

I've never heard that song before, but I do like the words, Though the seas are raging, I will find my rest in you.

You are in control.

And that's a good, good declaration of our faith in the Lord and our trust in Him.

I've been reading through the book of Job lately, and you remember that old, old story?
about why.

Why God?

Why did you allow this to happen to me?

Job complains to the Creator.

And you might know this, but Job is the oldest book in the Bible.

Now, I know Moses wrote about creation, and that predates Job.

I get it.

But most scholars think that Job was written during the time of the patriarchs, like Abraham, some 2000 B.C.

Moses didn't write Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, all that until like 600 years later, you know, about 1400 B.C.

or even after that.

And so, isn't it interesting that the oldest book in Scripture is about, God, are you still in control?

God, why?

God, where are you?

All those questions that Job asked his Creator, and we ask those same ones today.

And so, I don't know what your life is like these days, but understand this, that if you've got some doubts from time to time, you're in good company, right?

If you're experiencing some things that you think you don't deserve, you're in really good company.

David did that when David, the rightful anointed king, was being hunted down by an insane ruler, King Saul.

It's the question that Habakkuk the prophet asked God, God, why not only would you allow these bad things to happen to our country, why would you allow evil people to come in and rebuke us and defeat us?

Even Jesus on the cross asked, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

And so these are common questions, and the skeptics out there would say that, Well, there's two possible explanations, right?

You all believe that God is good.

Well, what if He's not quite as good as you think?

Or another skeptic might say, You believe God is all-powerful, but what if He's truly not quite powerful enough to control events?

What do you do with your God then?

Well, even one of the greatest men in the Bible, Moses -- think about it, the central character of the Old Testament -- Moses must have struggled greatly when his life and his plans were turned upside down by God.

And God didn't apologize for it.

God had a journey for Moses that involved frustration and pain and some suffering and some disappointment and many whys.

So we're going to look briefly at his life this morning and then apply that to our lives.

And here's the big idea this morning.

When it appears that God has lost control of the world and His good plans for your life, be assured that He still reigns.

He's reigning right now.

No matter what you're going through, He rules and He reigns.

If you have your copy of Scripture, you can open it up to the Book of Exodus, the second book in the Bible.

And as we turn there together, I'm going to be reading quite a few bits of passage from Exodus 24 and 32.

We're going to start with Exodus 24.

Here's the background.

The people of God, the Hebrew people, have spent the last 11 months at the bottom of Mount Horeb, also called Mount Sinai.

And there God has instructed them to do something.

God instructed that the 70 elders should come to the foot of the mountain and wait there, and that Moses, and of course his aide Joshua, would actually go up on the mountain, that Aaron would also come to the base of the mountain,

And then God did something miraculous there, as the majority were at the base of the mountain, God made His appearance shine forth.

And they just described it as like this appearance of God was standing on a platform.

And we can read about this in more detail in Ezekiel, but it was a platform of...

and it describes it as this lapis lazuli.

bright blue.

Think of a dazzling sapphire.

And then this appearance of God is standing on that.

They didn't know what to make of it.

Well, Joshua went up further on the mountain, as you remember the story, and then Moses went up to the top.

That's where I'll pick up in Exodus 24.

Look at verse 15 and following.

When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai.

For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud.

To the Israelites, the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.

Then Moses entered the cloud as he went up on the mountain, and he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Now, we've heard this story many, many, many times, maybe all of our lives.

And some of you might think that on the mountain, that all that God gave Moses was the Ten

Commandments.

And you could list them for me.

They are good to memorize, right?

They haven't passed away.

But if you remember when the tabernacle was created, and then later on the temple, there was that golden box called the Ark, and inside it were the Ten Commandments.

And you remember that, right?

and the jar of manna and Aaron's rod that budded.

Those three things were in there initially.

But next to the Ark, that golden box, was the Book of the Covenant.

Those are the other instructions that God gave Moses.

What was the Book of the Covenant?

It was instructions for how to build, well, how to construct the Ark, how to build the tabernacle, later on the temple.

It was how to

make the vestments for Aaron, the high priest, and his sons.

It was instructions about the diet and hygiene and how to act like people set apart from God.

It was about relationships, including sexual relationships.

That's all part of the book of the covenant.

But these two tablets that were the Ten Commandments

They were created by God and inscribed with His finger.

You remember that part of the story?

The first step of the Ten Commandments.

You might say, well, right, does God have a finger?

Does He have a fingernail?

I mean, does He have hands?

Well, we're taught by Jesus in John 4 that God is what?

Spirit.

And those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.

And so what we're looking at in the story of Moses is, you've heard this term before, an anthropomorphism.

That's attributing to God a characteristic of anthropos, man in a Greek, right?

