

What Do You Desire?

Exodus 33:18-23

By Michael McKelvey

It's a great pleasure to be with you this evening. It's a great honor to be asked to do this. I don't know if David Strain really knew what he was doing when he asked me to do this because I have a tendency to embarrass those who are very dear to me. You can just ask my wife about that! Many of you may not know that David loves to play racquetball. I knew somebody asked me when I told them this question they said, "I didn't know racquetball was popular in Scotland." And I was thinking, "Neither did I!" It's not. Okay! So it's not popular in Scotland. So we have an oddball over here. The first time that we played, and we play quite often together out at RTS, the first time we played I made the mistake of getting close to the front of the court and I turned around. And it was his turn to hit and I saw a flash in his eyes of wild Scotsman and I should have known what was about to come. And he reared back and hit the ball as hard as he could and it proceeded to hit me right square in the face. It about knocked me out. I hit the ground, hands and knees, and in a drop of a hat he turned on pastor mode! And he was on top of me saying, "Are you okay, brother? Are you okay?" And I was like, "I'm not sure!" So just to tell you that so if you ever see the flash of wild Scot in his eye don't panic; pastor mode can be turned on real quick. I couldn't resist it brother; I'm so sorry! It's one of the bad habits I have. There's other people in the congregation tonight that mean a lot to me too so I'd better stop while I'm ahead.

Let's turn in God's Word and quiet our hearts as we turn there to Exodus chapter 33. Exodus chapter 33. It's on the back of your bulletin if you don't have your Bible with you. And while we quiet our hearts let's ask the Lord to help us to do so.

Our Father in heaven, we are thankful to You that You have given us Your Word and we pray that tonight we would see clearly what it reveals - that it reveals You. By Your Spirit help us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Context of Exodus 33

Let me set the context for you before we look at the particular passage. Exodus 32 records the incident of the golden calf. So the people of God have just entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai and Moses has been up on the mount receiving the Law of God and then in Exodus 32 the people of God say, "Moses

has been gone too long. We need something to worship.” And they talk Aaron into making a golden calf. And they’re worshipping the golden calf and then, because of this, as Moses comes down God says, “I will not go with this people to the land.” He says, “They have sinned. They are a stiff-necked people. They have broken My covenant and because of that I do not want to destroy them along the way, so Moses, you’re going to lead them up to the land but I’m not going with them.” What a statement about sin, isn’t it? So here is the statement and here is Moses. And the people hear this and they start to come unglued and go beside themselves and they say, “Moses, do something!” And Moses does something; he intercedes for them. He comes to God on their behalf and he says, “Lord, if You don’t go with us up to the land, how will the world know that we are Your people, that You love these people? What will Egypt say that You brought them out of the land but You weren’t able to bring them up? Your fame is what’s important here! Lord, for the sake of Your name, for the sake of Your glory please go with us!” And because of Moses’ intercession the Lord says to Moses in verse 17, “The very thing you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My sight and I know you by name.”

That leads us up to the passage I want to consider. Verse 18:

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," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and life." And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

The Desire of Our Hearts

What is it you really want? If I were to send out a survey with the question on it, “What is it you really want?” how would you answer? I’m sure we’d have a variety of answers. Some would say, “I want financial stability.” Some would say, “I want a family.” Some would say, “I want a special someone who will simply accept me as I am and love me.” Some will say, “I want the deacons to get an air-conditioned pavilion out here!” Some will say, “I want my football team to win the national championship” - and I have a dog in the fight, just to say that! We might say a lot of different things as far as what we want but what is it at the very heart of our core being that we want most of all? When we look at this passage we see that revealed to us about Moses. We see something that says what our deepest desire should be above all. Moses reminds me here of a teenager, a young person. And you young people will know what I’m about to say. It’s like when a teenager comes to his mom or dad or her mom and dad and says, “Dad, can I

have this?" and they say, "Yes," and I say, "Oh, they're in a good mood! And since they said yes let me ask for something else!" And even the older people have done this too. "Let me have something else." And they keep asking and they'll keep asking - if you give an inch they'll take a mile - and they'll keep asking for more and more until the "No" comes.

And I'm reminded here of Moses in this because he's just asked for one of the most amazing things to ever happen. God says, "I am not going with you," and he says, "Please Lord, for Your name and for Your people You must." And He says, "Okay, I will." And so now he's in this situation. "The Lord just said yes now let me ask Him for what I really desire!" So what is it you really want? I want you to hold off on answering that question, hold off on answering that survey, till we get to the end of the sermon tonight.

