JESUS IN THE TABERNACLE

THERE IS A PLACE BESIDE ME — PART 1

A Study Guide from My Daily Bread Global

Think about your last few conversations with God. How much of what you said was about your circumstances, and how much was simply asking to know Him better? There's no wrong answer, but tonight's passage features a man who made only one request, and it's worth seeing why.

WHERE WE LEFT OFF

For several weeks we've walked through the tabernacle piece by piece and seen Jesus in nearly every detail. Tonight we go back to a conversation that happened before the tent was even finished, when Moses stood talking with God and asked for something bigger than anything on the furniture list. God's answer gives us one of the clearest pictures in the Old Testament of where we stand with Him.

THE BIG IDEA

Moses asked to see God's glory. God said he couldn't see His face and live, but then added a sentence that changes the whole story: "There is a place by Me." God doesn't refuse the request. He provides a place where Moses can get as close as a human being can survive. That place turns out to be a picture of Jesus.

ONE REQUEST

Look at what Moses doesn't ask for. He doesn't bring God the budget, the building materials, or the logistics. Back in Exodus 25 the people had supplied the gold, which freed Moses up to ask for only one thing. In Exodus 33 his request is simple: if Your presence doesn't go with us, don't send us.

> **Exodus 33:15–16** *If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that I and Your people have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?*

Moses understood that presence is what makes a people distinct. Not their reputation, their gifts, or their skills. If God isn't in the middle of it, there's nothing left to separate them from anyone else. It's worth asking what, in your own life or community, would still be there if God's presence were removed.

ALL OF HIS GOODNESS

God's first answer to "show me Your glory" is generous: "I will make all My goodness pass before you." Not some. The whole of it. He then adds that He will be gracious to whom He will be gracious. That's not a harsh statement. It means God's kindness isn't waiting on a committee, a vote, or anyone's approval. He is free to bless, and He isn't asking permission.

> **Exodus 33:19** *I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN GET

Then comes the hard line: "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." The glory is simply more than a human body can hold. So God doesn't deny the desire. He engineers a way to meet it.

> **Exodus 33:21–23** *Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.*

Look at the details. A rock to stand on. A cleft to stand in. A hand covering him during the moment that would be too much. And then, after God has passed, Moses sees what's left behind. One translation of "back" reads like an afterglow. Everything God passes by carries some of what He left.

Notice also who's taking the initiative. This whole story started in Genesis 3 with God walking through the garden asking, "Where are you?" Adam never went looking. Sin was our problem, but the longing to close the distance was God's. Here He is again, making room.

THE PLACE IS A PERSON

Paul says of Israel's wilderness rock, “that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). Jesus is the place beside God where we can stand and see His glory without being destroyed. And in the incarnation God came as close to us as He could, wrapped in flesh. The veil of His body was the only thing between people and the full brightness of God.

> **John 14:6** *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

The Moses story doesn't say “a place,” it says “the place.” That's the claim Jesus makes too, and it's meant to be both narrow and kind: not every route works, but there is a real one, and it's open. And notice that we don't stand there because we've earned it. Moses isn't the point of this story. The cleft is. We're seated in Christ by position, not by condition (Ephesians 2:6). If we're going to brag about anything, it should be how good the place is.

SIT WITH THIS

1. If you only got to ask God one thing in your next prayer, what would it be? What does your answer reveal about what you want most?
2. What in your life or community would still be there if God's presence were removed? What would be gone?
3. Where do you feel like you can't get close to God, and what would it mean that He has already made a place for you there?
4. The afterglow image says people should be able to see traces of God on those who've been near Him. What would someone notice if they spent a week around you?

BEFORE NEXT TIME

Set aside ten minutes this week to pray with only one request: to know God more. No list, no problems to solve. Just ask, and then sit still long enough to notice what the quiet feels like.