so much higher and greater than our own. His wisdom is vast. His understanding is deep. His power is infinite. Time holds no meaning for God. There is nothing in the universe that remains a mystery to Him. He created it all. He knows it all. He sustains it all. It is utter foolishness for human beings to question God. A conclusion Job rapidly reaches once God shows up. "God then confronted Job directly: "Now what do you have to say for yourself? Are you going to haul me, the Mighty One, into court and press charges?" Job answered: "I'm speechless, in awe—words fail me. I should never have opened my mouth! I've talked too much, way too much. I'm ready to shut up and listen." (Job 40:1-5 MSG) Job is working off of limited information. He doesn't see the whole field. He can't begin to plumb the depths of God's purposes. He can't begin to fathom the reach of God's plan. So he shuts his mouth and finally begins to listen.

Recently, I was talking to my oldest. She and I were reminiscing a bit about her time in high school and some of the challenges we faced and worked through. One of the things she shared with me was that she didn't always appreciate the fact that I simply knew more than she did. Perhaps even more importantly, she didn't always trust that our rules were designed for her safety and security. She believed our rules were restrictive when in fact they were set up to create an environment in which she could thrive. Even the hard stuff we asked her to do was for her good. Even those moments when she struggled with disappointment because she didn't get her way or she had to delay gratitude or she had to suffer in order to build discipline whether in sports or music or academics was ultimately to help her grow and flourish as a young woman.

God is a good Father who loves and cares for His children. He never abandons us. He never forsakes us. He promises to take what this world meant for evil and turn it to our good. He promises to use all things - even human suffering - for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. His plans for us are good. His purpose is to bless us and keep us. He has designed our lives in such a way as to prepare us for eternity.

Readings for tomorrow: Job 40:6-24, 41-42, Psalm 29

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 3, 2023
Knowing our Place

Readings for today: [Job 40:6-24, 41-42, Psalm 29](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

It was theologian Sally McFague who once defined sin as a refusal to accept our place. We refuse to accept the place in God's created order. We refuse to accept the role God planned for us to play in His great salvation story. We refuse to accept the purpose for which we were created and the result is chaos. Suffering. Pain. Death. Humanity abandoned the call to care for the world God created and instead seeks to exploit it for our own ends. Humanity rejected the call to cultivate the earth and help it thrive and flourish and instead enslaves it to satisfy our insatiable desires. Humanity walked away from the call to love and serve one another and instead chose to compete with fellow human beings for resources thus resulting in warfare and violence. Why does Job suffer? On a cosmic level, it is because a key cog in the universe is missing. Humanity has yet to take her rightful place as God's representative and image-bearer on earth. We have yet to fulfill the creation mandate to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion over it as God had originally intended. Our unwillingness to accept our responsibility is what creates the mess we find ourselves in.

I love how the Message version puts it in Job 41:11 where God plainly says to Job, "I'm in charge of all this - I run this universe." In the face of God's holiness and power, Job can only bow his head. He says, "I admit it. I was the one. I babbled on about things far beyond me, made small talk about wonders way over my head...I admit I once lived by rumors of You; now I have it all firsthand - from my own eyes and ears! I'm sorry - forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise!" (Job 42:3, 5-6 MSG) Job finally understands his place. He finally understands his position before God. He finally grasps the vastness of the gap that exists between us and God. And he is humbled. Notice he never receives an answer to all his questions but those questions have ceased to have any meaning for Job. Even if God did give him an answer, it wouldn't matter because Job has seen God face to face and it is enough.

At the end of the day, what does the Book of Job teach us? It teaches us that God is God and we are not. It teaches us that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. It teaches us that God is infinite and we are finite. Most of all, it teaches us humility before God. He has a plan. He is working all things for our good. We don't need answers so much as we need His presence in our lives. And the great news is that when we seek Him with all our hearts, He promises He will be found.

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 1-4

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 4, 2023
God Remembers

Readings for today: [Exodus 1-4](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

[Audio Introduction to the Book of Exodus](#)
written by Eugene Peterson in *The Message*

My family has a history of dementia, early onset Alzheimer's, diseases that rob us of our precious memories and make strangers of those we love. My grandfather died in his middle thirties due to this disease. My aunt died when she was in her early sixties. My grandmother on my mother's side spent the last few years of her life in an almost catatonic state. So I know the journey. I know the pain of watching someone you love slip away from you while they are still living. I know what it's like to say the long goodbye. I'm also a pastor. As such, I've spent countless hours with people who wonder if they've been forgotten by God. They go through incredible hardship and pain. They face great tragedy in their lives. They wrestle with deep depression and demonic powers. And they feel all alone. They cry out to God in their suffering and they wonder if He hears their cries. I often take them back to these verses from Exodus...

“Many years later the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Their cries for relief from their hard labor ascended to God: God listened to their groanings. God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw what was going on with Israel. God understood.” (Exodus 2:23-25 MSG)

Surely the people of Israel must have wondered if God had forgotten them. Remember, God had not yet revealed Himself on Sinai. He had not yet given them the Law nor the plans for the Tabernacle. They have not seen His presence. They have not witnessed His miracles. The Red Sea. The wilderness wandering. The journey to the Promised Land. All of that is still in the future for Israel. All they have to go on is a few stories that have been handed generation after generation about a God who chose the family of Abraham to be His people. That's it. And now they've lived in Egypt for many years. They've been enslaved. They've been abused. They've even suffered genocide at the hands of Pharaoh who attempted to kill all their male children. Such is life when one serves a man who sets himself up as a god-king.

Thankfully, God listens. God remembers. God sees. God understands. He is a God who draws near the broken-hearted and crushed in spirit. He is a God who stands with - not apart from - His people. When Israel cries out, God hears and God answers. He calls the midwives to save Moses. He delivers him into the hands of Pharaoh's daughter where he will be raised to lead as a prince of Egypt. God sends him into the wilderness to prepare him for the Exodus journey. Then, in the fullness of time, He calls Moses from a burning bush. He sends Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh. He delivers His people with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. He brings the world's mightiest empire and the world's mightiest ruler to their knees. He hardens Pharaoh's heart. Not allowing him to escape until God has had His way. He rains down plague after plague until all the magicians in Egypt are exhausted and spent. He defends and protects His people from any and all harm. In this way, they will know and come to understand their special place as His chosen people.

Friends, God still remembers His covenant promises. It's why He sent His one and only Son. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all God has promised. He is the Second Adam. The Faithful Israelite. He lives a life of perfect obedience. He is the perfect Passover lamb who was sacrificed on our behalf. He

delivers us from the powers of sin and death and evil by dying on the cross. He parts the Temple curtain so that we might gain access to God. He clearly demonstrates His authority over Satan and all his demonic forces by rising from the dead. All this He does for us. All this He does to deliver us. All this He does to save us. Yes, in this world we will face suffering. In this world, we will face trials and temptations. In this world, we will experience pain but we look to Jesus and take heart. In Christ, we know God listens. God remembers. God sees. God understands. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 6, 2023
Who is God?

Readings for today: Exodus 5-9 [\(audio reading\)](#)

John Calvin once said our hearts our idol factories, constantly churning out false gods. It seems human beings will worship anything and everything except for the one true and living God. In ancient Egypt, the people worshipped Pharaoh. They sacrificed for him. They served him. They gave him everything and, in return, he maintained order. Through the elaborate rituals he performed, the sun rose and set each day. The Nile flooded each year. The seasons changed and the ground produced. From birth, the Egyptians were taught to believe this about their god-king. And it wasn't just the Egyptians who believed these things about Pharaoh. For four hundred years, the people of Israel were also conditioned into this belief. They were conditioned to believe they were his slaves. They were conditioned to believe there was no hope for freedom because of the power Pharaoh held over their lives. This is why they wouldn't listen to Moses when he delivered God's message. "But when Moses delivered this message to the Israelites, they didn't even hear him - they were that beaten down in spirit by the harsh slave conditions." (Exodus 6:9 MSG)

