

Exodus 33.18-23

¹⁸Moses said, 'Show me your glory, I pray.' ¹⁹And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, "The Lord";* and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰But', he said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.' ²¹And the Lord continued, 'See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; ²²and 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; ²³then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.'

1 Corinthians 2:1-7

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

Matthew 14:25-33

²⁵And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'
²⁸Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.'
²⁹He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus.
³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' ³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

FINDING PEACE IN UNCERTAINTY

If you took a poll of people who are familiar with the stories of Jesus and asked what was the coolest thing Jesus ever did, walking on water would probably be quite high on the list. The things that get our attention are quite frankly the miraculous stuff – yes, Jesus taught many great things, but it's his healing the blind or his walking on water that pique our interest, the stuff that can't be explained too easily. One could say that our faith is founded on such a supernatural event, Jesus' resurrection.

In this sense, most Christians live in tension between their natural experience and the supernatural, between what seems certain and what is uncertain. Our creeds and dogma confess our belief in the resurrection, but unless we have indeed seen the resurrected Christ, or had an experience that somehow confirms Jesus' resurrection, we must be content in the realm of

uncertainty. That's the message of our Old Testament lesson; Moses wants to see God face to face, to see his glory. And God, being *merciful*, hides his face from Moses, allowing him only to see his back, "for no one shall see me and live," says the Lord.

Why is that? Why does exposure to the Almighty spell our own doom? I believe the answer lies in our own nature, corrupted nature. Jesus correctly predicted what would happen when a lynch mob, or more precisely a "stoning mob" brought an adulteress to him and asked him to give the go ahead to execute her. "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her," is what Jesus said, and one by one the executioners departed. If I were to ask who among you is without sin I don't think I would see any hands raised, and were you to ask me, my hand would remain down as well. The truth is that we're not the people God created us to be, though I believe that we all are being transformed into that by the Holy Spirit. But we're not there yet. And to see God in all his splendor and power would be more than we could handle.

This truth becomes clear to us when we consider some of most "religious" people in our history. I don't doubt that people who have had some religious experience become very zealous, very passionate about God. The problem is that they sometimes misinterpret their religious experience, and instead of striving passionately to serve God they unknowingly work against God. I think of some of the great religious villains of history; Oliver Cromwell, who is no friend to the Irish and slaughtered many, including Catholic priests in his Protestant zeal. The zealots of the great Crusades slaughtered Muslim women and children in the name of Jesus Christ. And the Rev. Jim Jones in 1978 committed suicide as many of his followers drank, or were forced to drink cyanide-laced Kool-Aid – over 300 of the victims were children. And of course we're all too familiar with ISIS and the Taliban and other such extremist organizations. The point is that the leaders of these movements hold a strong conviction that they are indeed doing the will of God while it's clear to everyone else that they are doing the exact opposite. And if you asked these misguided people why they do what they do, they would offer very rational arguments for what they do, even citing Scripture to justify their atrocities. It would be naïve to say that everything they believed was wrong, but there is just enough truth in what they believe to make them dangerous and to attract others to join their movement. I would argue that these people *have* drawn close to God, close enough to see some of his glory, but they have perverted that glory to the detriment of themselves, their followers, and countless innocent victims. And we wonder why God does not reveal his full glory to those who ask to see it.

If you spoke to people who are home right now, who are not in church or temple or mosque or synagogue, many would tell you that part of the reason they are not in some place of worship is because religious people are dangerous, that we are fanatics or brainwashed. We should appreciate their point of view. There ARE quite a few folks in churches who harbor crazy beliefs and ideas, believing themselves to be God's chosen vessels for saving the human race, often at the expense of anyone who does not believe what *they* believe. Out of mercy, God does not reveal his full glory.

But God does reveal enough of his glory to guide us where we need to go. Referring to the Kingdom of God Jesus says, "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." This is a promise to those who really really want to know God. God is too big for our minds to grasp, but his desire is that we know his love, his goodness, his

forgiveness, and his will for our lives. That's enough. We don't need to know when and how the world will end or if the Shroud of Turin is authentic; we need to have faith that God will reveal what we need to know when we need to know it. And we can know what we need to know if we truly seek God. The author of Deuteronomy tells us to seek the Lord with all our heart and strength and soul. Humanities problem is that we start off seeking God and either give up or get sidetracked. If we truly seek God with ALL our heart and ALL our mind and ALL our soul we would spend more time obeying God and less time on ourselves.

And this is my message to you today. Seek the Lord with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul, and never cease. Seek God through prayer. Seek God through scripture. Seek God together with others, in community and in worship. Don't be distracted. God will reveal enough of himself to you. But be content with what he reveals to you. Accept the fact that he will not give you all the answers, and be wise enough not to trust everything that comes out of the mouth of any self-proclaimed authority. Don't be anxious for answers, but don't stop asking questions. Be at peace with what God has made known to you this day, and have faith that he'll give you enough direction to guide you to tomorrow.

And if there is one place that I recommend you focus, it is Jesus Christ. That's what Paul proclaims to the Corinthians; "I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." THAT'S ALL THAT PAUL NEEDED TO PROCLAIM. That is the center of our faith. If we Christians spent our time and energy just making Jesus our Lord and following his commandments, as we should if he is indeed our Lord, not only would WE be closer to God but others too would see Christ's light shining in us and themselves be drawn closer to God. If we live in Christ and proclaim Christ in word and more importantly in deed, people will see the power of the Spirit in our love, in our forgiveness, in our faith, in our perseverance. That is the power of the Holy Spirit, and that is what draws people to Jesus Christ.