I. The Request of Moses

And I want us to notice three things. First, I want us to see the request in this passage. Moses makes that request in verse 18. He says, "Please show me your glory." That word in Hebrew that's translated in English "please" is a very small word. It's hard to translate but it means "earnest." It means something in the most deepest desire of the heart being expressed. It's not like please like please and thank you like we're taught. It's please in the sense of him begging from his heart, "Please." Have you ever been upon your knees begging someone for something? That's the picture here. "Please show me your glory."

The Invigorating Power of the Glory of God

Now hasn't Moses seen the glory of God? What did he see at the burning bush? He saw a bush that was full of flames but was not consumed and out of that he heard the voice of God give him his covenant name. "Yahweh - I will be who I will be or I AM who I AM." He gave His name to him. He saw the glory of God right there in the midst of the wilderness. And then God used this stammering-tongued murderer to go back to Egypt and used him to smash Pharaoh and to destroy the gods of Egypt through the plagues. Each plague is a statement that Egypt's gods are no gods. "I alone am LORD," God is saying through that. He's seen the glory of God being produced time after time, again, and then even in the Passover and all that that symbolized. Surely in some way Moses had an idea of the need in that of a sacrifice. He'd seen the glory of God. What happened when they went out of Egypt. They went out as rich families. They were poor and destitute in Egypt but Egypt gave them their wealth and gave them gold and silver and things. They said, "Get out of here and take all that we have!" Rags to riches in a moment. What happened there in the Red Sea when the armies of Pharaoh came cruising up behind them ready to destroy the Israelites and they were helpless. God told Moses, "Pick up your staff." And He caused a great east wind to come through and separate the Red Sea and the people went through not on

muddy ground but on dry ground. And then as the army followed the waters came back and crushed the enemy.

Moses has seen the glory of God. He was on the Mountain of Sinai when God gave him the Ten Commandments and the Law. He's seen the glory of God. What's he asking for here when he says, "Please show me your glory"? The phrase in Scripture in the Old Testament, "the glory of the Lord," refers to the presence of God. For instance, at the end of Exodus you see the temple, the tabernacle, made and then it says, "The glory of the Lord descended on the tabernacle." The manifested presence of God with His people. And over and over again you see this idea of the presence of the Lord, the glory of the Lord. It's His presence manifested among the people. So when he's asking here to see the glory of the Lord he's saying, "Lord, show me Yourself! I want You and all that You are! That's what my heart desires." Now why did he ask this? Moses knew something. He understood that God is far superior to anything else that exists or can ever exist. And brethren, it's one thing to say it and it's another thing to know it. And he knew it. By the grace of God he knew it and he wanted it. Nothing could compare to the Lord, not even the wealth of Egypt. Here was a man who grew up in the circle of civilization at that time. He was brought up by the greatest teachers of the time. He had wealth at his fingertips. He could by anything or have anything. He could have as many women as he wanted. Nothing was out of his reach as a son of Pharaoh's daughter but the Christian gospel says in Hebrews that Moses regarded the reproaches of Christ as far more glorious than all the wealth of Egypt. He regarded the suffering of Christ as better. He knew that God was the greatest thing or the greatest entity that could ever be fathomed by us.

Regarding the Honor of God more than the Esteem of Men

He also loved the Lord and wanted the Lord more than the honor of men. That's one of the things that fascinates me about Moses. You know it's so easy to be tempted by the fear of man, isn't it? "What does this person think about me? What does that person think about me? If I don't do this, this group's not going to like me; if I do this, they're going to like me." Our young ladies, you have my heart. You're growing up in a world where there's so much demand for you to be pleasing to somebody else in order for you to be accepted. Whether it comes from your friends, whether it comes from a boy or a man, or whether it comes from a circle group or just the culture in general, the desire to place upon a standard upon our young ladies is one of the worst things that I see in our world because what it does - it's not just for ladies, it's for all of us, but especially for our young girls it places upon them the sense that they must do something to be accepted. The fear of man, the honor of man is pervasive. But I say to you tonight on accord with the Word of God, Christ is far better than what your neighbor thinks and Jesus Christ will love you more than any man on this earth could ever love you. And you could give your heart to Him without fear of having it trampled. And that goes for everyone tonight but I wanted to say that especially

to our women. There is One who loves and loves freely.