The Exodus story is more than a story of deliverance. It is about the introduction of God to the world. It is about the humbling of the greatest empire on the face of the earth and the utter destruction of her most powerful king. It is about teaching humanity - not just Israel - who God is and what He's all about. The goal of this whole enterprise is not just to save Israel from slavery but to teach the pagan world all about God. Listen to what God says to Moses, "Look at Me. I'll make you as a god to Pharaoh and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to speak everything I command you, and your brother Aaron will tell it to Pharaoh. Then he will release the Israelites from his land. At the same time I am going to put Pharaoh's back up and follow it up by filling Egypt with signs and wonders. Pharaoh is not going to listen to you, but I will have my way against Egypt and bring out my soldiers, my people the Israelites, from Egypt by mighty acts of judgment. The Egyptians will realize that I am God when I step in and take the Israelites out of their country." (Exodus 7:1-5 MSG)

Why is God so passionate for His own glory? Why is He so zealous for His own Name? Because He knows the false gods of this world can't deliver on what they promise. He knows the false gods of this world are weak and empty. He knows the false gods of this world don't even exist. And because He loves humanity so much, He hates to see us fall for the lie. He hates to see us place our trust in something false and untrue. He hates to see us give our lives in service to something that will ultimately never satisfy. But we are stubborn. We don't give up our idols easily. We don't let go of false beliefs very quickly. So God has to subject us to judgment, often in the form of pain and suffering. Listen again to what He says to Pharaoh, "For one reason only I've kept you on your feet: To make you recognize my power so that my reputation spreads in all the earth. You are still building yourself up at my people's expense. You are not letting them go." (Exodus 9:16-17 MSG) If we are honest, we are all like Pharaoh. Hardening our hearts against the will of God. Only the Holy Spirit living inside us can soften our hearts. Only the Holy Spirit doing His sanctifying work inside us can loosen our grip on the idols we've created. Only the Holy Spirit can do the work of regeneration we all so desperately need. Pray today for the Holy Spirit to reveal the idols you worship and ask Him to give you the strength to cast them down.

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 10-13

[**Back to Table of Contents**](#)

February 7, 2023
God's Sovereignty

Readings for today: [Exodus 10-13](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

Today we have to grapple with one of the deepest mysteries in all of Scripture...God hardening Pharaoh's heart. Before we even get started, let's acknowledge the obvious. We hate this truth. It runs counter to everything we've been raised to believe about free will, everyone getting a choice, God loving everyone, etc. It calls into question God's justice. God's righteousness. How could a righteous God harden someone's heart to the point where they are kept from saving faith? And yet, if we are courageous enough to take the text at face value, we are left with no other conclusion.

"God said to Moses: "Go to Pharaoh. I've made him stubborn, him and his servants..." (Exodus 10:1 MSG)

"But God made Pharaoh stubborn as ever. He still didn't release the Israelites." (Exodus 10:20 MSG)

"But God kept Pharaoh stubborn as ever. He wouldn't agree to release them." (Exodus 10:27 MSG)

"Moses and Aaron had performed all these signs in Pharaoh's presence, but God turned Pharaoh more stubborn than ever—yet again he refused to release the Israelites from his land." (Exodus 11:10 MSG)

God is relentless with this man. He will not let him repent. He will not let him escape judgment. He will not let him give in until his nation lies in ruins. God will not let up until there is no doubt who is God and who is not. Now this is hard for us. This is a different side to God that we aren't used to. A God who reigns over the affairs of humanity. A God who rules over the universe with a firm hand. A God who is to be feared as much as loved. So again, the question is pressed...how could a righteous God harden someone's heart to the point where they are kept from saving faith?

The key is how we define righteousness. Do we define it from a human perspective or a Biblical one? According to Scripture, God's highest aim is NOT the salvation of His people. As important as this is, it is merely the means God chooses to achieve a higher end. What is that "higher end?" The full display of God's power and glory and majesty and sovereignty over all creation. God's greatest aim is to fill the earth with His glory. His grand design calls for all creation to honor His great name. This is the purpose for which we were created and it is clearly revealed in the Exodus narrative.

"God said to Moses: "Go to Pharaoh. I've made him stubborn, him and his servants, so that I can force him to look at these signs and so you'll be able to tell your children and grandchildren how I toyed with the Egyptians, like a cat with a mouse; you'll tell them the stories of the signs that I brought down on them, so that you'll all know that I am God." (Exodus 10:1-2 MSG)

"God said to Moses, "Pharaoh's not going to listen to a thing you say so that the signs of my presence and work are going to multiply in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 11:9 MSG)

And the Apostle Paul affirms God's purposes when he looked back on the Exodus story. "The same point was made when God said to Pharaoh, "I picked you as a bit player in this drama of my salvation power." (Romans 9:17 MSG)

The point is clear. God will make His name known. And He chooses to make His name known through “vessels of mercy” (His people) and “vessels of wrath” (not His people). And lest we think this somehow compromises God’s justice or righteousness or goodness or it just isn’t fair; we have to remember our condition before God. All of us are dead in our trespasses. All of us have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. All of us deserve death. We are in no position - broken, sinful, and rebellious as we are - to pass judgment on God. God is free to choose to use whom He wills in whatever way He wills and this in no way compromises His integrity.

So what does this mean for us? Does it mean we should be scared of God? Does it mean we are at the mercy of a God who is arbitrary and capricious? Not at all. In Jesus Christ, God has provided the perfect Passover Lamb! He Himself has become the sacrifice that saves! His blood delivers us from the angel of death! And because we have no idea whom God has chosen, we should go forth and gladly, even boldly, share this good news with the world!

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 14-18

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 8, 2023
Saving Faith

Readings for today: [Exodus 14-18](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and God, with a terrific east wind all night long, made the sea go back. He made the sea dry ground. The seawaters split.” (Exodus 14:21 MSG)

I've often wondered what it must have been like for Moses to come to the shores of the Red Sea. You've faced down the most powerful man on the planet. You've plundered the most powerful empire in the world. You've led God's people out of Egypt with the promise of a better life. A life of freedom under God in the Promised Land. But in following God, you realize He's led you essentially into a trap. He's led you to a place from which there is no escape. The Red Sea in front of you. The desert behind you. The ground shaking beneath your feet at the approach of the chariots of the Egyptian army. The people following you aren't happy. In fact, they are terrified. They believe all hope is lost and lash out in anger against Moses. They question his leadership. “Weren't the cemeteries large enough in Egypt so that you had to take us out here in the wilderness to die? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt? Back in Egypt didn't we tell you this would happen? Didn't we tell you, 'Leave us alone here in Egypt—we're better off as slaves in Egypt than as corpses in the wilderness.'” (Exodus 14:10-12 MSG) The pressure must have been enormous and yet Moses doesn't miss a beat...

“Moses spoke to the people: “Don't be afraid. Stand firm and watch God do his work of salvation for you today. Take a good look at the Egyptians today for you're never going to see them again. God will fight the battle for you. And you? You keep your mouths shut!” (Exodus 14:13-14 MSG) At this point in his life, Moses has learned to trust God. He no longer questions Him. No longer doubts Him. He's come a long way since the burning bush where he argued with God. He has seen God's wonders. He had seen God's miracles. He had seen God's power on display and he knows in his bones that God will deliver. God will save. So he tells the people stand firm and watch God do what only God can do.

Not only does Moses point people to God, he takes an even greater step of faith. He turns his back on the Egyptians, trusting God to be his “rearguard.” He faces the vastness of the Red Sea and stretches out his hand. And as he raises his staff, God sends a violent wind to drive back the sea. Now can you imagine the hurricane forces God would have to unleash to create a path in the middle of the Red Sea? It had to be unbelievable! The roaring of the wind drowning out the rumble of the chariots. The power on display dwarfing anything the Egyptians could bring to bear. The people standing there in awe. All because Moses believed God. All because Moses trusted God. All because Moses was fully confident that God was able to do what He had promised. This, friends, is the essence of saving faith.

So what about you? What steps of faith have you taken in your life? What steps of faith is God calling you to take right now? What's holding you back? Metaphorically speaking, over what obstacle do you need to raise your staff, trusting God to deliver? Trusting God to save? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you need walk by faith and not by sight.

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 19-21

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 9, 2023
Immeasurable Distance

Readings for today: [Exodus 19-21](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

I remember visiting the Grand Canyon for the first time. I stood on the south rim. I looked out over the vast expanse. My heart was struck by the sheer immensity of it all. I felt so small. So insignificant. The depth and breadth of the canyon was simply beyond my ability to comprehend. The beauty and splendor of it all was overwhelming. The forces involved in the shaping of this natural wonder over millions of years were simply awe-inspiring. Now imagine you are standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Imagine the summit of the mountain bursting forth into flame as God descends. Smoke like a furnace pours forth. Lightning flashes. Thunder shakes the very ground. Is it any wonder the people drew back in fear?

