

“The Mountain of God’s Glory”—Exodus 24:15-18

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Mountain of God’s Glory”, is Exodus 24:15-18 → *Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Did you looked forward to gathering for worship here today? This may seem like a strange question since you’re here. Even though you planned on coming to worship and adjusted your schedule appropriately, did you conscientiously think of it as “looking forward” to worship? Could be. People try to analyze the reason for so many empty pews in worship. Actually, the answer is simple: Aside from health issues, not only do many not look forward to gathering for worship, they actually make the intentional decision not to attend.

You may be here because of expectations of getting something “spiritual” out of our worship experience. Hopefully, your presence is a natural response of faith and obedience to God Who commands us to gather for worship. Maybe you’re expecting a “miracle” of some kind to happen in your life during worship. Maybe you’ve come with all your sins and “baggage” in order to be forgiven, renewed and empowered to glorify and serve the LORD anew!

In our text we read the account of Moses and the leaders of Israel worshiping Yahweh on Mount Sinai where Moses received from Him *the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which He had written for their instruction.* (cf. Exodus 24:12) While receiving the Ten Commandments verse 16 of our text tells us that *the glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai amidst a cloud which covered the mountain.*

The Hebrew word *glory* literally means “heaviness” in the sense of something “weighty” in Yahweh which makes Him important and demands honor. It is different than the “glory” of people or countries usually described by prominent characteristics that makes them unique such as the “glory” of King Solomon because of his wisdom and immense wealth, the “glory” of Lebanon because of its massive and stately cedar trees, or the “glory” of various world empires (e.g. Egypt, Babylon, Assyria or Rome).

However, when *the glory of the LORD* was experienced in the accounts of

Scripture it truly was a “weighty” or “heavy” experience which instilled fear in people at the thought of sudden death! Verse 17 of our text describes it *like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel*. The “weighty” nature of this sight happened because it instilled a strong conviction of sinfulness in the presence of God’s holiness. This is why the demons reacted to Jesus, Who embodied God’s glory in the flesh. Fearful of immediate judgment they recognized Him as *the Holy One of God* and asked: *What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?* (cf. Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34)

Thus the ***devouring*** characteristic of the fire connected with a revelation of *Yahweh’s glory* could signify His judgment upon sin in us sinners. It reinforced the possibility of being destroy, devoured or consumed by God’s judgment upon our sins which reflect idolatry in our lives. As Deuteronomy 4:24 says: *The LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God*. Could it be that the reason people stay away from experiencing God’s glory in worship is because they think they will experience ***only*** His judgment upon their sin and disobedience, even while encountering Jesus, *the Holy One of God*?

*The glory of the LORD* is so great that He had to appear in a natural way to “veil” it so that their lives would be spared. Our text describes this “veil” as a *cloud which covered the mountain, which Moses entered* in order to receive

Yahweh's commands. Thus, the LORD spoke to Moses in the midst of the cloud. This same "veiling" was used when God's glory was revealed in Jesus to Peter, James and John on a mountain. Jesus was transfigured before them while He spoke with Moses and Elijah, also enveloped by a cloud. (cf. Matthew 17:1-8) Everything happening in our text had something to do with the revealing of God's glory **in Christ!**

Creation itself reveals God's "weighty" working in our lives. Psalm 19:1 says: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.* Through this natural knowledge of God people can experience the awesomeness of God's glory in nature. Unfortunately, in their efforts to understand it all, they defined nature itself as "god" and created false gods depicting created things from nature—a knowledge which again incurs God's judgment on idolatry. (cf. Romans 18-32) It is no different today when people strive to find their own explanations for God's working in their everyday lives only to end up giving glory to something or someone other than the LORD. The revealed knowledge of God in Scripture points us to the LORD Who controls nature and provides for us in both physical and spiritual ways!

