

# Exodus Chapter 33 v 12 - 23

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning everybody. It's good to welcome everyone this morning, especially those who are visiting with us. We've got a group from Pontefract with us this morning and we look forward to speaking with them afterwards.

On the wall behind me is a scripture reading which tells us that God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles, that's us, the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And some of these things this morning we're going to be thinking about, this hope of glory, and perhaps to answer the question, what glory is? And so it's appropriate to begin with our first hymn. It's number 44 in the hymn book, Glory Be to God the Father, Glory Be to God the Son, Glory Be to God the Spirit, Great Jehovah, Three in One. He's the one we come to worship and glorify this morning. So let's stand and sing number 44.

And let's all pray together. Let us pray. Glory, glory, glory, glory to the King of Kings. Lord, we do thank you and praise you that as we come into this place this morning, a gathering of your people, your church, we pray that all the glory and all the honour will be given to you. Because we come knowing that even during this last week we've committed sins against you, that we've failed in so many ways. And yet, Lord, your word tells us that there's a tremendous promise given to us that if we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our saviour, we will one day see that glory of which we've been singing. So, Lord, just be present with us. We pray that wherever the gospel is preached this morning, you'll be there in the midst of your people, that it won't simply be words only, but it will be as if that almighty path from on high has been unleashed. And Lord, that there might be many who hear for the first time the gospel of the living God.

Lord, we ask that as we meet together, we might just be able to worship you in truth and our worship might be acceptable in your sight. And Lord, as we come, we come knowing that our world is in a difficult time as it always is. But we know, Lord, that you are in control. And so we can come and take this time together, a time of peacefulness, a time of just being able to reflect on all that you've done for us. And we pray, Lord, that you'll continue to bless your people, not just here, but in the whole world. And that people looking on will see that you're a God who dwells with his people. So, Lord, be with us this morning. Help us to worship you together and to rejoice in the good news of the gospel. For we ask all these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. The scriptures from the book of Exodus chapter 33. Exodus chapter 33. And we're going to begin reading at verse 18.

If you've got a Bible, then Exodus 33 is actually on page 92 in the church Bible.

[ 3 : 4 5 ] So, Exodus 18. We're going to read from verse 12. Moses said to the Lord, you have been telling me, lead these people. But you've not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, I know you by name, and you found favor with me. If you're pleased with me, teach me your ways so that I may know you and continue to find favor with you.

Remember that this nation is your people. The Lord replied, my presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. Then Moses said to him, if your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you're pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth? And the Lord said to Moses, I will do the very thing you have asked, because I'm pleased with you, and I know you by name. Then Moses said, now show me your glory. And the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But he said, you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.

Then the Lord said, there's a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I pass by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen. And may the Lord add his blessing to his word. And the children are going to go out now, and we're going to sing together hymn 35.

At one of the meetings I was at this week, as part of that meeting, we asked the question, if you could have anything in the world that would make your life complete, what would it be?

And we got various different answers. But if you ask most people in the street that question, I suppose we can all guess maybe the three things that they would mention. They'd probably say, it'd be nice to have a lot of money so that I could buy whatever I wanted. Nice house, nice car, whatever. The second thing might be that they would want to have someone who was their wife or husband, who they could spend their life with. Or perhaps it would be that they just wanted to be healthy, never to be ill, and then their life would be complete. But in the passage that we read in Exodus, Moses asks for one particular thing. He says, now show me your glory. I'm indebted to Steve Novak, who was with us, if you remember, for the mission week, because on the Saturday morning, he spoke on that verse. I'm not going to repeat it, but it started me thinking, and I looked into this particular verse, and I want to open it up for us this morning.

[ 7 : 39 ] Now show me your glory. And this was from a man who'd seen so many glorious things already, hadn't he?

But this morning, I want to talk about three things which hopefully will maybe help you to remember when you've gone home. I want to talk about a glorious view, I want to talk about a glorious event, and I want to speak about a glorious feeling.

But before we start, we've got to understand what we mean by glorious. Because it seems obvious, and the Bible's full of the word glory and glorious when it's applied to God, but maybe we've got some idea what it might be.

But if somebody asks you to describe what glory was, you might be hard-pressed. The Hebrew word for glory is kabod, and the Greek word is doxa.

And it's not one particular meaning. Those two words have different meanings, including these. heaviness, worthiness, wealth, splendor, reputation, honor, opinion, and soul.

[ 9 : 01 ] So it's not just straightforward, is it? I'm not sure that Moses knew what he was asking for when he asked God to show him his glory. And if you think about it, he'd seen so many things.

He'd seen all the plagues in Egypt. He'd seen the fiery pillar guarding as he went to the Red Sea. He'd seen the parting of the sea.

He'd seen the commandments being written in slabs of stone. He'd seen manna provided in the wilderness. He'd seen water come from a rock. And all sorts of other glorious things.