“All the people, experiencing the thunder and lightning, the trumpet blast and the smoking mountain, were afraid - they pulled back and stood at a distance. They said to Moses, “You speak to us and we’ll listen, but don’t have God speak to us or we’ll die.” Moses spoke to the people: “Don’t be afraid. God has come to test you and instill a deep and reverent awe within you so that you won’t sin.” The people kept their distance while Moses approached the thick clouds where God was.” (Exodus 20:18-21 MSG)

We simply do not appreciate the enormous gulf that exists between God and us. He is wholly other. He is transcendent. He exists on a plane that is inaccessible to us. He is immortal, invisible, and eternal. He is as far from us as the East is from the West. He is above us and beyond us as the heavens are above and beyond the reach of earth. His purity cannot stand even the least amount of corruption. His holiness will not tolerate even the slightest of sins. He is light in whom there is no darkness at all. Not even the briefest of shadows. The only way we can meet this God is by undergoing an intense purification ritual. It’s why the people of Israel had to spend days washing their clothes and preparing their hearts to meet with Him. It’s why they had to protect themselves by posting boundaries around the mountain, lest someone accidentally stumble into God’s presence and be consumed. The threat of death was actually for their own protection, to communicate the seriousness of what was about to take place. Meeting with God is not for the faint of heart!

Now fast forward several thousand years. Listen to the words of the writer of Hebrews as he unpacks what Christ has done for us. “Unlike your ancestors, you didn’t come to Mount Sinai—all that volcanic blaze and earthshaking rumble—to hear God speak. The earsplitting words and soul-shaking message terrified them and they begged him to stop. When they heard the words—“If an animal touches the Mountain, it’s as good as dead”—they were afraid to move. Even Moses was terrified. No, that’s not your experience at all. You’ve come to Mount Zion, the city where the living God resides. The invisible Jerusalem is populated by throngs of festive angels and Christian citizens. It is the city where God is Judge, with judgments that make us just. You’ve come to Jesus, who presents us with a new covenant, a fresh charter from God. He is the Mediator of this covenant. The murder of Jesus, unlike Abel’s—a homicide that cried out for vengeance—became a proclamation of grace...Do you see what we’ve got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God. For God is not an indifferent bystander. He’s actively cleaning house, torching all that needs to burn, and he won’t quit until it’s all cleansed. God himself is Fire!” (Hebrews 12:18-24, 28-29 MSG) Friends, Jesus has done what we could not do. He has bridged the gulf. He has spanned the gap. He has crossed the divide. When He hung on the cross, He held the heavens in one hand and the earth in His other. He laid hold of the East and joined it together with the West. He exchanged His righteousness and purity and holiness for our unrighteousness, impurity, and

unholiness. He became sin who knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. And it was this beautiful and glorious exchange that opened the way for us to enter into God's presence unafraid.

As you gaze upon the cross of Christ, do you find your heart brimming over with thankfulness? Do you find yourself falling to your knees in worship? Do you find your soul responding in awe and wonder at all God has done? If this is not your experience, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to the mystery of grace God offers you in the gospel of His Son.

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 22-24

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 10, 2023
God With Us

Readings for today: [Exodus 22-24](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

It's both comforting and convicting to know God is with us. It is encouraging and sobering to know God is eternally faithful to walk by our side. He never leaves us nor forsakes us not even for a single moment. If we listen to Him and walk in obedience, He will bless us. If we ignore Him and walk in rebellion, He will discipline us. God is eternally consistent. There is no shadow or turning in Him. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So the words He speaks to Israel are just as appropriate for us today as they were for them back then. The ways He reveals Himself to His people back then are just as true for us today as they were for them.

“Now get yourselves ready. I’m sending my Angel ahead of you to guard you in your travels, to lead you to the place that I’ve prepared. Pay close attention to him. Obey him. Don’t go against him. He won’t put up with your rebellions because he’s acting on my authority. But if you obey him and do everything I tell you, I’ll be an enemy to your enemies, I’ll fight those who fight you. When my Angel goes ahead of you and leads you to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, I’ll clear the country of them. So don’t worship or serve their gods; don’t do anything they do because I’m going to wipe them right off the face of the Earth and smash their sacred phallic pillars to bits.” (Exodus 23:20-24 MSG) Can you imagine how comforting it must have been to Israel to know God would be “an enemy to their enemies” and would “fight those who fought them?” Especially after watching what God did to Pharaoh and Egypt? They must have felt invincible. Despite the many different tribes occupying the Promised Land and the challenge they would face driving them out, Israel must have felt such confidence knowing God would be on their side.

“I’ll send my Terror on ahead of you and throw those peoples you’re approaching into a panic. All you’ll see of your enemies is the backs of their necks. And I’ll send Despair on ahead of you. It will push the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites out of your way. I won’t get rid of them all at once lest the land grow up in weeds and the wild animals take over. Little by little I’ll get them out of there while you have a chance to get your crops going and make the land your own. I will make your borders stretch from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and from the Wilderness to the Euphrates River. I’m turning everyone living in that land over to you; go ahead and drive them out.” (Exodus 23:27-31 MSG) At the same time, God is faithful to not give Israel a quick or easy victory. “Little by little” God would drive them out. He knows Israel isn’t ready to exercise dominion over the land He’s giving them so He will give them an opportunities to practice along the way. It’s the principles of “to whom much is given, much is expected” and “to the one who is faithful with little, God will entrust them with much” that Jesus talks about in His parable of the talents. God knows our tendency to take things for granted. He knows how easy it is for us to become complacent so He will continue to challenge us and test us to refine our faith. This is what it means to have God with us.

God has always been and always will be “God with us.” He has been Emmanuel from eternity. His great desire is for all of us to be saved and fulfill the mandate He gave us at creation to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion over all He has made.” God created us in His image to serve as His vice-regents over all creation. He has never wavered from this commitment and is at work even now in your life and in my life to bring it to pass. Spend some time praying today and ask the Holy Spirit to make you more aware of God’s abiding presence in your life and then ask Him how you might respond in greater faithfulness to Him.

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 25-28

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 11, 2023
A Home for God

Readings for today: [Exodus 25-28](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

Imagine you receive a phone call one day from the White House letting you know the President of the United States would like to visit. How would you respond? You would immediately set to work making sure your home was in the most immaculate condition. You would set out the finest china. You would make sure the meal served was prepared by the best chefs. You would spare no expense in making sure everything was ready and worthy of the guest you were about to receive. You would inquire as to the President's tastes. You would want to know what they liked or disliked. You would want to know how to best set up your home in terms of furniture and layout. You would do all you could to make sure your guest was as comfortable as possible.

Now imagine you are Israel and the guest you are asked to prepare a home for is God Himself. There is no dwelling here on earth that will do. Certainly not the tents you are living in as you wander through the wilderness! So you set out to make a dwelling that is worthy of the God of the universe. You find the most precious of metals and stones. You use only the finest linens and threads. You hire craftsmen to make all new utensils as you prepare for your honored guest. Not only that but you seek His will regarding how to prepare His home. You want to know His taste in furnishings. You want to know how He likes His room. You want to set things up according to His taste. You want the place to be as comfortable as possible for Him. Furthermore, you would spare no expense. You would sacrifice anything in order to make this miracle happen.

Listen to how the Book of Exodus describes it, “God spoke to Moses: “Tell the Israelites that they are to set aside offerings for me. Receive the offerings from everyone who is willing to give. These are the offerings I want you to receive from them: gold, silver, bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet material; fine linen; goats’ hair; tanned rams’ skins; dolphin skins; acacia wood; lamp oil; spices for anointing oils and for fragrant incense; onyx stones and other stones for setting in the Ephod and the Breastpiece. Let them construct a Sanctuary for me so that I can live among them. You are to construct it following the plans I’ve given you, the design for The Dwelling and the design for all its furnishings.” (Exodus 25:1-9 MSG)

Can you imagine? God wants to live among His people. God wants to be with them and near them and among them. He wants to journey with them as they make their way to the Promised Land. He wants to go before them to give them victory over their enemies. He wants to be their rearguard to protect them from those who might pursue them. He wants to provide for them along the way. Feed them with manna and quail. Lead them beside still waters in the desert. Make sure their clothing doesn’t wear out along the way. These are the promises God makes even as He calls them to build Him a home. A sanctuary. A sacred tent where they will meet with Him morning and evening. It’s a beautiful picture of the relationship God desires to have with us.