So the honor of man is something that he didn't fear. How many times did they pick up stones to stone him? That's a good Bible study for you. Write it down; I want you to go through all of the Pentateuch and find out how many times they picked up stones to stone him, over and over again. Would that make you want to cave in and give in to the whims of the people? I would be tempted. But he didn't because he feared the Lord above man. People want many things from God but not many people want God Himself. Let me say that again so it's clear - people want many things from God but not many people want God. They will ask Him for money. "Please, Lord, give me money. I have to make the bills." They will ask God for fame. "I want to be famous; I want to be popular so I can have some sort of influence in the world, even the influence for good." But they won't ask for Him. They'll ask God for power, political power, ecclesiastical power, business power. They'll ask God for health. "Lord, give me health so that I can be healthy and enjoy life." They'll ask God for success. "Let me have success and be successful." They'll ask Him for everything under the sun but they will not seek God. They will not say, "Lord, I don't care about this world or the wealth of this world or the treasures of this world. I just want You!" And the churches in this land are full of people like this. And our own hearts are guilty of this. Men ask God for many things but they won't seek Him in His Son and they won't say with the old spiritual, "You can have all this world; give me Jesus." So many are saying, "I want the world and I'll take Jesus as well." But everything that's of the world is in contrast with Him. Everything that's of the world - the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life is not from God. What do you want from God? What are you asking God for? What do you seek Him for? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." And do you know what the kingdom of God is? It's the rule of God in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls.

II. The Majesty of God

Nothing can compare to God and that's what I want us to see next when we consider the majesty. The Lord hears the request of Moses and tells him what He will do and we see in the description the majestic greatness of God and it's staggering. It's so staggering I can't even do justice to it in trying to describe it. He says, "I will cause all my goodness to pass before you." Now what does that mean? I'm an Old Testament professor and I can't really even define what that means. I ask the question though, because I don't have anything better to do, so I ask the question, "What does that mean?" and I'm at a loss. "My goodness." It's got to be everything about God that's good. It's got to be His righteousness, His kindness, His benevolence, His excellence, His love. Everything that we have in this world that's good, it comes from God. Everything from a breath of fresh air that I pray would just come sweeping through here to the little baby that you hold in your arms and you look into their eyes. Everything that is good has its origin in God.

“So all My goodness,” he says, “will pass before you.” And God’s goodness will pass by and He will proclaim His name. And He says there, you see it in all capital letters, that’s the name Yahweh, that’s His covenant name; that’s the name He gave to Moses at the burning bush. “I will proclaim My name,” and the name of God stands for the whole of God in the Old Testament. “We will praise the name of the Lord” - it means we will praise all of the Lord; we will praise the Lord in His fullness. And so it’s that word that says, “I AM who I AM,” or “I will be who I will be” and it points to something about God. It points to the fact that He is a God who keeps His promises. He says, “I will be with you.” And so He says, “I AM” - that means that He will be with His people. And it also points to something about God and it points to the nature of God. The name of a person pointing to something about their nature. Jacob was called “Jacob” why? Because he was the deceiver. God is called Yahweh because He exists and He’s a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. And so as He’s stating this He’s declaring His nature to them, that He is self-existent and autonomous and immutable and attainable. All those great and grand, glorious words that we learn in theology. But what it means ultimately is that He is sovereignly independent of everything.

And He says in line with this, “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.” What this means is that no one binds His hands. No one tells the Lord what He’s going to do. No one can manipulate Him. He can’t be bargained with. We can’t go to God and think we can manipulate Him and treat Him as we so often do. “Lord, if You just give me this then I will do this.” Have you ever said something like that? Guilty. Have you ever thought something like that? Have you ever said, “If I can just get my life in a certain way then I will serve the Lord?” and the Lord says, “I will have mercy on whom I choose to have mercy.” It’s the same verse that’s quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9 so that we will be very clear that it’s not dependent upon us at all; it’s dependent upon God. He is sovereign in election. And that’s so that none of us will be haughty in our hearts before Him. It’s so that we won’t look at God and say, “Lord, that’s not fair because if you’re going to be fair You should do what we think You should do.” And the reality is that if God’s fair then we don’t want what’s coming because what’s fair, what we really deserve, is not grace. We want God to be merciful. He says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.”

