

Evening Service

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to the chapter that we read, the book of Exodus, and chapter 33. We can read again at verse 17.

And the Lord said to Moses, this very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.

Moses said, please show me your glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord.

And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

But you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.

And particularly the words that we find Moses saying in verse 18, please show me your glory. Or as it is in the King James Version, I beseech you, show me, I beg of you, show me your glory.

[1 : 12] And before we come to perhaps consider these words, we need to put the passage in context as to what is actually happening here and what has happened.

As we saw from the end of chapter 32, this is immediately after the episode with the golden calf.

And you will remember that Moses has been 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai, where God has given him not only the tablets, the tables of stone with the law, but also has given him specific instructions about the construction and the order and the worship of the tabernacle.

Now, sometimes it's quite confusing because we find the word tabernacle sometimes used. This particular translation here is a little bit clearer on that.

If you see in verse 7, the passage is called the tent of meeting. And again, if you're using an older version, it refers to it as the tabernacle.

[2 : 27] But that is not the tabernacle of worship that was still to be constructed. And when Moses and Joshua come down from the mountain, they find then the whole sequence of events that take place in chapter 32.

And that is the worship of the golden calf. And you remember, of course, that that worship was a worship that basically was idolatry.

And it's a very interesting question, isn't it? Why was it that after everything that God had done in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, and bear in mind that they had been camped at Mount Sinai now for quite some time, probably up to a year, that they suddenly descend into idolatry?

The reasons that are usually given for that is probably because they had been used in Egypt to seeing visual symbols of worship.

That is, the statues. We're all, I'm assuming we're all, even the very youngest, familiar with many of the statues and the pyramids and all the various other things that archaeologists have discovered in Egypt over the last centuries.

[3 : 59] And therefore, when the children of Israel were in Egypt, they would have been used to seeing a visual form of worship, an actual representation of the gods.

And with Moses being gone up on the mountain for 40 days, it would seem that this became a sort of pressing necessity.

But unfortunately, it wasn't only the golden calf, but what happened afterwards as well. We see that various feasts of debauchery took place almost immediately afterwards, for the people were naked and so on.

And God's punishment then is ruled out on these people. You see in chapter 32 and verse 25, when Moses saw that the people had broken loose, i.e. that they had broken the rules of decency, etc.

For Aaron had let them break loose to the derision of their enemies. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered round him.

[5 : 16] And he said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put your sword on your side, etc. And each of you kill his brother and companion and his neighbor. And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses.

And that day about 3,000 men of the people fell. Now, we're not given any indication as to how the selection of who was to be killed was actually made.

There's lots of speculation about that, but it doesn't really matter. We really don't know. But it seems that somehow the priestly tribe, the tribe of Levi, were able to identify, if you like to think of it this way, the ringleaders among those who had led the worship of the golden calf.

But that wasn't the only punishment that was to come because of that. And we see at the end of the chapter, chapter 32, that the Lord sent a plague on the people because they had made the calf the one that Aaron made.

We don't know what the plague was. But it would seem to suggest, again, that many died from the plague. But there are some commentators who think that it was a different kind of plague.

[6 : 40] It was a plague of suffering, similar to the boils that had happened to the Egyptians, etc. Again, we are speculating. We don't know. Scripture doesn't tell us.

But then we come into chapter 23, and we come to the consequences of that idol worship. And the consequences, firstly, they are to depart from here.

And then as we see in verse 2, sorry, verse 3, they are told to go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you.

That's a devastating sentence. I will not. God himself, Jehovah, will not go up with the people.

Why? Lest I consume you on the way, for you are a rebellious, a stiff-necked people. And therefore, God is laying clear to them that the propensity to sin, to fall into the temptation of idol worship again and again, is something that will continue to happen all the way to the promised land.

[8 : 02] And indeed, we see that. We see rebellious acts taking place several times throughout the journey. And Moses then takes on the role that he has been given from God of mediator between himself and God for the people.

Now, this meditorial role is extremely important. And we see that Moses takes this little tent of meeting and he pitches it outside the camp.

And you notice that it's outside the camp. It's not inside. Later on, when the tabernacle is erected, it's in the center of the camp and the tribes are divided in various rows in order round about it.

But here, this is outside the camp. And we see that Moses goes in to speak to the Lord. And in verse 9, it tells us, when Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance to the tent.

And the Lord, Jehovah, would speak with Moses. Now, this is the Shekinah pillar of cloud.

[9 : 24] That's what it's referred to, the name that it's given. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. And you remember that that had accompanied them all the way since they had left Egypt.