Here’s the thing. We don’t have to imagine it. As the Apostle John once wrote, “From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we’re telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we’re telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!” (1 John 1:1-4

MSG) Friends, Jesus Christ is God with us! He is the Word of God who took on flesh and blood and made His dwelling place among us! He is the Word of Life who appeared right before our eyes. We saw it. We heard it. We touched it with our own two hands. Jesus Christ manifested in the flesh and raised from the dead in glory! This is the good news we continue to proclaim! This is the source of all joy in our lives! We have communion with the Father and with the Son through the Holy Spirit. Pray and thank God today that He has made His dwelling place with you.

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 13, 2023
Soaked in Holiness

Readings for today: [Exodus 29-32](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

As many of you who read this blog know, I've been reading through the Bible in a Year for about thirty years now. It's one of the very first spiritual disciplines I engaged in after becoming a Christian. However, one of the dangers I have to battle is routine. I become so familiar with the language and the words that I have a tendency to rush through the readings. One way I combat this is by reading the Bible in different versions. This year I've chosen to read it in a paraphrased version called The Message. Written by Eugene Peterson, it attempts to capture the meaning of the text by placing it in modern idiom. It is not a word for word translation and can't be treated as such but it does offer some interesting insights. Take today's reading for example. This is definitely a section where I would be tempted to gloss over what I'm reading because it feels so foreign to me. However, about halfway through chapter 29, Peterson uses this phrase that caught my attention - "soaked in holiness."

What an image! Aaron and his sons undergo this elaborate ritual that essentially involves soaking them in oil, blood, and water. They are washed and purified. Oil is poured onto their heads. Blood is thrown against their vestments. Sacrifices are made and burned. Blood poured over the altar. And the whole thing takes seven days at the end of which Aaron and his sons will be fit to serve as priests of God. The point of it all is to prepare Aaron and his sons to enter into the presence of the Most Holy God. The God whose presence sanctifies all He touches. It is God who will make the Tent of Meeting a holy place. It is God who will make the altar where the sacrifices are offered a holy vessel. It is God who will make Aaron and his sons holy and fit to serve. It is God who will make Israel holy as He moves among them and makes this journey with them.

Now fast forward several thousand years. As prophesied by the prophet Joel, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on those who believe in Jesus Christ. He has come to make His dwelling place inside us. And He makes holy all He touches...including you. Including me. We are not made holy by our own effort. Notice how little Aaron and his sons actually "do" in the story. The same is true for us. Jesus has accomplished all we need to become holy. He is the perfect sacrifice made on our behalf. He is the whole burnt offering which turns away God's righteous wrath and judgment. He purifies us with His blood. He atones for our sins by His death. And He exchanges His holiness for our unholiness. Not only that but He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts as a regenerative, sanctifying Presence so that, over time, we become who He created and called and redeemed us to be.

Friends, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are "soaked in His holiness." Let that truth sink into your bones today and, as you pray, thank the Holy Spirit for His work in your life and ask Him how you might open yourself up more and more to what He wants to do in and through you.

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 33-36

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 14, 2023
The Name of the Lord

Readings for today: [Exodus 33-36](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

The importance of these readings from the Book of Exodus cannot be overstated. God is renewing His commitment to Israel. Despite their sin and rebellious ways, God has determined to be their God. He has determined to do something miraculous in and through them that will stun the nations of the earth. He will drive out their enemies. He will secure for them a homeland. He will do for them what has not been done for any other people. They are His chosen ones.

The conversation between Moses and God which begins at the end of chapter 33 and finishes in chapter 34 is of particular importance. God begins chapter 33 by telling Moses He will not be going with them. His holiness would consume them along the way for the people are stiff-necked and stubborn in their sin. Instead, He will send an angel to accomplish the mission He's started. This isn't enough for Moses. Jump down to 33:12 and Moses again intercedes on behalf of the people. He asks God to remain faithful. To be present among them. To teach them His ways and show them the right paths to walk. God responds favorably to Moses' prayer. But then Moses gets even more bold. He asks to personally witness the glory of God. Perhaps he needs assurance from God? Perhaps he needs to be affirmed by God? The text doesn't tell us. But God indeed passes before Moses and in one of the most important passages in all of Scripture reveals His divine name...

"The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped." (Ex. 34:5-8)

From this point forward, whenever Israel is in trouble or has fallen into sin or is suffering or is being oppressed or find themselves in need, they call on the "name of the Lord" and are saved. They call on the "name of the Lord" knowing with full assurance that the Lord's name is mercy. Grace. Steadfast love. Faithfulness. They call on Him knowing He is slow to anger and keeps his steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love Him in return. They call on Him knowing He is just and will be no means give the guilty a pass. They call on Him trusting Him to be true to Himself. True to how He revealed Himself to Moses. True to what He has declared about Himself. Over and over again, we will see these verses referenced throughout the Old Testament. Every time the people of God call on the "name of the Lord," they are looking back to this particular meeting where God showed Himself to Moses.

Fast forward several centuries to the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is writing to the church in Rome. A church that is struggling. A church that is suffering. A church that is being persecuted. Torn apart by division from within over the Jew/Gentile question. In the midst of his letter to them, Paul writes these words, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." He's quoting from the Old Testament prophet Joel who himself is looking back to this encounter between God and Moses in the Exodus. The difference, of course, is Paul is referring to Jesus. "The radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..." according to Hebrews 1:3. In Jesus, we have seen God's glory in all its fullness! In Jesus, God has revealed Himself truly to be merciful and gracious and steadfast in love and faithfulness! In Jesus, God has promised to be with us even to the end of the age! Thanks be to God!

Readings for tomorrow: Exodus 37-40

[**Back to Table of Contents**](#)

February 15, 2023
Shekinah Glory

Readings for today: [Exodus 37-40](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

I will never forget when my first daughter was born. We named her Chloe Shekinah because she represented the glory of God for us. We had lost our first child. Caleb was only 22 weeks when he died and the delivery process was traumatic. He had massive and fatal birth defects which included a complete lack of lung development. He literally was unable to take a breath. Going through that experience as a young couple broke us. The grief was deep and profound. The fear and anxiety over whether we would ever be able to have children was real. When we got pregnant with Chloe, we had a couple scares where we thought we might miscarry. It was a hard pregnancy on my wife. She was in excruciating pain quite often. Throughout the process, we cried out to God. We cried out to God when we received Caleb's diagnosis. Cried out to God when Kristi's life was in danger from the pregnancy. Cried out to God when we held his broken body in our arms. Cried out to God when Kristi got pregnant again. Cried out to God in those moments where we thought we might lose Chloe. Cried out to God when Kristi was doubled over in pain. And we cried out to God on January 28, 1999 when our beautiful daughter entered the world. We praised Him for His faithfulness. For His goodness. For His grace to us. His presence with us in the delivery room was palpable. Almost like a cloud of glory had settled over us in that place. So we named our daughter "Shekinah" which literally refers to the glory cloud that filled the Tabernacle after it was built.

Imagine being Israel and seeing the cloud of glory descend. Imagine watching the cloud of glory fill the Holy of Holies where the ark of the covenant was placed. Imagine stepping out of your tent at night and seeing the cloud light up like a fire as God continually assures you of His abiding presence. Imagine watching the glory cloud life when it was time to continue the journey or stay put when it was time to rest. It must have felt so comforting. Listen again to how the Bible describes it...