*The glory of the LORD* is ultimately connected to His covenant **of grace** with His people, sealed in blood. The "worship service" described in our text involved Moses proclaiming *all the words of the LORD* and presenting burnt

offerings and sacrifices to the LORD. It continued by Moses placing half of the blood in basins and throwing the other half against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, to which they responded, *“All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”* Then Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, *“Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”* (cf. Exodus 24:3-8)

This worship service was truly a bloody mess! Killing animals to get their blood and then throwing it all over the place, even splattering the people with it? This definitely is not what I think of when I think of experiencing God’s **glory**! I want it to be a beautiful vision of peace and light that makes me feel good, not an experience that makes me feel “icky” by being covered with blood! I want it to be a feeling of joy, happiness and a knowledge that everything is good!

That’s exactly what the people who crucified Jesus wanted. They wanted the Redeemer who would bring *the glory of the LORD* in the form of an earthly kingdom of peace and happiness! Instead, He gave them *the blood of the covenant that the LORD . . . made . . . in accordance with all the words* He had spoken in the Old Testament Scriptures. **He gave them His own blood shed on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins!** *The glory of the LORD* is still

“weighty” for us because you cannot experience His glory without the “gore.”

Why? Hebrews 9:22 says: *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

Based on His covenant of grace, sealed in the blood, the experience of God’s people seeing His glory manifested from the mountain should move them to “glorify” God in obedience to His words. All of the laws God gave His people were for the purpose of glorifying Him in worship! That’s why Psalm 29:1-2 tells us: *Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; **worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.***

In worship we do *ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name* in response to how He serves us with His grace through Word and Sacrament (i.e. the blood of the new covenant)! The question is: “What do we do with God’s commands when we leave this place, having experienced His grace?” Do we find ourselves doing what God has given us to do with only our own interests in mind? Is it like entering *the cloud*, experiencing His glory and grace and then coming down from the mountain only to do our own thing? While Moses was receiving God’s words the people of Israel fell into idolatry again by making a golden calf (cf. Exodus 32)—and this shortly after having experienced God’s glory on the mountain saying, *all that the LORD has spoken we will do,*

*and we will be obedient!*

When we glorify God it means that we recognize the importance of His Lordship over **every area of our lives**—not just our worship together. Acts 17:28 says that in the LORD *we live and move and have our being*. Thus, this relationship with the LORD extends far beyond the walls of our worship sanctuary. We must take the glory into the gory, sinful mess of the world in which we work, play and live. But how? How can we continue to live on the mountain of God's glory when so much of what happens in our daily lives strives to pull us into sin and idolatry? **By focusing on how God continues to reveal His glory to us daily in the grace and forgiveness which only Jesus Christ gives us from Mount Calvary!**

God has revealed His ultimate glory to us in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life, suffering, death on a cross and resurrection from the dead is the final judgment on your sin and the fulfillment of the LORD's covenant of saving grace with **all** mankind! John 1:14 refers to Jesus as the One in Whom we see God's *glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*. Did you hear that last part? **Full of *grace* and *truth*!**

When we come to worship we do not just hear God's judgment upon our sin, being left to wallow in the burden of our guilt. Rather, we glorify the LORD by praying to Him, praising Him and giving thanks to Him because we

experience the ultimate in His glory as our sins are forgiven in Christ! No matter what you're feeling, no matter how immense your guilt, no matter who you are or how grievous your sins, God's grace in Jesus Christ is truly yours because He is the glory of God *full of **grace** and **truth** for you!!*

Because of Jesus Christ we can now come near to God's presence with confidence, not with fear and trembling. Hebrews 10:19-25 describes our worship under the new covenant in the blood of Christ: *Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

We *meet together* in worship to ascend the mountain of God's glory through faith in Jesus Christ, experiencing His presence through Word and Sacrament, in order that we may descend that mountain as the Holy Spirit accompanies us into our daily vocations to witness Christ to others through

our words and actions! Amen.

*If anyone speaks he should do so as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*

*To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

(1 Peter 4:11)

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