

## Sermon Reflection: Giving to God What Is God's

Bible Verses Referenced: Genesis 1:26-27, Exodus 32-35, Matthew 11:28, 2 Corinthians 3:18, John 1:14

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we're so grateful for the gift of Your Word, where we get to know and learn about Your Son, Jesus, and how to fall more deeply in love with Him. We pray and ask that the ministry of Your Word might be Your Word for the sake and glory of Your Son, Jesus, in His name we pray. Amen. Please. So we're talking about the story of the Book of Exodus, and Moses has come to this place on Mount Sinai where he is interacting with God in a very intimate way.

And before I get to that, though, I want to talk about taxes in Caesar just a little bit. Okay, so Jesus is in a scene where He has the Pharisees on one side and the followers of the puppet King Herod on the other. And they are trying to trap him by getting him to take sides in some of the cultural debates of the day. And one of those debates was, was it lawful for Jewish people to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor?

And so the Pharisees know that this is a troubling question, and especially to ask this in front of a bunch of Roman Herodians, that he says to them, "Well, let me ask you a question," and he asks them to throw him one of the coins that is used to pay the tax, and they toss him a denarii. And so he holds up the coin, and he says, "Whose picture or image is on this coin?" And of course, whose image would be on the coin?

But Caesars, the emperors. They reply correctly. And then he likely takes the coin and tosses it back to them and says, "Well, then give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor and give to God what belongs to God." Very creative. And they were amazed at the answer, and some of us may be puzzling over it.

So let's think about it. The coin bears the image of Caesar, right? So you give what belongs to Caesar to Caesar, the coin. Pay your taxes. But then he says, "Give to God's what is God's?" So where is God's image engraved? There's the key question that's unspoken. It's on us. We, Genesis chapter 1, are made in the image of God.

So if you give to Caesar what is Caesar? You pay your taxes. If you give to God what is God's, you give Him your very life. You give Him yourself. This is ultimately what the Lord wants from us, is for us to be in an intimate, worshiping relationship where we give Him our very selves. We give Him our very lives.

Jesus is reminding these Jewish leaders what the heart of the matter is. We have the same kind of thing being talked about with the story of Moses. In the book of Exodus, Moses is up on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. And while he's up on the mountain, he is receiving detailed architectural instructions and drawings on how to build a sanctuary for the Lord. And the instructions have all kinds of things laid out.

You know, it has exactly how wide and high and long everything is. It describes the furniture that is supposed to be in the sanctuary of the Lord. It describes how the priest's garments are supposed to be laid out. It tells you what kind of threads to use, what kind of jewelry and gold and all this stuff is all laid out on those instructions.

And while Moses is getting these detailed exact instructions, the Israelites are down at the base of the mountain impatiently worshipping a golden cow and engaged in idolatry. And nothing drives a wedge between the relationship of God and His people than idolatry.

Idolatry is the diminishing of God and creating a false version of God so that we can worship, in a sense, the work of our hands. And God, this is breaking commandments one and two, shall have no other gods before me. Do not make for yourself any graven image of me or any other thing. And so the Lord is on the outs with the people of Israel in this conversation with Moses.

And Moses has pled with him for mercy. Say, "Please forgive them, Lord. Don't destroy them in the wilderness because you know what would everybody say about you if you led these people out in

the wilderness just to destroy them?" So he's pleading with God on behalf of his people, and God is wanting to bring the relationship down to just him and Moses.

And Moses is saying, "Nope, I want my people included in this." And so the very first thing that I want you to think about here is, one, the intimacy of the relationship that God and Moses have, and how that Moses' heart as a pastor and as a leader of a congregation, the Israelites of the people, is for that same intimacy to be manifest in their lives with God.

What is intimacy? One of my wife's favorite authors is a lady named Sharon Hirsch, and she talks about that everybody deeply wants to be truly known and truly loved. That that's the longing of everybody's heart. And that when we have that, when we're known and when we're loved, that's when we're close to somebody. And then right on the heels of that is having their presence with us, right? We want them in our presence.

And so that's what's taking place with Moses and God. He is put your sermon upside down, you can't read it. So Moses says to the Lord, Moses says to the Lord, "See, you say to me," this is in your bulletin, by the way, "Bring up this people, but you have not let me know whom you will sin with me.

Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have found favor in my sight.'" So Moses is advocating for his people and what God is going to do with these people, but he says, "But what you've said to me is that you know me and that you find favor with me." In other words, you love me. You know me and you love me. Now therefore, if you love me, if you found favor in my sight, well then show me your ways that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

But I also want you to consider that this nation is your people. So what Moses has is he is known by the Lord, and he loves the Lord, and he's loved by the Lord. And he knows the Lord, and he loves the Lord. But what has become a problem is that the people don't know the Lord and don't love the Lord. And God is getting to a place where He doesn't want to be intimate with them either.

And so Moses is sinking up that relationship back again, trying to get His people to be in that loving and knowing relationship. I love this quote. It's along the same lines of knowing and loving from Tim Keller, a Presbyterian minister who recently passed away. One of the best Presbyterian ministers out there, New York, so you're not able to go and visit his church. You have to stay here.