"The Cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Glory of God filled The Dwelling. Moses couldn't enter the Tent of Meeting because the Cloud was upon it, and the Glory of God filled The Dwelling. Whenever the Cloud lifted from The Dwelling, the People of Israel set out on their travels, but if the Cloud did not lift, they wouldn't set out until it did lift. The Cloud of God was over The Dwelling during the day and the fire was in it at night, visible to all the Israelites in all their travels." (Exodus 40:34-38 MSG)

"Visible to all the Israelites in all their travels." I love that line. I love it because I know Jesus is with me in all my travels as well. Jesus is Emmanuel which literally means "God with us." He is the glory of God who comes to be with us. His Spirit is the glory of God who comes to dwell inside us. As a result, we are never alone. He leads and guides us just as He did ancient Israel. He guards and protects us just as He did His people. He comforts us in our struggles and strengthens us in our suffering and heals us from our hurts and gives us peace to calm our anxious hearts. This is who God has revealed Himself to be in Christ Jesus. Take some time to sit in the Presence of God today. Let your awareness of His nearness, His closeness bring you comfort and peace. Thank Him for always being with you. Ask Him to lead and guide you in all your travels today.

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 1-4

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 16, 2023
Reading Leviticus

Readings for today: [Leviticus 1-4](#) [\(audio reading\)](#) [\(Introduction to Leviticus - MSG\)](#)

Leviticus. The book where well-intentioned Bible reading plans go to die. The laws seem archaic at best. They deal with issues that seemingly have little relevance to 21st century postmodern Christians living in the wealthiest nation the world has ever seen. The cultural distance is extreme and difficult to overcome. The minutiae wears down even the most faithful reader. And yet, Leviticus is God's Word as much as the Gospels. The laws contained in this book are as divinely inspired as the "red sections" of the gospels. Reading them devotionally helps shape our hearts as much as the language of the Psalms. So how can we read in such a way that we profit from spending devotional time in this book?

Two keys principles...

First, keep in mind there are three different kinds of laws listed here. There are the ceremonial laws that govern worship. Sacrifices. Personal hygiene. Disease. Particularly focused on ritual purity, these laws were designed to create the conditions where holiness could flourish so the people could come before their God without fear. Second, there are the civil laws that govern the nation of Israel. Tithing. Inheritance. Sentencing guidelines. These laws were necessary to maintain order in society, create revenue for the national government, and promote social welfare. Third, there is the moral law govern behavior. Exemplified by the Ten Commandments, these laws were designed to teach us righteousness. Many of the laws governing violence, sexuality, lying, honoring parents, and how to observe the Sabbath were created to embed this moral law in the day to day and shape a covenantal understanding of life.

The second principle to remember is that Levitical law served three overarching purposes. First, as I just mentioned above, it was given to us by God to teach us righteousness. Righteousness is not a relative category. It is not something we create for ourselves. God sets a standard for righteousness that we, as His creation, are bound to follow. The Law is His standard. Second, the Law was given to restrain evil. Because we live in a society based on the principles of proportional justice, we fail to see how radical "an eye for an eye" truly was in ancient near east culture. Setting limits or restraints on vengeance was a massive leap forward for human society and while not necessarily unique to Israel, it did set them apart. The punishment must fit the crime and be serious enough to act as a deterrent to potential future crimes. Third, and most importantly, the Law was given to teach us our need for a Savior. We cannot keep the Law. We cannot achieve righteousness on our own. Our sinful nature rebels against God's commands and, if we're totally honest, we find ourselves violating them on a daily basis. The Law acts as a mirror of sorts to show us the true condition of our souls. Not to make us despair but to bring us to a point where we'll cry out to God! The Law ultimately humbles us. Brings us to our knees. Breaks our stubborn pride. It paves the way for Jesus.

As you read through Leviticus over the next several days, keep these things in mind lest you get lost the weeds of this important book. Put yourself in the place of an ancient Israelite living in abject poverty in a subsistence agrarian economy where the most important daily task is to secure enough food for you and your family. Imagine yourself living in a village with one to two hundred of your relatives. Raising kids together. Doing life together. Learning to survive together. Imagine going up to Jerusalem a few times a year to worship and the preparations you have to make for that particular journey. Then think about your own life. Do you live with the same intentionality? What would it look like if you did?

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 5-7

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 17, 2023
Restitution

Readings for today: [Leviticus 5-7](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

Why so many sacrifices? It's a great question to ask as we read through Leviticus and some of the other books of the Old Testament. Why so much blood? Why so many animals? What is the point of it all? The sacrificial system of ancient Israel was a massive operation. Fires were kept burning continually as priests performed their duties. Rivers of blood would have flowed from the mercy seat. The carcasses of the dead animals piling high as each family came forward to atone for their sin.

At the heart of this system is the need for restitution. Forgiveness is not free. It is not cheap. It is not easy. It is far more than feeling sorry. It is far more than feeling guilty for getting caught. Sin creates offense which must be addressed. Sin creates brokenness which must be made whole. Sin damages our relationship with God and therefore requires reparation. This is why God requires sacrifice because the price that must be paid in order to make things right with God is death. Death was the penalty for original sin - “on the day you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17) - and thankfully, in His mercy, God allowed His people to offer animals in their place.

“For the wages of sin is death...” The Apostle Paul clearly understood the seriousness of sin. He understood the righteous penalty God demands from those who rebel against His glory. Thankfully, the Apostle Paul also understood what God did to remove the penalty of sin in the sending of His only begotten Son to take our place. To die in our place. To become the “once for all” sacrifice that fulfilled the requirements of Levitical law. It’s why he goes on to say that though the wages of sin is death, “the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Why did Jesus have to die? He died as the perfect sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God who was slain before the foundations of the world. (Revelation 13:8) In so doing, Jesus offers Himself up as restitution for sin. To make right what went so wrong. To repair that which was broken. To restore that which had become marred and defaced. To redeem that which was lost. This, friends, is the heart of the gospel and what we read here in Leviticus foreshadows the cross. It is designed to point us forward to Good Friday where God Himself took on the sins of the world and paid the price so that we might receive forgiveness and grace.

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 8-10

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 18, 2023
Holy and Common

Readings for today: [Leviticus 8-10](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

“This is a fixed rule down through the generations. Distinguish between the holy and the common, between the ritually clean and unclean.” (Lev. 10:10)

Today’s reading challenges us. Two young men make a mistake as they go about their fairly new, priestly duties and die as a result. They offer “unauthorized” or “strange” or “profane” fire before the Lord and, as a result, fire breaks out from the Shekinah glory of God and consumes them. It’s a sobering reminder of what happens when the unholy comes into contact with the holy. Reminds me of the experiments we used to conduct in science class in middle and high school where certain elements would immediately burn when coming into contact with water. This is what I imagine happening as I read this passage. The two men come into God’s presence with fire that has not been consecrated and the reaction is deadly. Moses’ explanation says as much, “To the one who comes near me, I will show myself holy; before all the people I will show my glory.” (Lev. 10:3)

The holiness and glory of God is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it inspires awe and wonder. Reverence and fear. It brings us to our knees in humility. On the other hand, it puts us in danger for we are, by nature, unclean. We are, by nature, unholy. We are, by nature, impure. Entering into God’s presence requires a ritual of consecration so that we can stay safe and not be consumed. It requires great intentionality and attention to detail lest we pay the price for being careless or flippant about our worship. As many of the prophets will later say, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.” God is, by nature, pure. He is, by nature, clean. He is, by nature, holy and though we were originally made to stand without fear in His presence, our sin corrupts us and separates us thus our need for a Savior.

Thankfully, we no longer need to be afraid. God has done what we could not. He has sent His Son to be the pure and spotless sacrifice that makes us clean once and for all. On the cross, Jesus takes all our uncleanliness, all our impurities, all our unholiness on Himself and, in return, gives us His cleanliness, His purity, and His holiness. Now when we can approach God’s throne of grace with confidence. Now we can come into God’s presence without fear. Now we can bask in the glory of God for we have “put on” Christ and are “covered” by Him. Furthermore, we are made a holy priesthood called to intercede for the world just as Aaron and his sons did for the people of Israel. As we come to worship each and every week, may we fix our eyes on Christ and ask the Spirit to continue to do His sanctifying, purifying work in us!

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 20, 2023
Community Above Self

Readings for today: [Leviticus 11-14](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

God's stated goal for His people is for them to be holy as He is holy. "Make yourselves holy for I am holy. Don't make yourselves ritually unclean by any creature that crawls on the ground. I am God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Be holy because I am holy." (Leviticus 11:44-45 MSG) Yes, in Christ the ceremonial laws of Leviticus have been fulfilled. We no longer need to worry about clean and unclean animals. (See Peter's vision in Acts 10.) We no longer need to fear being made unclean by touching lepers or coming into contact with the dead. Through His shed blood, Christ has not only washed us clean (in the Levitical sense) but also sanctified us permanently! This is incredible to think about as we read about the rituals the Israelites had to perform.