But we know that literally God is spirit and He doesn't have fingers, digits, toes, fingernails, right?

But it's a description.

And so in Scripture we'll see references like the face of God, the right arm of God, but He is Spirit.

And these men, 74 in total, plus Moses, who saw this appearance of God, understand this, they didn't see God in His full form.

They didn't see the face of God.

See, 40 years later, when

Moses reviewed the law with them.

He writes that, and this is Deuteronomy 4:15, They saw no form of any kind.

Yeah, they saw some of the glory of God.

They saw this sapphire pavement, but they did not see God in His form.

I wonder why that is.

Could it be that

Our mysterious God who is spirit did not want anyone to make an idol of Him and then worship Him.

Our God is beyond form, beyond any idol.

Remember, it's the other nations in this time.

They created images of their gods, but our God, the true God, was the invisible God.

He's the God who is spirit.

And that's why one of the Ten Commandments is, You shall not make any idols, any representations of what you think God looks like so that you can look at it with your eyes and control it, perhaps, making yourself God.

One person has written that, False gods are always gods one can see and touch.

Those are the ones we like, right?

Those idols in our lives, those material possessions that we can see and touch, oh, they give us the buzz, right?

But our God is an invisible God, and we've got to be content with that.

Well, the story goes on in Exodus 32:1-6, When the people saw Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go up before us.' Right?

Idols.

Moses, we haven't seen.

God, we haven't seen.

Make us something that's tangible that we can see.

As for this fellow Moses who brought us out of Egypt, we don't know what's happened to him.

And so Aaron answered them, you remember this story?

And said, Take off your gold earrings that your wives and your sons and your daughters are wearing and bring them to me.

So all the people took off their earrings.

They brought them to Aaron.

and he made it into an idol.

He melted it down, then cast it in a sand cast, clay cast, and made it into a form of a calf.

And then the people said, These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you

you up out of Egypt.

So Aaron sees this, the people worshiping this.

They're pleased with it.

So he instructs them to build an altar in front of the calf, and then he announced tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.

So the next day the people come and they present offerings, burnt offerings before this calf, and they worship.

And then the Bible says it's a festival, so why not?

Let's eat, drink, and be merry.

And they engaged in what the Bible calls revelry.

So you can fill in the blanks.

So this is all happening while Moses is at the top.

You remember the story.

And then the story continues in 19 through 24.

So Moses comes down after how many days?

40.

And he sees this calf and the dancing, and his anger burned.

So what did He do with those sacred Ten Commandments that were from the hand of God?

What did He do?

He throws them down in anger, in disgust, and they are smashed to pieces.

So what does He do?

He then takes that calf, He has them melt it down, and then they grind it into dust, throws the dust on the water, and makes those people drink it.

as their punishment.

And then he asked his brother, What did these people do to you that you led them into such great sin?

Remember what Aaron replied?

Don't get mad at me.

They were saying, Make us gods who will go before us.

As for your brother Moses, we don't know what's happened to him.

So I just told them, Take off your gold jewelry.

Then they gave me the gold.

And all I did, big brother, actually little brother, I threw it into the fire and out jumped this calf.

Somebody quote from me, Romans 6:23.

Really loudly.

23 and 6:23 for the wages.

Finish it, yeah.

Well done.

The wages of sin.

Sin is always going to kill something.

You know who it killed on that day?

Well, the Bible tells us, right?

That the Levites were instructed and they struck down, they killed 3,000 people.

Three thousand people died because of disobedience.

Beyond that, what happened?

God sent a plague on the people.

Thousands more died.

See, sin is always going to kill something in our lives.

Think of all that it does in the world today, all the people dying because of sin.

You notice the old preacher that used to say, right?

Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you ever wanted to pay.

That's a sin that I know of.

And so there's a danger.

And so God sent this destruction on His people.

So what next?

Did God just give up?

Just judgment?

That's who we serve?

It's just a God of judgment?

A God who gets even with us?

But what's the next part of the story?

No.

God speaks to Moses again, and He says, Go back again.

Present yourself to Me on the top of the mountain.

This time, no one's to come with you.

So Moses went back up, chiseled out.

He did it this time.

He chiseled out two stone tablets, and then the Lord said something very important to him.

The presence of God passed in front of him.

proclaiming, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

Do you see the two sides of the coin there?

That you serve a God who loves you more than you could ever imagine.

A God who wants to give good gifts to His children.

A God who wants to hold you and protect you.

But He's also a God who cannot, by His perfect holy nature, leave sin unpunished.

By the way, that's why God sent a man to do this for us, yes?

To span the great distance between heaven and hell, us and heaven.

And so, what a word to Moses, that God had not given up on them.

that He would be present with them on the journey of the next 38 years.

There's so many lessons in this story, aren't there?

