

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, rcl yr a, 2020  
St John's in-person and on-line  
Exodus 33:12-23; Psalm 99; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22

*Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray."*

What does the glory of the Lord look like? Might and power and thunder and lightning? Sometimes. Does the glory of the Lord appear sometimes, more like a whirlwind? It does. Sometimes the glory of the Lord isn't bombastic at all, too—sometimes the glory of the Lord rests in silence.

Last week, Moses—the man of prayer who prayed to the Lord for the forgiveness of his people—brought to mind in prayer God's promise of salvation and care for his beloved community. Through that prayer of Moses, we learned something of God—in answering Moses's prayer that God would save his people, we learned that God is willing to forgive even a stiff-necked people, as angry as God was about Israel's actions.

And we see this again, today: Moses as a man of prayer. And again, through Moses's prayer, and God's answer to Moses's prayer, we see something about who God is and what God does.

Moses says to God, in our reading this week, "Show me your glory, I pray." And what we see, in an answer to that prayer, is that God does reveal his glory: but not in thunder and lightning, not in a whirlwind, and not in silence, either. In God's answer to Moses's prayer, the prayer that the glory of the Lord be revealed, God reveals his glory—a glory revealed as goodness, a glory revealed as graciousness, a glory revealed as mercy.

"Show me your glory, I pray," says Moses; "and [the Lord] said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you [...] and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.'"

Goodness. Graciousness. And mercy. This is the glory of the Lord.

We can't forget though that Israel is clearly a sinful community—that's been clear throughout the desert wanderings. The people have already blamed God and Moses because they were hungry. The people have already blamed God and Moses because they were thirsty. The people have

already, on a moment's notice, broken the commandments that God had just given to his people.

And this is very much *connected* to what God says here. To whom will God be gracious? To whom will God show mercy? The Israel that blames, the Israel that complains, the Israel that disobeys. God is gracious not to a perfect community, but a broken community; God is merciful not to a sinless community, but to a sinful one.

And this is the promise that is made to *us*, not just a wandering desert tribe thousands of years ago—it a promise made even to *this* community—that God would be gracious to *us*, that God would be merciful to *us*, even in our failings.

But this is all about God, right? This is just about God being good, God being gracious, God being merciful. But what about us? What does it mean to us that God is good, gracious, and merciful, when we find ourselves as God's community, a bit bereft, imperfect, sinful even, what does it mean to say that God is good is good and gracious and merciful in times when we have a hard time finding goodness and graciousness and mercifulness within our own communities?

It's relatively simple, in a way: we pray to God. We pray to God, that God's glory would be revealed, and that God's glory would be revealed in his goodness and graciousness and mercifulness. And that God's goodness and graciousness and mercifulness would be revealed *among us* and *between us*.

As Christians, we've become quite convinced that things like goodness, and graciousness, and mercifulness don't begin with us. That we are not able, under our own power, to somehow manufacture out of nothing things like goodness and graciousness and mercifulness. As Christians, we've become pretty convinced that when we see these kind of virtues in ourselves and others, they begin not with us—but are already gifts of a God who is good and graceful and merciful, gifts we share amongst ourselves.

And so if we were to hope beyond hope that *we* would be transformed into a people of goodness and grace and mercy we might well do what Moses does. To pray to God that his glory be revealed, knowing that God is the foundational cause of our own goodness, our own graciousness, our own mercifulness.

"Show me your glory, I pray," says Moses; and [the Lord] said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you [...] and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." And that would be my prayer for us, perhaps making a slight amendment or clarification to Moses's prayer, and the way we might pray today. That we would pray to God that his glory be revealed, and through that prayer, that God would bring to bear on *us* the gifts we need for one another.

What if we were to pray fervently for God's glory to be revealed to us? If we were to say, "Show us your glory, we pray"? If we were to pray in such a way, we would pray in the hope that we would bear the fruit of God's promise—and that in all our sin, in all our disobedience, all our brokenness, in all the ways we fail one another ... that God's goodness, God's graciousness, and God's mercy would be revealed *in us*. With God transforming us into a community of goodness, a community of grace, and a community of mercy. And that we would see God's goodness, grace, and mercy at work in us and in our community—the broken community of God's beloved.

Show us your glory Lord, even on days when we cannot see any glory whatsoever. Show us your glory Lord, even when we feel alone in our challenge and difficulty. Show us you glory Lord, even when it feels like everything's falling apart and we're not sure how to put the pieces all back together again. Show us your glory, Lord—may your goodness grace and mercy be made manifest in us, for your sake, and for the sake of your beloved, broken community.