And it was the visual sign of the Lord's presence. It's interesting, isn't it, when you compare backwards, when they wanted the golden calf as a visual symbol, that they seemed to have forgotten the Shekinah cloud of glory, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that was always there before them. But then we see this fascinating sentence in verse 11.

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And you're left wondering, well, how can that be?

Of course, again, it's metaphorical. God is a spirit. God doesn't have a face. God doesn't have a face. God doesn't have a face. But so often the actions of God and the presence of God has to be put into terminology that you and I can relate to.

[10 : 47] We see very clearly that God is a spirit when we come to the vision of John in Revelation 5, when he sees the throne room open. And you remember that what John sees is the 24 elders seated round the throne.

Not in front of the throne, but round the throne. And because they are seated round the throne, whoever is seated on the throne, therefore you would think would have his back to some of them. But that's not the case because God is a spirit. And his presence, he never turns his back on anyone in that sense.

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And we see that Joshua, who accompanies him, stays near the tent or in the tent.

It's not quite clear. Would not depart from the tent. Whether it was outside or whether he was actually in the tent is not made clear. And then Moses intercedes for the people.

[11:59] You say to me, he says, from verse 12 onwards, bring up this people. But you haven't told me who's going to go with us on the way. Yet you've said, I know you by name and you've found favor in my sight.

And if I've found favor, please show me now your ways that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. And you notice that Moses then begins to plead not for himself.

Consider too that this nation is your people. His intercession is on behalf of the people of God.

And God says to him, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest. And Moses said, if your presence does not go with me, don't bring us up from here.

That in itself is a wonderful request. If God's presence is not with us, then don't bring us up from here.

[13:10] How does one understand that? Well, for the Lord's people, God's presence is with you at all times. If you are a believer this evening on the Lord Jesus Christ, the presence of God is with you at all times, day and night.

You probably are not aware of it most of the time. But nevertheless, that is the case. Or there are times when you are aware of it.

Perhaps in your private prayers, perhaps in your worship, perhaps during a sermon, perhaps at some point during the day or something. Maybe when you're speaking to other people, you suddenly become aware of the Lord's presence.

And it happens very often. at special seasons of fellowship, perhaps at communion times, et cetera, and so on. But it happens most often when you are alone with God, like Moses in the tent of meeting.

And if you do not spend time alone with God, then it is very probable that this presence is not as manifest in your life as you would want.

[14:37] But it's a wonderful request. If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us. And notice how it switches from me to us.

If your presence does not go with me, do not bring us up from here. You have put me in charge as the leader, as the mediator, as the one who speaks to you face to face.

But nevertheless, your presence is required not just by me, but by all of your people. Why?

And he explains in verse 16, how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us so that we are distinct?

And there's a call there to you and I as well as believers. Are we distinct? Do people who see us, who walk with us, who talk with us, know that we are distinct, that we are different, that we are the Lord's people, that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?

[15:53] Now Moses is simply referring, of course, to the children of Israel who are here. But if you take it in its wider context, it refers to all the Lord's people now.

What is it that makes us distinct? Well, we'll come on to that in a moment or two. And what makes us really distinct is what Moses then requests.

Jesus, please show me your glory. God has said, this very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight and I know you by name.

And the Lord knows every one of his people by name. He knows you and I by name. Has done since before the foundation of the world. Long before you ever existed, he knew you.

you were graven on the palms of his hand. That's amazing when you think about it. We don't often spend time thinking about that.

[17:01] That you have been chosen from all eternity before the creation of anything. that the Lord would know you by name.

And not only know you by name, but that his presence will go with you and he will give you rest.

And you would have thought, would you not, that for Moses that would have been enough.

Please show me your glory. I beseech you, show me your glory. This is the man who had seen the burning bush.

From whom God had spoken in the desert when he was there by himself, out of the burning bush. This is the man whom God had sent to liberate or to bring the message of liberation to the children of Israel.

This is the man who had done the signs and miracles in front of Pharaoh, himself and Aaron. The man whose rod had been thrown down becoming a serpent and devouring all the serpents of the astrologers in Egypt.

[18 : 21] This is the man that had told Pharaoh of the ten plagues that were to come. This is the man who had witnessed all these plagues.

This is the man who had initiated through God's instructions the first Passover. This is the man who had been instructed that the blood of the lamb had to be sprinkled on the doorposts and on the lintels of each house.

And you remember of course the symbolism of all that of how that Passover is pointing forward to the last supper in the upper room and everything that would take place in Calvary.