So many ways that your sermon might go on this, or my sermon, but I want to pull out some principles here for those times when you feel frustrated, when you feel like your plans have not worked out, and you're wondering, God, why did You allow this to happen when I've been so faithful to You?

As Moses was reminded, think about it, now he spent 80 days without food or water.

Can you imagine?

Two sets of 40.

Can you imagine his frustration after that first time thinking, Now I've got to go back up and do it all again because of you people.

The frustration when people don't act right.

The frustration when people talk about you behind your back.

when people don't do what they say they're going to do.

The frustration of when people who should have great faith seem to have such little faith and shrink back in fear.

It's frustrating.

It's painful.

And Moses must have felt all of that.

But the first principle I want to share with you is that God is working out His plan for history, and get this, and for you.

Even though God's people were disobedient,

That didn't change God's plan and His purpose for history, for them as a nation.

And it won't change anything for you.

God is still at work all the time.

That's what Jesus claimed about His Heavenly Father.

My Father is always working, and I must work too, Jesus said.

He's at work even when you can't see this invisible God.

So many times we have tunnel vision.

Right?

We have tunnel vision, and the world is just what we can see.

But there's a bigger thing that God is doing out there.

The whole world is focused right now on the Strait of Hormuz.

Right?

Like that's the only important thing going on in the world, and it is very important.

But there's things going on in every nation and country, and God is doing great and mighty things.

And there's some horrible things going on too in every nation, including ours.

But we have this tunnel vision.

It's about us and our agenda and how we feel.

Nile Avenue Baptist Church has gone and is going through some tough times right now, yes?

Let's be honest.

Times of disappointment and just not understanding why things turned out the way they did and transition and all of this.

And you're wondering, Where are you, God?

Who made the mistake?

Maybe you and your life, maybe you're experiencing some loss today, and you admit, Yeah, that's me.

Loss of a loved one, loss of health, loss of a job, loss of a friend.

God, where are you?

I was faithful.

Where are you?

I mean, that's what Job asks.

But God is working out His plan for history and for you.

We've got to remember some doctrine, right?

I found that when I can't figure out this world and circumstances, I go back to what the Bible says about our God.

And our Bible says that God is sovereign.

Yes?

What does that mean?

He rules.

He reigns.

He is still on His throne, no matter the tunnel vision we have on earth or not.

Our God is King, and He will not abdicate His throne to anyone.

I get it for a time period.

On earth, Satan rules as the prince of this planet.

I get that, but that's only because God allows him to in our fallen, broken world.

The sovereignty of God.

Always go back to the sovereignty of God that He wins in the end.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

He rules.

But also, the providence of God.

That's another theological term.

That just means that God's will will win out.

That God is the God of providence.

Things work out according to His will.

He might say, Well, wait, wait, wait.

What about a little child that's horribly

run over by a car or has cancer at age three and passes.

What, surely that can't be God's will.

Well, we're smart enough to know, right, that there is a permissive will of God.

He allows bad things to happen on earth.

Yes?

There's a permissive will.

but there's also a perfect will of God.

And that's all mysteriously wrapped up in the providence of God that says that in the end, God's will will win.

It'll win out.

And we can't understand all that, and along the journey we're going to struggle, but it's going to help us trust God more by remembering those principles.

God is always at work.

He's always working out His plan.

He's sovereign.

For history, for this church, for you, even when we can't see it.

But the second principle is this, that God's timing...

Oh, I don't like this one.

Put the slide up there.

God's timing often requires us to wait.

I mean, who likes that?

I don't like to wait.

So Moses waited.

How long?

Oh, 40 days, 40 nights, fasting.

Then another 40 days and 40 nights, He's waiting.

Waiting, waiting, waiting.

All the while, God, what are You doing?

What is going on?

And you can think about, again, just His attitude toward the people.

He had to be prayed up all the time to keep from being so bitter towards His own people, so resentful that they're the ones who made Him do all that waiting.

And he was alone.

Those 80 days, he's up there with nobody except for God.

Do you know that there's scholars, you know, this isn't make-believe, right?

Do you know that there's scholars who, that there is a Mount Sinai even today, and it's for all these decades have been off-limited, protected by a fence and military and all that.

And it's not in a country amenable to Christianity or Judaism, but there is a mountain.

And they have pictures of charred rocks on the top of Mount Sinai.

You do know that.

And there's photos of the cave, right?

Some call it Isaiah's cave, where he fled to, that maybe Moses used as well.

So the waiting.

Moses waits and waits and waits and waits.

And yet, what was God doing?

God was changing Moses' life.

And get this, what if mountaintop experiences are tough places?

I've always thought of mountaintop experiences like when I was a teenager and we would go to youth camp, and I can't remember where it was around here, but we went.