The Majesty of God in the Vision of Isaiah

And then we see that the majesty of God is too great for man. He says to Moses, He says, “You can’t see My face for no man shall see Me and live. You can’t see My face.” So the majesty of God is so overwhelming that no one can bear to be before Him or they will completely be undone. We get another picture of this in Isaiah chapter 6. It’s a great passage; if you’re not aware of it, look it up later. Here is Isaiah in a vision. He said, “I saw the Lord, high and lifted up, seated on His throne and the train of His robe filled the temple and the seraphim were flying

around. They had six wings. With two they flew, with two they covered their feet, and two they covered their faces.” These are sinless beings created by the Holy God to be in His holy presence but even they cannot bear the majesty and glory of God and so they just hover there and they call out back and forth, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!” And the first thing that comes out of Isaiah’s mouth is the first thing that enters into his mind and heart. He says, “Woe is me for I am ruined. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell amongst people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” He didn’t say, “Hey, this is really cool to see. Let me pull up a chair and get a cup of coffee or popcorn and let me see what’s going on here.” He was before the Lord and he was undone. And God is so loving and gracious and He comes, He sends one of the seraphim and they come with the coal of the altar that has the fat drippings from the sacrifice and touches his lips and He says, “You are clean.” That shows us how good God is to those He loves.

We see God’s goodness here to Moses. He loves Moses. He doesn’t want Moses to be destroyed by His full glory so He puts him in the cleft of the rock and He covers him with His right hand, His hand of power, to protect him. Isn’t that wonderful? He loves Moses and He protects him from Himself which is what we need most. We need protection from the wrath of God and God gives that protection. Do you see the majesty of God? Is it something that you see or something that you simply say, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever,” and it has no meaning to you? Does it mean anything to me? Who knows? The Lord knows and He is the searcher of the heart and He sees, He sees if we really behold His majesty and love Him for it.

III. The View given to Moses

The third thing is the view. What did Moses actually see? I haven’t the foggiest idea! It’s one of those other things that I’ve thought about and still don’t have an answer for. We’re not sure what he actually saw. He’s using human language here to explain that which isn’t human. How can you describe the infinite when all we have is finite language? Well we do the best we can. And Moses is doing the best he can to explain here in this passage what he saw. And so what he says here is, “I saw His back but I did not see His face. I saw the glory of God but not all of His essence.” And surely that was an amazing site for Moses. You know I pity Moses, particularly as a minister. You know it’s hard to be a minister? David won’t tell you this but it’s hard being a minister. Pray for your ministers. Pray for them. They need your prayers. They need your support; they need your encouragement. Moses was a minister of God and Moses had a rough life. So when I look at this passage I say, “What a blessing! What a kind gift.” Here he is dealing with these stiff-necked people and he is surely getting frustrated with them but he keeps on; he keeps on. Why? Because he loves the Lord and he loves the Lord’s people.

Christ: The Fullness of the Glory of God

And so here, the Lord gives him a kind glimpse of His glory. And surely it was a great gift to him, especially when I think about poor Moses; he didn't get to go into the Promised Land. He sinned against God. Do you see what sin causes? Even in the best of men they're still men at best. He got to see an amazing sight, though. But let me say something, and I say it with all sincerity and all reverence - we see more in Jesus Christ, we see more of the glory of God in the Son of God than Moses saw from the cleft of the rock. We see, according to Paul, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," the presence of God, in the face of Christ. All that God is, is fully revealed in His Son, and so in Christ we can come to God and we can see what God is like. Every part we see in the New Testament about Jesus is the way God is. Is Christ loving? Is God loving? Yes! Is God forgiving? Is Christ forgiving? The woman who came to His feet weeping over her sins, the sins of her past, He says, "I love you. Your sins are forgiven." Does that mean that He can forgive you or me? We see in Jesus Christ the glory of God. By faith, by the Spirit of God, our eyes have been unveiled to see this, and to see it more and more each day if we have Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 to 3: "In the past, God spoke to our forefathers, including Moses, through the prophets and at many times and various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." And the writer continues, "He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being." Brethren, when you look at Jesus you are seeing God. When you hold the sacred Scriptures in your hand and you look and see what Jesus is like, that's just what He's like with you. Do you see a loving, gracious God? A loving Savior? Do you see a Savior who knows you mess up and knows you get it wrong but He still loves you, He doesn't cast you away? When you look at how He dealt with Peter and He didn't throw Peter away after He denied Him three times; He still loved Peter. And even before Peter did it, He said, "Peter, you're going to do this but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail you." That's the Savior we have. That's the God that we have.