It's so tempting to read the Bible through western eyes. We read these chapters and immediately our hearts go out to those individuals who are hurting like those who contract leprosy. Leprosy was considered a highly contagious disease in ancient Israel. One they took very seriously. Those with leprosy were removed from community. They were isolated. Quarantined. Often grouped together in colonies where they struggled to survive. They were not allowed to mix with healthy people. They were barred from corporate worship. The local priests - who also served as frontline healthcare workers in their communities - monitored their care closely with the goal of restoring them to fellowship as soon as possible. But most westerners reading these texts react to their pain on a visceral level. We can't get our heads around why they would be cast out of their homes and separated from their families. We fundamentally believe such measures are unjust and unrighteous. But there is another angle here as well. Reading these chapters through Middle Eastern eyes brings us to a much different conclusion. While we acknowledge the pain and suffering of the individual, we also acknowledge the need to protect the community. When an individual becomes "unclean" by contracting a disease, they are often isolated in order to stop the spread. The same might be true in cases of habitual or addictive sin as well. For example, a Christian recovering from alcohol addiction would need to isolate themselves from situations where temptation might rise that would cause them to drink. Practically speaking, these chapters from Leviticus show us what it means to put the needs of others before our own. To put the needs of the wider community above our own. To sacrifice for the greater good of those around us.

As an aside, it's fascinating to read these passages in the wake of a global pandemic. These are good words to prayerfully consider as we reflect on our experiences over the past few years. How do we balance the needs of the most vulnerable and less vulnerable in our community? How does the needs of others factor into our decision-making? When is the right time to put the good of the community above our own? When have we gone too far? These are very complex questions and there are no easy answers. Global pandemics impact every sector of society and the public health issues are multivalent. One response here has unintended consequences over there. We need to be praying for our leaders to seek God's wisdom for the good of our communities and the welfare of our cities.

Holiness, for the Israelites, was a way of life. It impacted their diet, their homes, childbirth, the way they treated disease, and their interactions with others. Why did they follow these laws? What motivated them to break dishes when something unclean fell into them? Or make the sacrifice to remain outside the camp for long periods of time? They fundamentally believed holiness led to human flourishing. They believed God's ways were better than their ways and would result in greater blessing. Do we believe the same? Do we believe the way of Jesus is better than our way? Do we believe the life

Jesus offers us is truly abundant? Do we believe following His commands will lead to blessing? This is the challenge set before us by Old Testament books like Leviticus.

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 15-18

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 21, 2023
Sexual Ethics

Readings for today: Levitcus 15-18 (audio reading)

One of the hallmarks of the Judeo-Christian faith is its sexual ethic. From the opening pages of Genesis, God makes clear His design for sexuality. It is to be enjoyed within the boundaries of covenant marriage between one man and one woman. The physical act of sex is one sign among many of the “oneness” God created us to reflect as His image-bearers. Though it is often claimed otherwise, Jesus Christ affirms God’s design in Matthew 19:4-6 as does the Apostle Paul throughout his letters. This ethic is consistently portrayed throughout Scripture as the norm. The pattern. The paradigm for godly human relationships. Are there examples where God’s design is not followed? Absolutely. Polygamy, adultery, incest, rape, etc. all make their appearance in the Scriptures, many them being committed by God’s people. However, at no time does God affirm them as acceptable alternatives to His design.

The sexual drive of human beings is a powerful force. Almost impossible to resist. God knows this because He created it in the first place. Corrupted by the Fall, it leads to all kinds of self-destructive behaviors. Just look at the Canaanites as an example. Their culture was rife with sexual immorality. The fertility rites of their religion were essentially largescale sexual orgies in which the priests and priestesses had sex with multiple men and women. They also might re-enact Baal’s copulation with cows or offer their children as sacrifices. They communed with the dead by having sex with their closest living relative. All this in an effort to ensure the harvest for the coming year. Archaeological evidence suggests most Canaanites lived in fear of their priests. Marriages and families were torn apart and the unwanted children of these annual unions were often slaughtered on altars to Baal or Dagon. Sexually transmitted disease was likely epidemic; rape was perhaps as common as it is in the worst of today’s war-ravaged nations. It is against this horrific backdrop that God issues the laws concerning sexual behavior in Leviticus 18.

Sadly, humanity refuses to listen. Sexual restraint is considered antiquated at best, bigoted at worst. Even the suggestion that sexuality be reserved for covenant marriage between a man and a woman is considered hate speech in some circles. Human beings desire sexual freedom above everything else but what have we gained? Shattered relationships. Rampant sexual abuse. A rise in sexually transmitted disease. Thousands of unwanted pregnancies. Does any of this give us pause? Cause us to stop and reflect that maybe our way is not the best way? No. Instead, we seek ways to make sex “safer.” We ignore the emotional toll it takes in a person’s life. We kill our babies in the name of “choice” because we don’t want to face the very real consequences of our actions. Far from making progress, we have simply reverted to type. We are no different, and certainly no better, than the ancient Canaanites!

There is only one way to experience true sexual freedom and that is to live within the restraints God has set up. They are for our good. For our protection. They are designed to help us flourish as human beings and experience the depths of intimacy. There is nothing like giving one’s whole self - body, mind, and soul - to a member of the opposite sex within the sacred covenant of marriage. It is designed to be a reflection of the unity God desires to have with His people. Some will argue this isn’t fair because not everyone can get married. Not everyone experiences heterosexual desire. Not everyone is able to find their soulmate. I understand and I grieve. It is a tender subject for me personally as I walk alongside those I love. Our world is truly broken. Our sexual desires are disordered, misdirected, and all jumbled up. All of us look forward to the Day when God makes all things new and sets all things right. On that Day, marriage will cease to exist according to Jesus because we will enjoy perfect

intimacy with Him and with one another. No one will be left out. But until that Day comes, we must submit our sexuality to God. We must embrace God's design. Sexual faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman or sexual faithfulness in celibacy as a single person.

I know that last statement sounds scary and again, unfair. It feels like God is robbing many of us of something very special. Unrequited sexual desire can lead to a sense of existential loneliness which is painful and all to real to so many in our world today. Depression, despair, and suicide haunt our loved ones who are struggling. This is where we must cling to the sufficiency of Christ. He is more than enough to meet all of our needs. He is faithful to comfort us in the midst of our grief. He gives us the strength to follow His commands. He recognizes we will suffer in this life and He promises He will make it up to us in the world to come. Furthermore, Christ does not leave us alone or adrift. He gives us the gift of His church. A family. A community of believers to fill the empty void in our hearts. Now I get the church is all kinds of messed up. The sexual abuse propagated by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike is terrifying and traumatic. But that's not every church. In fact, it's not even most churches. Most churches are like families where people from all walks of life can connect and find community.

Friends, if you are struggling to submit your sexuality - in whatever form - to Jesus, I want you to know you are not alone. I am here for you. Our church family - PEPC - is here for you. If you live out of state or out of the country, look for a local church who will come alongside you in the journey and a local pastor who will pray with and for you.

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 19-22

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 22, 2023
A Life of Blessing

Readings for today: [Leviticus 19-22](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

Here's a potential new thought for you...a holy life equals a blessed life. Following God's way leads to the flourishing of human life. The deepest intimacy in human relationships. The redemptive lift of all human society. For far too long, holiness has been perceived as a net negative. We tend to look at God's laws as restrictive, confining, even limiting. They cut against the grain of our natural desires so we tend to reject them.

But what kind of life have we created for ourselves? What kind of life have we gained by indulging our desires? What kind of life have we found by going our own way? Not a great life. Not on balance. Humanity's inhumanity is on display every single hour of every single day. Despite the fact that there is plenty of food to go around, millions are starving. Despite the fact that we have the ability to deliver clean water to every person on the planet, millions go without access. Despite all our medical advances and technology, millions go without access to basic healthcare. Despite our aversion to suffering and death, millions suffer violence and abuse every single day. If we focus our attention closer to home, things don't look much better. Our selfishness tears apart relationships. Our greed widens the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots." Our laziness makes hard work seem like a necessary evil. Our lack of resiliency makes us vulnerable to anxiety, despair, self-harm, and suicide. It's tragic and heartbreakingly on so many levels.