And mountaintop experience, you know, every day at youth camp with a bunch of kids and singing songs and worshipping and all that kind of stuff.

What if mountaintop experiences aren't the easy places?

For Moses, it was a tough place.

He had to fast.

He was worrying about his people.

What are they going to do next?

What if God would have you get all alone with Him up on a mountaintop?

Where you didn't have social media, you didn't have Facebook, you didn't have Instagram, you didn't have your laptops, your tablets, didn't have your phone.

What if God would have for you, coming up soon, a mountaintop experience that, turns out, is not much fun?

But that's where you get real with God and He gets real with you, and that's when He changes you.

Don't run away from hard experiences and hard times.

Don't run away from isolation.

Now, we're all wired differently.

I'm wired to get alone with God.

My wife is wired to get alone with God with reading with other people through Scripture, or listening to worship songs and Scripture together.

The community.

But my point is, don't assume

that a mountaintop experience in your life is going to be always joyful and always fun.

It might be one of the toughest things you've ever done, but it's where God is going to mold you and make you and change you.

That's what He did in the life of Moses.

And what did He share with Moses?

Feelings?

He shared the Word of God, the Ten Commandments in the Book of the Covenant.

So there's another lesson for us, right?

As I'm alone with God, I am not to be meditating on my navel and expect to achieve enlightenment.

Right?

Why did God preserve this for thousands of years?

For us to read.

So when I'm alone with God, I'm together with the Word.

Yes?

Because that's where He most clearly gives me my instruction.

Clearly the words that help me repent of any known sin.

Clearly the words to strengthen me.

and give me power.

Well, here's the third point and the last one.

God provides His presence in place of answers.

I like this one probably the best.

We want God to give us answers to answer our whys and our how-comes, right?

To justify ourselves before Him.

Why did you allow this to happen to me when I've been trying to be so faithful to you?

But this is my experience, and I do think this is God's Word, that God provides His presence in place of answers.

You are never going to understand why everything happened to you that has happened to you.

You're never going to understand why God allowed everything that's happened to this church to happen to this church.

You just won't.

But I promise you, He'll give you something better, and that's His presence.

That's His presence that you can enjoy every single day.

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The Lord replied, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

What more did Moses need?

My living presence, Moses, is going to go with you as you lead these people, and I'm going to give you rest through that.

I'm going to give you peace through that.

His presence that changes everything.

See,

the distinguishing mark of true believers is the presence of God.

It's to know that God is with us even when circumstances are against us.

It's the presence of God.

Can I ask you, don't be offended by this, but do you have the presence of God in your life?

Do you know that the Holy Spirit of

Almighty God resides in you.

The Spirit of Jesus abides in your life because you want Him to, because you've asked Him to, because you've said, I don't want to be God.

I don't want to be King.

I want you to be in my life.

So come in and fill me with your presence and do your work that cancels out all of my sins, past, present, future.

Do others see that God's presence is in your life?

And you're okay with not knowing all the answers to all the things you've suffered because God is enough.

I guess that's the question, right?

For you, is God enough?

Go to the next slide.

You know, Moses, the Bible tells us that when he went in to the tent of meeting, that was his little tent to be with God,

that he spent time with the presence of God.

And what happened to his face?

You remember?

It's like he was glowing.

His face was glowing.

So he would come out, Joshua was there, you know, come out, and he would teach and preach to the people and lead them, and they would see like the Shekinah glory of God all over his face.

Has anybody

Not seeing there's kind of glory on you necessarily, but has anybody ever told you that they can just tell you're a Christian?

Has anybody shared with you that you just look joyful today?

How can you do that when you just got that bad diagnosis?

Can people see the presence of Jesus in your life?

You remember also what happened with that face of Moses?

What happened after he went out for a while and ministered to the people?

What happened to his face?

It started to grow dull, right?

It's like the glory was fading.

The radiance was fading.

What would Moses have to do to get that radiance back?

You'd have to go back in the tent of meeting and spend time with God.

That's a whole other sermon, right?

But that's the answer to be an influential for Christ and moving people one notch towards

towards God is to spend time with God yourself so that you can represent Him, and so that some of His radiance can rub off on you.

Well, be encouraged, church, in these trying times.

Understand that God is still sovereign.

He will win, and that His will

will win out.

Understand that He offers something much better than facts and answers and figures and all the things we want to know and the whys.

He will offer His presence to you if you trust Him.

He really will.

In fact, church, He wants to give that to you right now, if you let Him.

You are never alone.

So can I give you a homework assignment this week?

Find one way, one way to show God that He's enough.

When you don't get the answers, when He seems not to answer your prayers with the yes.

Instead, it's a no or a not yet.

Think of one way that you can show God you're all in.

You're trusting Him.