And yet, having seen all that, he still felt there was more to see, more to this glory that he wanted to experience.

If we read in Scripture, then we find that in Isaiah chapter 6 verse 3, it says, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory.

[ 10 : 09 ] The whole earth. The whole of creation. Apparently, the atheist Bertrand Russell was asked what he would say if when he died, he discovered that God really did exist.

The quote he used was that he was going to say to God if this happened, Sir, why did you make yourself so hard to find? But, that raises a question.

Does God hide himself from us? Perhaps for those who aren't really looking, the answer is yes. It's not that God is hiding, but if people aren't looking for him, then they're never going to find him.

But, the answer is probably yes. But, what about those who are earnestly seeking God and honestly desiring to find him? The Bible tells us, you will seek me and find me.

When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord. And here, Moses was seeking God with all his heart and he really wanted to see his glory, even though he probably didn't know what he was asking for.

[ 11 : 29 ] And I want us to think about that this morning under those three headings that I mentioned. When the Lord caused his goodness to pass before him and he showed him his glory, he only saw the back.

He didn't see his full glory because he wouldn't have been able to bear it. But, at least he'd seen the power of God and his authority and he'd been in that personal contact.

And yet, he still wanted to see the glory of God. Why was that? Well, part of the answer to that question is actually given in Luke's Gospel, chapter 16, verse 31.

This is what it says. This was Jesus speaking to someone about people believing in him. He said to him, if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.

So, there's something about people that makes them not believe even if they see the Lord's hand at work. And the greatest work that the world could see, it would seem, is somebody being raised from the dead.

[ 12 : 46 ] But Jesus said, even if they see someone raised from the dead, they still won't believe. And you can imagine what would happen if that was reported on the BBC news or the ITV news.

Someone was raised from the dead. They would all immediately say, oh, it's a trick. You know, he wasn't really dead. You know, nobody can raise anybody from the dead. They simply would not believe.

But of course, what they need to do is to see God himself and have a relationship with him. not to see the works that he's done, but to have that relationship.

But, our verse says that they can't do that. They can't see God himself because they wouldn't be able to stand it. Even Moses was given this veiled view.

But he's not the only one who God showed something of his glory to. In Elijah, we find that Elijah, when he'd defeated the prophets of Baal, he was then frightened because he was about to be killed by the queen.

[ 13 : 55 ] And so he fled and eventually disappeared. And the Lord found him hiding away in fear. And this is what happened then.

The Lord said to him, what are you doing here, Elijah? Elijah replied, I've zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, turned down your altars and killed every one of your prophets.

I'm the only one left and now they're trying to kill me too. Go out and stand before me on the mountain, the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain.

It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

[ 15 : 07 ] So once again a man with a close relationship with God was given an opportunity to see and hear the Lord. And this was the prophet who was taken to heaven in a whirlwind and on a chariot of fire.

Which also lets us know that Elijah didn't suffer a normal death. He went out in a real blaze of glory, quite literally. and we've looked at these two men, Moses and Elijah, having special encounters with God.

But of course in the New Testament we've got another example in Luke's Gospel where the disciples went up to the mountain with Jesus and he was transfigured before them.

You remember the story? And they were there and they witnessed it and they witnessed the glory of Jesus, God who visited this earth. And if you remember the story well, you remember something else.

Let me just read the end of it. I won't read you the whole of the story. But he says, while he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them.

[ 16 : 18 ] Then, who was it? Well let's just see what Peter says. Peter was very sleepy but when he was awake, he said, there were two men standing near him.

And those two men, of course, were Moses and Elijah. Don't you find that amazing? Because Moses had asked God, he's the character we think about today, he'd asked God to show him his glory.

And the Lord wouldn't because he knew he couldn't bear it. But now, he does see God's glory in the face of Jesus as he's transfigured.

God kept his promise and showed him his glory. And also Elijah, who also had that glory seen but it was veiled.

Is it amazing that these people who really sought God were able ultimately to see the glory of God? God? But how can we understand the glory of God?

[ 17 : 23 ] That was the question. Those are three examples. Let's look at this glorious view first of all. One night recently I was driving back from church and I went along the west cliff and the headland at Sanzen was black and the sky was striped bright red, scarlet, with purple clouds in the background.

The blue sea was there but it was like steel and it was a three-masted yacht and it was just like a mill pond to see and on the yacht there were lights flickering and I thought what a glorious view that is.

I took a picture with my camera and it was rubbish. But I wonder whether you've ever seen a view like that which really just took your breath away. there's probably many occasions when we see views similar to that which take our breath away.

But Isaiah said the whole earth is full of his glory, is full of God's glory. And therefore as people often say God's glory can be seen in his creation.