But remember that the blood in the basin is not sufficient. It needs to be applied. It has to be applied to the doorposts and the lintel before the destroying angel passes over.

That's why it's called the Passover. what else did he see? As they led the people out of Egypt after the death of the firstborn and that has its own symbolism as well.

[19 : 42] You remember of course the coming to the Red Sea and how God parted the waters and the people were able to cross on dry land.

There are many nowadays who scoff at that story and say that it's impossible that it's a figment of the imagination. And those who believe it as a legend say simply it was just like a big tide that the waters receded like a high spring tide like we have just now.

That's not what Scripture tells us. Again I'm not going to go into the great details of that but so many other things. this is the people to whom God has given manna to feed them in the wilderness.

This is the people whom God feeds every day with the manna as he feeds you and I with the hidden manna of his word as the book of Revelation tells us.

This is the people to whom quails were brought when they complained about not having meat. This is the people from whom water was bought out of a rock. And yet Moses having seen all these things and indeed been instrumental in many of them now wants more.

[21 : 13] He wants more. That's not been enough. All these signs and manifestations that he's seen have been external to himself.

But he wants to see God's glory. And you and I have to wonder this evening is that a big desire in our heart as well?

Do we really want to see God's glory or are we frightened of it? That leads us to wonder and think what does God's glory actually mean?

The word itself or derivatives of it is used 538 times in Scripture. Now I didn't count them.

That's of course taken from commentators. But I have no reason to doubt that that's fairly correct. But if you think of how often we use the term glory in many ways.

[22 : 21] We talk about a glorious sunset. We talk about one of God's people dying and we say he's gone to glory. But when Moses says show me your glory what does he really want to see?

After so many manifestations are ready of the power of God. And glory implies power. He still wants more.

He still feels that there's something that he hasn't seen. The definition that's given of God's glory usually is the manifestation of his divine attributes and perfection.

Including not only the possession of them but the presence of them. We use the term God's glory fairly loosely.

You noticed in all the Psalms that we sang that each of the Psalms reflected on God's glory in a different way. Psalm 19 reflected on the glory of creation.

[23 : 36] God's book of works. And it is a glorious creation. And if we think of it even in its beauty as it is, it's marred by sin.

It's corrupted. The creation itself groans, Paul says, because of that corruption. What is it like? What is God's creation?

What was it like before Adam and Eve fell? if the beauty and the glory of God's creation are manifest in the world now, it must have been absolutely stunning before sin came in.

But there's more to God's glory than that. There is the glory of his creation in you and I, the human being. even Shakespeare paid tribute to that when Hamlet says, what a marvelous piece of work as a man, and goes on in that speech to outline the perfections of the human being. It's amazing, isn't it, that after goodness knows how many centuries, we still don't fully understand the human creation.

[25 : 00] Oh, we know a lot more about our bodies and the way that they work, etc., and so on, than we ever did before. We know so many other things about our heads and minds and brains.

But none of us, none of us can control our mind. You think about it, thoughts come into your mind sometimes that you had no wish to think.

And sometimes you're absolutely horrified by the things that come into your mind. You have no control of them. You can try, and very often we have to try as God people to say, get thee behind me, Satan, when some of these things that come into your mind are particularly obnoxious.

But we can't control our minds. But Paul tells us that if we're born again, we have the mind of Christ. But still the devil attacks us continually at all times.

things. But then when we come to think of the soul, where in your body is the soul? That's a fascinating question.

[26 : 23] Some people, some theologians, equate soul and spirit as being the same thing. I'm still not fully convinced by that.

I'm not sure that they are the same thing. But whatever, the human soul is an area that we have no knowledge of except what scripture teaches us.

No doctor, no psychiatrist has ever been able to penetrate into the soul of the human being. And yet it is the soul of the human being that continues into glory.

into eternity. Maybe we should spend more time thinking about that. Show me your glory. What else does he want to see?

The Hebrew word that's used here, kabod, for glory, literally means abundance, weight. You see, we tend to think of glory as some sort of wonderful manifestations, et cetera, and so on, of splendor, splendor, et cetera, flashing lights, brilliance, and so on.

[27 : 40] But the Hebrew word just quite simply means abundance, weight, your glory. The catechism tells us that the chief end of man in the first catechism is to glorify God.

God's glory. And it's a very interesting question for you to think about. I'm not going to give you an answer to it. I'm going to leave you with this question. It's why does God need us to glorify him?

Or does he need us to glorify him? I'll leave you to meditate on that one yourself. But when you and I come to think about God's glory, then it's in a realm that is beyond our understanding.

