

WEEK OF SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 3, 2017

Exodus

A summer discussion series of Lee Memorial United Methodist Church.

read

Exodus 33:12-23, 34:5-8
Common English Bible

¹² Moses said to the LORD, “Look, you’ve been telling me, ‘Lead these people forward.’ But you haven’t told me whom you will send with me. Yet you’ve assured me, ‘I know you by name and think highly of you.’” ¹³ Now if you do think highly of me, show me your ways so that I may know you and so that you may really approve of me. Remember too that this nation is your people.”

¹⁴ The LORD replied, “I’ll go myself, and I’ll help you.”

¹⁵ Moses replied, “If you won’t go yourself, don’t make us leave here.” ¹⁶ Because how will anyone know that we have your special approval, both I and your people, unless you go with us? Only that distinguishes us, me and your people, from every other people on the earth.”

¹⁷ The LORD said to Moses, “I’ll do exactly what you’ve asked because you have my special approval, and I know you by name.”

¹⁸ Moses said, “Please show me your glorious presence.”

¹⁹ The LORD said, “I’ll make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I’ll proclaim before you the name, ‘The LORD.’ I will be kind to whomever I wish to be kind, and I will have compassion to whomever I wish to be compassionate.” ²⁰ But,” the LORD said, “you can’t see my face because no one can see me and live.” ²¹ The LORD said, “Here is a place near me where you will stand beside the rock. ²² As my glorious presence passes by, I’ll set you in a gap in the rock, and I’ll cover you with my hand until I’ve passed by. ²³ Then I’ll take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face won’t be visible.”

^{34:5} The LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him, and proclaimed the name, “The LORD.” ⁶ The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed:

“The LORD! The LORD!

a God who is compassionate and merciful,

very patient,
full of great loyalty and faithfulness,
⁷ showing great loyalty to a thousand generations,
forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion, yet by no means clearing the guilty, punishing for their parents’ sins their children and their grandchildren, as well as the third and the fourth generation.”

⁸ At once Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped.

consider

“Commentary on Exodus 33:12-23” by Karla Suomala at *WorkingPreacher.org*
< https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=169 >
Accessed August 27, 2017.

Hasn't Moses gone far enough, overstepping the boundaries between humankind and God? So far in his conversations with God, Moses has persuaded God to change God's mind about total destruction of the Israelites, insisted on forgiveness for them, secured God's presence with them in their travels, and even been assured of greater knowledge of God along with a clear sign of God's favor.

In Exodus 33:18, however, Moses goes for broke: "Show me your glory, I pray." Commentators since ancient times have puzzled over what exactly is signified by "glory" in this plea. They generally agree, though, that it points to a need on the part of Moses for greater intimacy in his relationship with God. Basically, Moses tells God, "I need more than a business relationship with you. You know me, by face, by name, in every possible way, but I don't know you and I can't see you. I want reciprocity."

So, what more could Moses want? He wants a deep, personal, intimate connection to God. What is remarkable here is Moses' desire to know more of God, and his doggedness in realizing this goal. Taking care of the business of leading the Israelites isn't enough for Moses --he wants relationship and connection with God, along with knowledge and experience of the Divine.

discuss

How do we move from knowledge and experience of God to a relationship with God? Is there a difference between knowing and relating?

next week

“Praying Together: The Lord’s Prayer”