Now here's a question I'm going to give you the answer but I'll ask the question first so you can think about it for a few seconds before I give you the answer. If I asked you what was the pinnacle, what was the highest point, what was the zenith of God's creation, what would it be?

[ 18 : 59 ] The only clue I'll give you is I'm looking at it. Mankind. Mankind. The whole of creation was made for man because when God created the world and everything in it, remember at the end he said to the man and the woman, go and subdue the earth.

It's all yours. Whatever there is to eat, whatever it is that you need, it's all for you. That's the pinnacle of creation.

And anybody who's seen pictures of a baby in the womb perhaps sucking its thumb but perfectly formed and you realise that when that baby comes into this world, there'll be a sentient being able to think, able to understand complex things, not just an animal, just following their instincts, they're able to think.

You've just got to say that was the pinnacle of creation. How do we know that? Because only for the most wonderful part of creation would Jesus go to the cross and ultimately die.

He didn't go to the cross and die to create another world. He didn't go to the cross to die to save all the animals. He didn't go to the cross to die to do anything other than one thing, to pay the penalty for sin that men and women had created.

[ 20 : 34 ] creation. That was the wonderful thing. That's why man was the pinnacle of creation. And I'm going to come back to that when we come to the end this morning.

God's glory is seen in the men and women he created.

It's hard to believe isn't it? As we sit here this morning I'm looking out at the glory of God because you are all God's creation. And there's something in every single one of us that reminds us of God and reminds us of the creator.

The whole of creation of course creates something in us which gives us wonder. And it's amazing how many people see the creation and think it's wonderful but can't see the God who made it.

Just like the children couldn't see those dots because they haven't got the full picture yet. They don't know the full story of creation and why the world was created and what ultimately happened.

[ 21 : 49 ] So they don't sense God in it. They can worship animals and some races do. They can worship things, mountains and some people do.

But they're looking at the glory of what God created. They're not looking at the creator. They're not looking at the glory of God himself. What about a glorious event?

Well in 2012, Kath and I went to see the Olympic Games and when we were in the stadium with the crowd singing and cheering as Jessica Ennis won the gold medal in the pentathlon, it was a glorious occasion.

Everybody felt it. glorious event. The Lord was in creation but of course he sent his son into this world.

I'll ask you another question similar to the first one. So what was the pinnacle? What was the zenith? what was the final top thing as it were of Christ's life?

[ 23 : 06 ] What was his purpose in coming to this earth? Was it the fact that he healed people? Was it the fact that he made loaves and fishes feed 5,000 people?

Was it the calming of the storm? No. It was his death and resurrection. That was the pinnacle. The world sees that as the end and a failure.

They don't see that that was the zenith of his life on this earth. That he was willing to die on a cross for those people that he'd made.

You and I. all of the other things that happened were to demonstrate God's goodness to his people.

But it was his death and resurrection which was the pinnacle of his life. It's ironic isn't it? That the pinnacle of his life was his death. Because then he was resurrected.

[ 24 : 09 ] Some people might believe in the resurrection of Christ. Some people might believe that he was raised from the dead.

But that still doesn't mean they'll become believers. Because even if they see someone rise from the dead it won't make them believe. They can explain it away and still be unchanged.

they need to see and have that relationship with the Son. See his glory and his offer of salvation. In John's Gospel chapter 1 verse 14 it says this the disciples talking we've seen his glory the glory of the only begotten Son.

And then in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 7 it says he is the image and glory of God. how could Judas live day by day in the presence of Jesus and have God himself there by his side see the miraculous things he did and yet still be an unbeliever.

It's a danger for each one of us. but what about this glorious feeling? Well I've got another example.

[ 25 : 42 ] It's a rather down to earth one I'm afraid. Having a lovely hot shower when you've been doing something dirty in the garden and you've got mud and there's sweat all over you and you go into a lovely shower and have a hot shower and you come out feeling absolutely clean and it's a wonderful feeling.

But now the third person in the Trinity is at work because when Jesus did go back into heaven he said he would send us a comforter and that comforter was the Holy Spirit but God's glory is seen in the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts.

Third question same as the last two. What was the pinnacle? what was the zenith of the Holy Spirit's work? Conversion.

When people are converted when they become Christians it's the Holy Spirit's work. It's God the Holy Spirit's work. He's the one who convicts people of sin.

He's the one who convinces them of the truth of the gospel. He's the one who guides us through that time when we're coming to God. He points us to Christ.

[ 27 : 04 ] He shows us about Christ's atoning death and resurrection and he's the one who points people in the right direction. So the pinnacle of the Holy Spirit's work as it were is when he sees a new Christian a new baby Christian born.

you can imagine the Holy Spirit saying that's my work done. So God's glory is seen in the conversions of men and women.

And for those who have been Christians for any length of time we understand it don't we because when someone becomes a Christian everyone who's a Christian rejoices when they see them coming to that new birth.