John Piper says it's impossible to define God's glory. It's impossible. We're given glimpses of it. We're certainly given glimpses in the various visions that people see throughout Scripture.

Remember Isaiah. Isaiah 6. Remember again Ezekiel.

[28 : 47] Zachariah. Remember the transfiguration. Remember Paul being lifted up to the third heaven. The shepherds get a vision of the glory of God when the angels appear in the sky.

But it's much more than that. Much more than that. John sees it in detail in the throne room in Revelation, the chapter 5 that I've already mentioned.

But we see it again in Revelation 21 when we see the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. And yet even that vision is probably nothing like the real glory of God.

Where do we see the glory of God most reflected in Scripture? Well, we see it particularly in the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ that we see the closest reflection of God's glory that we can find on this earth.

And that is why Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians and in chapter 2 speaking of this passage, you remember that Moses has to put a veil over his face when he comes back from speaking to God because of the brilliance of his reflection.

[30 : 21] Paul says, since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

But their minds are hardened. And then he goes on to say in verse 18, and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Where do we see God's glory most in our daily lives, in our church?

are we seeing it particularly at times of revival? Are you praying for God's glory to be revealed once again?

It's your daily prayer. Show me your glory. Show me your glory not only in my own life and my own experience with you, but in the manifestation of the power of the Spirit through the blood of Jesus Christ bringing sinners to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[31 : 47] That's where we see the redemptive glory of God. Lord, that we would pray more and more this prayer that Moses has.

Show me your glory, that I would see your glory every day reflected, not only in my own behavior, but in the behavior of those around about me.

But that I would see it especially reflected in people coming to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or we might think that there's not much going on in our island just now in terms of God's glory.

But I think we would be wrong. We don't know, perhaps, that the outward manifestations of that glory has not yet appeared, but the seed is being continually sown.

And in so many other parts of Scotland we hear time and time again of churches growing, not necessarily the free church, but of churches growing, of more and more people seeking a knowledge of God.

[33 : 07] We hear it from various other parts of the world, particularly the persecuted church, that God's glory is being manifested.

I don't know how many of you get Bill Ferguson's Asia Link magazine, which arrived a few days ago. You remember he was here earlier this year.

And it's interesting to see that countries where there was virtually no Christian witness before, like Bhutan and Mongolia, are beginning to open up to the gospel.

God is at work. God's glory is not shielded. God's glory is being exercised through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ every single day, every minute of the day, somewhere throughout this earth, until all his people are brought to faith, until all his people will be brought to glory.

And it is then, of course, that we will see the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't that a wonderful thing to pray for?

[34 : 28] Lord, show me your glory, that that would be your prayer and my prayer every day as we go on, that God's glory would be manifest, not just in our lives, but in the lives of others who as yet are strangers to the blessing of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless these reflections to us this evening. Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, we thank you that we can meditate a little on these things, things that we find perhaps extremely difficult to understand, to be able to meditate upon your glory, that we can only do partly.

And even as Paul put it, that now we see through a glass darkly, but eventually we will see face to face. We pray that your glory would be manifest once again throughout our island, throughout our congregation, throughout our land, and indeed throughout the world, and bringing sinners to a saving knowledge of yourself.

Bless any this evening who are struggling perhaps to understand these things, to be able to meditate upon them, and that your spirit would open your word to us more and more.

Be with us now as we bring our worship to a close, and take us safely to our homes, and pardon sin through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[36 : 00] Amen. Let us conclude then by singing these wonderful words in Psalm 24 in the Scottish Psalter, on page 230, we'll sing the verses from Mark 7 to 10.

These wonderful words that speak of God's glory. Ye gates, lift up your head on high, ye doors that last foray, be lifted up, that so the King of glory enter me.

But who of glory is the King? The mighty Lord is this, even that same Lord that great in might and strong in battle is. Ye gates, lift up your heads, ye doors, doors are to last foray, be lifted up, that so the King of glory enter me.

Who is he that is the King of glory? Who is this? The Lord of hosts, and none but he the King of glory is. Let us sing these verses then to God's praise.

Psalm 24 at verse 7, Ye gates, lift up your heads on high. Ye gates, lift up your heads on high, ye doors that last foray, be lifted up, and so the fear of glory enter me.

[37 : 40] But who of glory is the King, the mighty Lord is this, He.

Heucks, the Lord, the great in high and strong empire.

He has lift up your hands he durk, door zas to us for him he lifted up the soul the king of glory and hooray but who is he that is the king of glory who is this the lord of hosts and and the king of glory is grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all now and forever amen