Friends, God's ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He knows exactly what we need to grow and flourish and thrive. The rules He sets out are for our good. Yes, some of those rules change over time because our Heavenly Father knows our needs change over time. What human beings needed in the ancient near east or in 1st century Greco-Roman culture is different to some extent than what we may need in 21st century America. For example, the civil laws governing ancient Israel no longer apply in our context nor do the ceremonial laws governing ancient Israelite worship and purity. At the same time, some of the rules God lays out are eternal. Moral laws restricting violence, deceit, stealing, and sexual immorality appear throughout the Scriptures, are affirmed by Jesus and His apostles, and therefore remain in force in our day as well.

Do you want to live a life of blessing? Listen to what the Lord says, "Set yourselves apart for a holy life. Live a holy life, because I am God, your God. Do what I tell you; live the way I tell you. I am the God who makes you holy." (Leviticus 20:7-8 MSG) Holiness equals blessing. Holiness leads to human flourishing. Holiness is what sets us apart as followers of Christ and makes us His light in this dark world.

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 23-25

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 23, 2023
Holy and Healthy Rhythms

Readings for today: [Leviticus 23-25](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

We had some neighbors over for dinner a few years back. A young couple with two young children. We had a delightful time getting to know them. We laughed. We shared. We ate good food. Our kids played well together. But in the course of our conversation they let us know they had NEVER been over to another person's house for dinner. Crazy, right? So we started asking them about their lives. The husband travelled almost 300 days a year for work. The wife woke up early every morning to take her daughter to softball training. Dropped her son off at before care at his school. Went back to get her daughter to take her to school. Went to her job. Had her parents pick up both kids after school. Dropped by her parent's house to get the kids on her way home from work around 6 pm. Took them to their softball and baseball practices respectively. Tried to grab a quick bite to eat and some quick snatches of conversation along the way with her kids. Finally got home around 9 pm every night. This was their life in some form seven days a week. 52 weeks a year. Occasionally, they would get a vacation here and there but always in and around their kids' sports schedules. It was brutal. Unsurprisingly, they didn't make it. They got divorced about a year later.

Sadly, this is normal life for a lot of people. They work hard. They play hard. They drive their kids hard. They barely get enough sleep. Barely get enough to eat. Barely get enough time together. Their relationships fracture. Their friendships are non-existent. They suffer from anxiety and depression. But rather than slow down. Rather than pump the brakes on life. They medicate. They act out sexually. They crash and burn. It's heartbreaking.

Contrast this way of life with God's ways in Leviticus 23. Sabbath. One day out of every seven where we refrain from work. One day out of every seven where we slow down. Focus on worship. Focus on each other. Focus on the relationships that are most important. Passover. An annual celebration intentionally focused on the salvation of God. Firstfruits. An annual celebration intentionally focused on God's abundant provision. Weeks. An annual celebration of God's revelation of Himself to His people through His Word. Trumpets. Another celebration of God's provision at harvest time. Day of Atonement. One day set aside each year for national and individual confession and repentance of sin. Booths. An annual celebration designed to remind God's people of their utter dependence on God as they wandered in the wilderness. Taken together, these weekly and annual feasts serve to slow God's people down. They act as spiritual speed bumps in life. They remind us life is more than what we produce. Life is more than what we achieve. Life does not depend on us and our strength and our willpower. Life is God's. He gives. He takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Friends, we must face reality. The American way of life is killing us. Literally. It is bad for our mental, physical, and emotional health. We were not built for the pace we're trying to keep. We were not designed for the race we're trying to run. We were not created for the life we're trying to live. We were made for a different world. A different life. An eternal existence. Something so deep and meaningful and purposeful, the garlands of this world come off withered by comparison. In the face of all God has planned for us, the trophies of this world lose their shine. As the old hymn says so well, "the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

Readings for tomorrow: Leviticus 26-27, Numbers 1-2

[**Back to Table of Contents**](#)

February 24, 2023
The Beauty of God's Law

Readings for today: [Leviticus 26-27, Numbers 1-2](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

Wow. You've just finished Leviticus! Well done! Your reward? You now get to read Numbers! ;-) In all seriousness, this is one of the harder stretches of the Bible for sure. But if we persevere, we reap the rewards of our reading. Take our passage for today which describes the purpose of the Law.

Theologically speaking, God's law serves three distinct purposes. The first is to act like a mirror. It mirrors the perfect righteousness of God as well as our imperfect unrighteousness and reveals our desperate need for Christ. Second, the law restrains evil. While the law itself cannot change human hearts, it can protect the vulnerable from oppression. The righteous from the unjust. The third purpose of the law is to train us on how to live for God's glory alone. To show us what it means to bring Him honor in all we say and do. As we finish Leviticus today, we see all three of these "purposes" on display.

In verses 1-13, God lays out the blessings of obedience. "If you live by my decrees and obediently keep my commandments, I will send the rains in their seasons, the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit...I'll make the country a place of peace—you'll be able to go to sleep at night without fear; I'll get rid of the wild beasts; I'll eliminate war. You'll chase out your enemies and defeat them...I'll give you my full attention: I'll make sure you prosper, make sure you grow in numbers, and keep my covenant with you in good working order...I'll set up my residence in your neighborhood; I won't avoid or shun you; I'll stroll through your streets. I'll be your God; you'll be my people." (Leviticus 26:3-13 MSG) It's a beautiful picture of what happens when we commit our way to God and something Jesus Himself reinforces when He commands His disciples to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the rest will be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

The script flips in verses 14-39 where God invokes the second purpose of the law. "But if you refuse to obey me and won't observe my commandments, despising my decrees and holding my laws in contempt by your disobedience, making a shambles of my covenant, I'll step in and pour on the trouble: debilitating disease, high fevers, blindness, your life leaking out bit by bit...I'll discipline you seven times over for your sins. I'll break your strong pride: I'll make the skies above you like a sheet of tin and the ground under you like cast iron. No matter how hard you work, nothing will come of it...If you defy me and refuse to listen, your punishment will be seven times more than your sins...And if even this doesn't work and you refuse my discipline and continue your defiance, then it will be my turn to defy you. I, yes I, will punish you for your sins seven times over: I'll let war loose on you, avenging your breaking of the covenant; when you huddle in your cities for protection, I'll send a deadly epidemic on you and you'll be helpless before your enemies...And if this—even this!—doesn't work and you still won't listen, still defy me, I'll have had enough and in hot anger will defy you, punishing you for your sins seven times over...I'll abhor you; I'll turn your cities into rubble; I'll clean out your sanctuaries; I'll hold my nose at the "pleasing aroma" of your sacrifices. I'll turn your land into a lifeless moonscape...I'll scatter you all over the world and keep after you with the point of my sword in your backs...You'll perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will eat you up. Any who are left will slowly rot away in the enemy lands. Rot. And all because of their sins, their sins compounded by their ancestors' sins." (Leviticus 26:14-39 MSG) If we reject God's law, He becomes our adversary. He disciplines. He punishes. He gives us over the consequences of our sin and removes His protective hand.

Finally, as chapter 26 comes to a close, we see the first purpose of the law on full display. “On the other hand, if they confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors, their treacherous betrayal, the defiance that set off my defiance that sent them off into enemy lands; if by some chance they soften their hard hearts and make amends for their sin, I’ll remember my covenant with Jacob, I’ll remember my covenant with Isaac, and, yes, I’ll remember my covenant with Abraham. And I’ll remember the land... in spite of their behavior, while they are among their enemies I won’t reject or abhor or destroy them completely. I won’t break my covenant with them: I am God, their God. For their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I, with all the nations watching, brought out of Egypt in order to be their God. I am God.” (Leviticus 26:40-45 MSG) The reality is God’s people will not be able to fulfill God’s law and this is by design. God is teaching us that righteousness and holiness are beyond us. He brings us to our knees in what I call “holy despair.” He drives us to the end of ourselves. The end of our strength. The end of our ability. The end of our self-sufficiency. All so we get to a point where we cry out to Him for mercy and grace and turn to Christ. This is the beauty of the law.