But of course all that is so much we might see all of those things we might understand them and as Christians we might know them and sense them. But let's just look at them finally as we come towards the end.

Because if we go through those things let's put them in the context of what impact they have. Let's go back first of all to that pinnacle of creation mankind.

[ 28 : 20 ] mankind. If God loved the world so much not only that he would create us but that he would send the Lord Jesus to die on the cross then surely we need to look at men and women in a different way.

Not as men and women, not as rich and poor, not as talented and those without any talents, not those who are as it were criminals and those who are good people because the Bible says none of us are but looking on all men and women and all mankind as God's glorious creation.

And if it's God's glorious creation surely that's going to have an impact on our evangelism. Why do we want to reach out to people? Why do we want them to become Christians why do we want them to have this eternal life that the Bible speaks about?

Well for the very reason that they are God's creation and we need to reach out to them whoever they are. What about this wonderful event, Christ coming and dying on the cross and being raised from the dead?

Well surely these are the things that we need to present to people when we're presenting the gospel and trying to point them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 29 : 57 ] And here's the question that we need to ask about that particular event. Do we see the glory of God in his plan of salvation and the gift of eternal life?

That's the pinnacle of that plan. This was God's pinnacle as it were in creating the world, in creating the plan of salvation, the pinnacle would be that one day his people would inherit eternal life and be part of his family in heaven.

That's the pinnacle. And can we see that? That's why we're preaching the gospel to people. This is why we're telling them of why we believe and his atoning death.

And what sort of impact would that have on others if we witnessed in that way? And finally, the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit who gives us, if you like, our feeling, our sense of God in our hearts and pointing us towards Christ. He's the one who guides us through life.

[ 31 : 03 ] The Holy Spirit works in us to help us with our day-to-day battles with sin. And every person converted displays the glory of God, at least in reflecting him.

And it allows us to glorify him even more. One thing I found interesting, going back to Moses and Elijah for a moment, is that the last book in the Old Testament, you remember after the last book of Malachi, there were hundreds of years before Christ came, where, there was virtually no Christian witness.

And did you know, some of you will, I'm sure, but in Malachi verses four to six, we see the same two people, Moses and Elijah, being referred to by Malachi.

And he said that Moses would teach people about the laws of God and his decrees. And Elijah would come and work in people's hearts. hearts.

And in a way, they were mirroring what Jesus Christ would do in its totality when he came, when he led his people to salvation.

[ 32 : 17 ] salvation. And I think this is the hardest question I'm going to ask you today. And it's one that only each one of you can answer for yourselves. ourselves.

We can look at men and women and we can see with our minds and we can understand from what the scriptures say that they are God's glory and creation and therefore we can want to reach out to them.

We can see in Christ the wonderful plan of salvation and we can offer that to people who are searching for him. But when it comes to the Holy Spirit, here's a question that only in individuals can answer.

Who is at work in your heart today? Is it the Holy Spirit or is it something else? If it's just you, I'm the one who's in charge of me, then there's something wrong because the Holy Spirit is the one who guides us in this life.

We need him. The Bible says the Holy Spirit will come and dwell within us and if he's at work in us, what is he actually doing?

[ 33 : 32 ] Well, the Bible tells us that's really where we should place our sanctification day by day. We seek to follow Christ. If Christ is our saviour, then we look to the Holy Spirit to help us.

We don't rely on our own strength. faith. These men, Moses and Elijah, were both Old Testament characters, saw glorious views, experienced glorious events, but they never saw Christ.

They saw God veiled, but Christ came to dwell amongst his people. He came to us because we were not allowed to see God face to face.

How privileged then we are in this day to have the opportunity of a relationship with Jesus and a promise of eternal life to come.

it's great to look back through the Bible and see some of the wonderful events that took place and they encourage us and sometimes they challenge us, but you know how blessed it is for people who can walk with Jesus every day with the Holy Spirit's help.

[ 34 : 55 ] And if there's anybody this morning who doesn't understand the word I'm talking about, there are two problems with that, one it's probably the way I said it, but if the Holy Spirit's not at work in you, then whatever you're doing there's something wrong.

We need to trust in Christ, the Son who came to this earth, we need to trust in the Holy Spirit who guides us through this life and if we never come to Christ in that way, then we really need to do it immediately because it's the only way the Bible says in which we're ever going to see the glory of God.

I'll leave you with this thought, if you've seen some of the glorious things, I'm sure you have, that I've seen, a glorious view, a baby being born and other wonderful things I'm sure, just think how much greater, I don't know by what magnitude, millions and millions of times, the glory of God is going to be when we come before him on that day.

I don't know about you, but I want to be ready for that day because it will be a glorious day. Amen. Lord, we do want to give you the glory for the great things that you've done.

Now to him who's able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore.

[ 36 : 41 ] Amen.