Future Glory

And we will see even more of that glory in the future. 1 John 3 says, "It has not yet appeared what we will be like but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him for we shall see Him just as He is," and it says, "We will be made like Him." We will be transformed into His likeness. And in the last day, in the New Jerusalem, we are told that the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it and His bond-servants will serve Him and they will see His face. After the Fall, man is cast from the presence of God. "No man shall see Me and live," He says, but because of the work of Jesus Christ at the last day His servants will serve Him and they shall see His face! This is the work of Almighty God for sinners such as us. "Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great High Priest whose name is Love, who ever lives and pleads for me." And the

great thing is that we'll never grow tired of gazing into the face of Jesus, we'll never exhaust the glory that we see there. You know my son used to ask when he was little, "Dad, what's heaven going to be like?" You know where that question's coming from - "Is it going to be like church?" Because I know what he's thinking! "I know son, church can be a little boring!" Oops, I said it! I understand, especially as a young person. But I said to him in this way, I said, "Son, God is going to make it in such a way that we will never ever be bored as we behold His wonder and the wonder of His Son." I said, "You're going to have so much fun it's never going to end." And he could jive with that!

The Transforming Power of Christ: Our Hearts' New Desire

And it's true. It's true, brethren. Do you believe it? Do you know it in your heart? Do you say, "Hallelujah, what a Savior!" from the depths of your soul and say, "My desire is to see the Lord?" And does it show in your life that this is your desire? Because what we do is what we know. What we do in our lives reveals what we really know. Does it show at work? Do you live for Jesus at work or is it a Sunday thing? Does it show in your marriage? The most intimate relationship that you may have on this earth is with your spouse. Does it show that you love Jesus and you want to see Him in the way you treat your husband or your wife? Does it show in your family - the way you treat your children? Not trying to make them tow the line but to show them that we have a great Savior that they can trust in, that they can give their soul to. Does it show in the church? I know how big First Pres. is and you probably don't even know this but I'm a member at First Pres. Did you know that? We joined in August so we're pretty new! Is this shown in the church in the way we treat one another, in the way that we treat the outsiders who come in and show them the love of the Savior the way He has loved us when we were once His enemies? Does it show in our desire for the lost to know this Savior?

We could go on and on but we need to come to something that's more pertinent tonight and that means that we need to deal with where we are. Do you even desire Christ at all? Is it there? If there is just even a millimeters worth of desire for Jesus that's not natural. The grace of God is at work and you need to cry out and say, "Lord, increase my desire for you." But maybe we need to go past that and say some here tonight need to cry out to God and say, "No, I don't have a desire for Jesus." And perhaps you need to confess it and not worry about what other people think around you but think about the fact that He is the one with whom I have to do and He is the one I am accountable to. "I don't desire You. Change my heart. Save me, Lord. I see what I'm really like. I see that I'm a sinner. I see that by nature I don't care about You. I want other things. Have mercy on me, Jesus." And just like the blind men who called to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on us," He will come and He will show mercy. Confess and cry out, "Open my eyes, Lord, that I might see the wonder of God in the face of Jesus," and that is a prayer that God loves to answer.

So how would you answer that survey question now? And I don't mean answer it just because the preacher gave you the answer and be able to say, "I know what the right answer is." I mean a true and honest answer because it does me no good and it does you no good to lie. Be honest with the Lord and be honest with yourself and know that there is a Savior who loves sinful, lost, broken people and He will change you. He will remake you, little by little, more after His image, which is what you should want. I pray that none of us leave here tonight the way that we came. I don't want to stay the way that I am. I want to be like Christ. And I ask the Lord when I don't have that desire, "Forgive me, and please increase that desire." Amen. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for Your gracious Word and how clear it is to us. We need Your help and we are thankful that You love to help those who are weak and sinful. Forgive us of our sins. Bless this people, Your people, Lord, bless us. Give us the grace of Your Son. Make us a church that shines forth the glory of God because we want to see the glory of God and because we have seen it in the face of Christ. Give us more of Your Son. Bless the ministers of our church. Bless our senior pastor and how he labors in the Word. Give him a vision of the glory of God in his heart in Jesus that he may lead us, that he may lead us more and more to Christ. We ask this for Your glory and for our good, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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