**Prayer and Praise Service**

**September4, 2024**

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Tonight we stand in the valley between the two spiritual mountaintops of Mount Sinai and Mount Nebo.

On Sunday, we looked at Exodus 19. That chapter is “the theological and literary pivot of Exodus. Nowhere do we find a fuller revelation of God in relation to the people.”[[1]](#endnote-1) So, on Sunday, we learned four key truths about our covenantal God:

* He cares for His people.
* He commissions His people.
* He consecrates His people.
* He communicates with His people.

Due to time and the focus of the message, we didn’t spend time talking about the covenant that God makes on Sinai.

Already in this sermon series, we have seen two covenants. The covenant with Noah and the covenant with Abraham. The covenant introduced here at Sinai is often called the Mosaic covenant. The three covenants are different from one another:

1. The covenant with Noah to never destroy the earth by flood was unilateral, universal, and unconditional. God alone made it with every living thing, and it will never be revoked.
2. The covenant with Abraham to make him into a great nation was unilateral and unconditional. God made it and would keep it no matter what.
3. But the Mosaic covenant is different. While it builds on the Abrahamic covenant by establishing Israel as the people of God, it is a conditional covenant between God and the people. God binds Himself to His people, and they respond by binding themselves to Him. God reminds the people that they have an obligation to follow His law, and they agree to do so.

To make this covenant, God used His “big voice” at Sinai as we saw on Sunday. That had to be an impressive event!

But God does not always speak in His big voice. If you fast-forward another 700 or so years from Moses, you come to the prophet Elijah. He also encountered God on Mount Sinai and heard God’s voice. But God’s voice on that day was far different. Turn to **1 Kings 19**.

Elijah is fresh off a victory on Mount Carmel – a mountaintop we will consider later in our series. There Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal and saw God bring rain to the land. But then Elijah gets word that King Ahab and Queen Jezebel are angry over Elijah’s victory and want his life. In fact, Jezebel swears an oath: “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of [the dead prophets of Baal].” Naturally, Elijah is afraid, so he runs for his life. He finally crashes in exhaustion under a tree where he prays that he might die.

There is often an emotional low after a spiritual high. It especially happens to mountain climbers. Molly Mitchell is a professional rock climber. Writing in *Psychology Today[[2]](#endnote-2)* she tells of her journey back to rock climbing after she broke her back in 2020. After her recovery, Molly was determined to get back to climbing.

The climb took her and year and a half after her accident to achieve. She writes:

Overcoming the trauma of my injury was the most massive mental battle I’ve ever experienced. My back and the rest of my body also had to be constantly worked on, in ways that were different than before my accident. It was a journey with huge ups and huge downs. I even hated the climb for a while, even though I still went back to it regularly. I held onto hope that one day it would come together.

On May 16, 2022, Molly succeeded in making the climb. She says it was the biggest professional and personal achievement of her life to date. She rejoiced and celebrated. But then she crashed. “That climb was my focus for two years—and then one day, it was done, and I didn’t know how to say goodbye. It left me very depressed for a while. I wanted to just be happy and content—but I couldn’t help the loneliness that crept in, as much as I tried to avoid it.”

Molly realized that while she had to celebrate the win, she also had to grieve that a chapter of her life was over. The journey through injury and back to strength and all the challenges and victories that brought her – had ended. Molly found that other climbers experience similar feelings. Maybe they haven’t recovered from an injury, but, once they get to that mountain top to which they’ve been working so long, they have a sense of grief that the journey has ended and a “now what?” settles upon them.

That’s much of what happened to Elijah – except he had the added pressure of being a hunted man! Elijah tells God, “I have had enough!” And then he falls asleep!

The angel of the Lord comes to Elijah, wakes him up, and gets him to eat. Then Elijah goes to sleep again. It’s at vv. 7ff that I want us to focus. **READ vv. 7-13**

This time when God spoke, it wasn’t with smoke and thunder. It was with a gentle whisper. And with that voice, God brought encouragement and assurance to Elijah. And the next scene of 1 Kings is God bringing about a new season in Elijah’s ministry through the addition of Elisha as his assistant.

God used both His big voice and His still small voice at Mount Sinai at different times to achieve different purposes. God used His big voice at Sinai with the Israelites in Exodus because He wanted them to understand His majesty and power. But He used His small voice with Elijah because Elijah needed to know God was there and had a plan.

Whatever voice you need from God, He will bring to you.

Let’s spend some time in prayer now thanking God for being a God who speaks. To help us, let’s use Psalm 19 as a guide:

**Psalm 19:1-14**

1. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, 5 which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. 6 It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.
2. 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
3. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. 11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
4. 12 Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

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This Sunday we travel only about 40 years from Mount Sinai to Mount Nebo.

Last week we saw the beginning of Moses’ story, this week we will see the end. Moses first met with God at the burning bush on Mount Sinai and then led the people to that mountain to get to know their covenantal God. Moses’ life ends on Mount Nebo.

Turn to **Deuteronomy 32:48-52**. The generation that stood at the base of Mount Sinai had lacked faith that God could lead them into the Promised Land. After hearing the report of the spies in the book of Numbers, they said, “Oh no, we can’t go!” Therefore, God said, “Then you won’t!” They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years where funerals became their national pastime.

Now, all that generation has died except for Joshua and Caleb, who believed God could indeed lead the people into the Promised Land, and Moses.

The book of Deuteronomy is essentially Moses restating the law to the new generation that will soon enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. In Deuteronomy 32, God comes to Moses with an important word: **READ 32:48-52.**

This was not the first time God had told Moses this. The first time had been back in Deuteronomy 3. Moses had pleaded with God to allow Him to go into the Promised Land Himself. But God said, “No.”

We will look at the reasons for that denial on Sunday, but we will primarily focus on God’s grace in what God allows Moses to do. We will see God lead Moses up Mount Nebo and allow him to view the Promised Land. That God allowed this in Moses’ life is a picture of God’s grace to Moses. While there are consequences to Moses’ disobedience, God also extends grace. Moses cannot go into the land, but he can look over into the land.

Have you seen the grace of God in your life? Maybe there was something you did that messed up one thing, but God opened a door for a new thing. God never wastes anything – even our failures. And he never kicks us to the curb. When our hearts are in tune with His, He always extends grace.

1. Bruckner, 170. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-mountain-within/202208/the-low-after-the-high [↑](#endnote-ref-2)