

May 2, 2021

## 9. God Declares Who God Is — Exodus 33:12-23; 34:4-9

Our passage this week finds God and Moses in the middle of an argument. In response to Israel's worship of the golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai, God has said that God will keep his part of the covenant—giving them land. But God also said, “I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people” (Exodus 33:3).

Moses is not too keen to continue leading these people without the assurance of God's presence. Where we pick up the conversation in verse 12, Moses is pleading his case. And God responds! God says, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14).

Seemingly encouraged by God's response to his request, Moses presses God further. Now that he has the assurance of God's presence, he wants a revelation of God's glory. Again, God responds to Moses's request but with a caveat. “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, ‘The LORD.’ . . . But . . . you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live” (Exodus 33:19-20).

I tend to think this inability to see the Almighty and live is connected to our finitude as created ones. We simply do not have the capacity to comprehend all that our Creator is. I don't think God is trying to hold out on Moses or hide something from him. I think the limited revelation Moses receives is because humankind cannot fathom all that God is. It would utterly blow our minds.

As I pondered this passage with Moses's begging for the promise of God's presence and a glimpse of God's glory, I found myself drawing parallels to the road to Emmaus story. In this Easter season, as I try to make sense of the promise of resurrection contrasted with the reality of the pain and chaos in the world around us, I have taken much solace in the story of the disciples walking to Emmaus. The risen Jesus is with them on the road. The risen Jesus is explaining to them what God is doing in the world through his death and resurrection. The risen Jesus stays with them when invited, and the risen Jesus is revealed in the breaking of bread . . . and then he disappears. In both Exodus and Emmaus, God is present on the journey, and God is revealed—to a point.

I am thankful for the continuity and faithfulness of our God. I am thankful that Jesus reveals to us the fullness of “the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). I am thankful that the God of Sinai who faithfully journeyed through the desert with the Israelites and faithfully journeyed with the disciples beyond the grave now faithfully journeys with us by the indwelling of the Spirit. We are walking a hard road right now—a road fraught with many challenges. We often can't see the way forward or understand how God will bring good out of our current circumstances.

And yet we do not have to walk alone. The responsive, journeying God travels with those who invite him. While I don't fully comprehend our traveling companion, like Moses I can't imagine going anywhere without him.

—Rachel Wallace

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*Looking for participant guide page numbers in the leader guide? The page numbers in the leader guide work for both guides.*

## Resources for this session

- **Kevin Ressler** is the presenter for unit 2, New Creation. These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each weekly session. *The videos are free and available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#).*
- A **Salt & Light Reproducible** is available for use with this session, found at [www.MennoMedia.org/SL](http://www.MennoMedia.org/SL).