So here’s the most important question as you finish Leviticus...do you find yourself resenting the Law of God? Dismissing the Law of God? Or do you find yourself overwhelmed by a deep sense of inadequacy before the Lord? If it’s the former, I would encourage you to go to prayer and ask God to soften your heart towards Him. If it’s the latter, be encouraged that you are drawing ever closer to Christ and He stands ready to take your place!

Readings for tomorrow: Numbers 3-5

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 25, 2023
Strange Rituals

Readings for today: [Numbers 3-5](#) [\(audio reading\)](#) [\(introduction to Numbers\)](#)

The Bible is full of rituals that seem strange to us. This is part of the cultural distance we must keep in mind as we read. What may have been normative for an ancient near east Israelite is certainly not normative for a 21st century American and vice versa. Of all the strange rituals recorded in the Bible, the one detailed in Numbers 5 has to be among the strangest. A woman suspected of adultery is put to a test whereby she has to drink bitter water to determine if she is guilty of committing adultery.

First and foremost, we need to remember the context. Women and men were not considered equals in the ancient near east. In fact, women were more property than they were people so we shouldn't be surprised at the patriarchal tone of the text. It doesn't make it right. It doesn't mean God is in favor of patriarchy. It simply means God is speaking to His people through the cultural norms of the day and revealing His sovereign will just as He does to this day.

Second, we need to remember the seriousness of adultery. Adultery was one of the "big three" crimes in ancient Israel. It was punishable by death along with idolatry and murder. The reason God lays out such harsh penalties is to protect the family. The family unit is the fundamental building block for God's chosen people. It is through the family unit that faith is passed from one generation to the next and the story of God's history with His people kept alive. God wants to protect the family at all costs and adultery puts the family at significant risk.

Third, God is a God of justice. Unlike the pagan cultures that surrounded Israel, God wanted to make sure that women were not cast aside on the jealous whims of their husbands. He wanted to protect women by providing a way for them to prove their innocence. He uses the cultic practices of the ancient world to place a hedge of protection around women to prevent them from being slanderously accused.

Finally, God is a God of honor. The honor of the wife and the honor of the husband and the honor of the family are of paramount importance to Him. Jealousy threatens the honor of the family as does suspicion, gossip, and whisper campaigns that human beings seem to take so much delight in. By subjecting the woman to a public sacred ritual, all potential dishonor is put to rest. Furthermore, the public nature of the ritual would also act as a deterrent to husbands who might be tempted to bring frivolous charges against their wives.

So what do we take away from our reading today? Well, it's worth pondering our own attitudes towards sexual fidelity in marriage. Do we guard our hearts and take adultery as seriously as God? Second, how can we protect the honor of our families in the way we think, speak, or act? How can we protect those we love from frivolous and slanderous accusations? Finally, we look to Christ who drank the bitter cup and took on the curse for us and we give thanks for His willingness to take our place.

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 27, 2023
Waiting on God

Readings for today: Numbers 6-9 (audio reading)

One of the hardest things to learn as a follower of Christ is how to wait. We are always in such a hurry. We rush around in the morning to get off to work and school. We rush around all day trying to get things done. We rush around in the evenings to different activities and events. Then we wake up the next day to do it all over again. Furthermore, we live in a world of instant gratification. We get what we want when we want it and woe to anyone who cannot deliver on our timeline! Patience is no longer a virtue in our world. Waiting is considered a waste of time.

The Bible is clear that “waiting” is a key skill for any disciple. Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives. Long-suffering is something God’s people know intimately. Consider what we read from Numbers today. “The day The Dwelling was set up, the Cloud covered The Dwelling of the Tent of Testimony. From sunset until daybreak it was over The Dwelling. It looked like fire. It was like that all the time, the Cloud over The Dwelling and at night looking like fire. When the Cloud lifted above the Tent, the People of Israel marched out; and when the Cloud descended the people camped. The People of Israel marched at God’s command and they camped at his command. As long as the Cloud was over The Dwelling, they camped. Even when the Cloud hovered over The Dwelling for many days, they honored God’s command and wouldn’t march. They stayed in camp, obedient to God’s command, as long as the Cloud was over The Dwelling, but the moment God issued orders they marched. If the Cloud stayed only from sunset to daybreak and then lifted at daybreak, they marched. Night or day, it made no difference—when the Cloud lifted, they marched. It made no difference whether the Cloud hovered over The Dwelling for two days or a month or a year, as long as the Cloud was there, they were there. And when the Cloud went up, they got up and marched.” (Numbers 9:15-22 MSG) The passage tells us that sometimes they camped for days in one location. Sometimes for hours. The point is Israel didn’t move until God moved. Israel didn’t break camp until God broke camp. Israel was learning how to wait on God.

I’ve been in ministry now for over twenty years. In that time, I’ve spent hundreds, if not thousands, of hours in my office counseling people through all sorts of different seasons in their lives. One of the most common issues I have to address is impatience. It makes total sense. People in crisis want out of crisis as soon as possible so I get it. However, in their rush to get out of crisis they often jump from the frying pan into the fire. Refusing to wait on God, they prematurely end their marriage. Prematurely cut off a relationship. Prematurely make a professional decision. Prematurely rush into what they think is a solution only to find their supposed “cure” worse than their disease.

God wants us to wait on Him. His time is not our time. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. So often when we wait on God, we don’t understand. I am sure there were moments when Israel looked around and said, “Really God? This is where you want us to camp? This is where you want us to settle down for a few days?” I’m sure there were other times when they found wonderful pasture and plentiful water only to have the pillar of cloud rise the next morning, taking them onward. They had never seen the Promised Land. They had no idea where they were headed or what it would look like when they got there. They simply had to wait on God.

Where is God calling you to trust Him in your life today? Is it with a professional decision? Is it with your children’s future? Your marriage? Is it with your finances? Perhaps your aging parent’s health?

Maybe it's your college choice? A career decision after you graduate? What does it look like for you and how are you learning to wait on God to reveal His will?

Readings for tomorrow: Numbers 10-13, Psalm 90

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

February 28, 2023
Seeing God

Readings for today: [Numbers 10-13, Psalm 90](#) [\(audio reading\)](#)

Jesus once said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” He might have been talking about Moses. Moses was a humble man. In fact, he was more humble than anyone living on earth at the time. His humility was demonstrated over and over again throughout the course of his life. His leadership was a model of humility as he collaborated with others. One never gets the sense that Moses had any ambitions of his own. He simply lived to serve God and His people.

In our reading today, Moses’ humility is put to the test by his own family. Those closest to him. Those he loved and trusted the most. They had become bitter and resentful towards Moses. They aspired to the same position and authority as Moses among the people. More than anything, they were jealous of the unique relationship Moses had with God. “Is it only through Moses that God speaks? Doesn’t He also speak through us?” The obvious answer is “no.” God clearly wasn’t speaking through Aaron and Miriam like He was through Moses and He even goes on to tell us why. Moses is no ordinary prophet. He is God’s special servant with whom God speaks face to face.

If we’re honest, this grates a bit. We probably sympathize more with Aaron and Miriam. Believing rightly that all are equal in the eyes of God, we often make the false assumption that all are called to the same roles in God’s Kingdom. I see and hear it all the time. Men and women who look to those in authority above them in an organization and believe they can do as good a job or better. Those who are just getting started in their professional careers who believe they can do just as good a job as those who have years of experience. Even among pastors this dynamic often comes into play as assistant or associate pastors become jealous of the influence or the position or the authority of a senior pastor. In fact, this is so common most churches have special rules in place to make it harder for associate and/or assistant pastors to ascend to the senior pastor role! So we are all more like Aaron and Miriam than we want to admit and this is a major reason why we don’t see God.

To see God, we must be pure in heart. We must have the purest of intentions. We cannot allow selfish ambition or vain conceit to get in the way. We cannot let our aspirations or dreams become more important than God’s dream for our lives. We must learn to humbly accept the role God has called us to play in His Kingdom. We should not look to others and play the comparison game. We should not allow envy or jealousy to get in the way. We should fix our eyes on Jesus who humbled Himself and became our servant. We should follow the example of Moses who humbled himself and became a servant. After all, the greatest in the Kingdom are the servants which is why they shall see God.

Readings for tomorrow: Numbers 14-16, Psalm 95

[Back to Table of Contents](#)