But Tim Keller says, "To be loved but not known is comforting, but that's superficial." That's a hollow thing. You know, say to somebody, "I love you, but I don't really know you." It's nice to be loved, but we want to be known as well. To be known and not loved, well, that's scary. That's fearful. It's our greatest fear, in fact, to be known and not loved.

But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It's what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense. It humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and it fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us. Wonderful thought. So what Moses is wanting is for God's presence to be with His people.

The problem is God knows these people as a stiff-necked people. And it's causing a problem with His favor of them. And it also is the reason why He can't dwell and be present with them. But He says, "I'll have my presence be with you, Moses.

My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." It's the very same thing that Jesus said when He said, "Come unto me all you that weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He's quoting God and saying exactly the same thing that the Lord is offering Moses. But Moses says to him, "Well, if your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.

For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and Your people? Is it not in Your going with us?" See, Moses is not content to just have God dwell with Him. He wants God to dwell with His people, the Israelites. Now, all of this, I think, connects with St.

Mark's, actually. And we're starting today at three o'clock will be the installation of a new Rector here at St. Mark's. And I hope you will all come back to church. There'll be a lot of church in one day, but I

hope you'll be back. But one of the things that I could say to you as your new Rector is that my heart is not that I simply would have a personal relationship with the Lord, and that I would be intimate with Him.

And that you would look at me and go, "Wow, what a wonderful guy, and what a spiritual person who is spending all that time praying with the Lord and studying His Word, and He really is loved by God and loves God." No, that's not good enough. What Moses models here is that it's not enough to have a spiritual leader. You also need to be a spiritual people.

And so if you want to know what my heart is for you more than anything else, is that God would dwell in your midst, and that you would be known by God, and that you would be loved by God, and that you would know God, and you would love God. And that's fundamentally my job, actually, as your pastor, is to stand here, and one, represent the Lord to you, and tell you so much about how He cares about you, and wants to know you, and wants to be engaged and involved in your life.

And also for you, and this is your job, is to respond to that and to give your hearts to the Lord in worship. What we're about, just like Moses was about this back with the Israelites, is calling upon the Lord to dwell in the midst of His people. And that is my heart and passion. You need to know that about me.

More than anything else, I want God to be here. I want Him to be dwelling in the midst of your lives. Now, of course, we have the same danger that the Israelites had back then. Keep yourself from idols, beloved, because if your hearts get distracted by the idols of this world, you can be led astray from the Lord, and you can drift away from Him, and He can withdraw His presence from us.

And so this is what we're all working on, is that we want God's presence to be dwelling in our midst here at St. Mark's. And so Moses, he says, you know show me your glory, Lord. And that's what I want, is for the glory of the living God to manifest Himself here. Now, what is glory? Glory is the visible manifestation of the attributes of God.

So when Moses asks to see the glory of God, God says, "Well, you can't see all of it, because if I showed you all of my glory, you wouldn't be able to live." And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to show you a glimpse of it. He says, "I will make all my goodness pass by you and proclaim before you my name the Lord. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.

But you can't see my face, for man shall not see me and live," the Lord says. So he says, "I'm going to put you in a rock and a little spot I have for you. And I'm going to put you in this little hole in the cave. I'm going to put my palm over you. And my glory is going to pass by. And then right when I'm passing by, I'm going to remove my hand, and you're going to get a little glimpse of me. You're going to see just a little bit of me. And that's what the Lord does.

Now think about glory as light, OK? Glory is light. It's the fullness. Light is so critically important for everything that we have, but we often take it for granted, just like we take God for granted. But when you reflect light through a prism, what happens? Roy G. Biv, right? Remember that from science class? Roy G. Biv. Well, it's the same thing with God's character, the light of God.

When you refract it, you see all the different attributes of God. His justice, His holiness, His mercy, His love, His kindness, just the whole entire list. And so what the Lord is saying to Moses is, is I'm going to let my fullness pass you by, but I'm going to refract the light of my character. And you're only going to see little glimpses of certain attributes that I want to show you. Like I'm going to show you red, yellow, and green, but not blue.

And so he says, "I'm going to show you mercy and goodness and love." And so as the Lord passes by, He declares Yahweh, Yahweh, and He lists off different attributes. "I am merciful and gracious and loving and full of covenant faithfulness and kindness and forgiving the sins of my people for a thousand generations to those who love me." But I have a little bit of justice I want to show you.

And so here is the glory of the Lord. And what the New Testament church is all about is seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That when we look and gaze upon the person and work of Jesus, that we see the manifestation of the attributes of God. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

And so when we see His face, and we want to look upon that glory more than anything else, as this congregation, our lives will then begin to be transfigured and transformed by that glory. His light will begin to shine in our light, and His character will begin to manifest itself as our character, and we will become the people that God is calling us to be.

Because right worship always leads to right character and right practices within the people of God. We become truly human. The words of Jesus about giving to God what is God's. When we begin to give God what is God's and worship Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, well then our lives become bearing His image as they rightly originally were designed to do. We become the image bearers of what God is doing in this world.

So give to God what is God's.