

## **God of Revelation**

Relational God: Part 3 “God of Revelation”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – February 5, 2023

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

**Readings:** Exodus 33:12-23, 34:4-9, 27-29; John 1:14, 16-18

**Reflection:** Psalm 103

**Greeting:** The Lord is merciful and compassionate. The Lord is very patient, and full of faithful love. The Lord is good to everyone and everything. God’s compassion extends to all his handiwork! (*Psalm 145:8-9*)

**Prayer:** Lord, our guide and our guardian, we pray that you will shelter us and lead us as we join together today in worship. May we remember the wonders of your creation each and every day. May we remember that we are a people of your great promise. May we recall your steadfast love that has been revealed to us. May we know that you are with us in all things old and new, and that you are there in every transition. We pray that you help us to face any change with faith and perseverance because you are with us. May we worship you in spirit and truth this hour, and may we proclaim the love of our savior is for all people. And it is in Jesus’ name we pray this day. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 103

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits— who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust. As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. (Psalm 103:1-18 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of the 103rd Psalm and we hear about God's character. That God is merciful and loving. That God's love of justice was revealed through Moses. That God is full of compassion and mercy. Do you reflect God's love for justice in how you live your life? Do others know God's justice because of your actions? How do you share in God's blessings? How has your life changed because of God? How can we help others to experience the joy of Christ in their lives?

**Prayer:** O God, help us to remember all that you are for us. May we always celebrate your steadfast love in all the ways that we experience it. May you bless us in your love and your peace so that we may share that love and peace with others. Help us to show love to each other as a sign of our love for you. May we show the compassion and mercy that has been shown to us through Christ our Lord. As we reach out to you with our joys and our concerns, may you build us up in your mercy and grace. May you lift us up in both laughter and tears that we may always find comfort in you. And may you strengthen us in our celebrations and our sorrows, knowing that you are with us always. And it is in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Exodus chapter 33 verses 12 through 23 and chapter 34 verses 4 through 9 and 27 through 29.

*Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now if I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider, too, that this nation is your people." He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, 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, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth." The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord,' and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live." And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the former ones, and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name, "The Lord." The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger,*

*and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." And Moses quickly bowed down to the ground and worshiped. He said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, my Lord, I pray, let my Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." The Lord said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. (Exodus 33:12-23, 34:4-9, 27-29 NRSV\*)*

Our other reading for today comes from John chapter 1 verse 14 and verses 16 through 18.

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. (John 1:14, 16-18 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

In today's reading we come to Moses, the first of the two people we see with Christ in the Transfiguration. We have Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets, as we see the law and the prophets brought together and fulfilled in Christ. We also get some interesting parallels between Moses and Christ in today's reading. Our reading from Exodus has Moses asking that God go with his people and asking to see the glory of God. There's a handful of different interesting things I want to cover because there's a lot happening with Moses. But there's also a lot that we tend to overlook in the Old Testament because we often get hung up on the specifics of the law and miss some of the bigger messages that are there. In our reading today, Moses is asking that the presence of God will go with the people, and he is asking to see God's glory. So, God tells Moses that his goodness will pass before Moses, and he will proclaim his name, which that's a whole other topic. And you can ask anybody who has been through the Bible study session I lead on God's name as to how much goes into understanding that. If you are interested, come talk to me. But God follows this up with something else. God says he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious and merciful to whom he will be merciful. That statement reiterates something that we covered last week. Because last week, we talked saw that God will do what God does for whom God chooses. And here we see that once again, but this time it's part of God's revelation to Moses. But the Lord continues in saying that Moses can't look upon his face because that is too much, but he can look as God passes by. There's a lot of symbolism in this but the gist of all of it is that Moses goes up to receive God's command and have God's glory revealed. As God passes before

Moses, he proclaims to him this revelation of God's character. God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation. I highlight this because sometimes we have this idea that these are things that we don't find until the New Testament. But we saw this in the last couple of weeks in Genesis. The God who saw creation and declared it was very good. The God who heard Abraham laugh and still blessed him. The God who reveals himself to Moses as a God of faithfulness, love, and compassion. So Moses prays that God will go with his people, even if they are stiff necked. And the Lord reiterates the covenant made with those people.

And here we come to an interesting parallel. And you may see it if you think about the fact that Lent is coming up soon. Moses is with God on the mountain top for forty days and forty nights. When Moses comes down, he is shining from being in God's presence. And we see Jesus start his public ministry by spending forty days and nights in the wilderness, just like Moses. When Christ is transfigured, he shines with the glory of God just as Moses shone from being exposed to God's glory. The number forty is throughout the Bible and often marks important periods. This links Christ going into the wilderness with Moses' time on the top of the mountain. It is part of Christ's connection to the law and the prophets and shows Christ's connection to Moses.

We touch again in the first chapter of John and have a connection to Moses there as well. We hear that the Word became flesh to live among us. That we see his glory, like the father's glory, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we receive grace upon grace. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Christ. We also hear that no one has seen God, but it is the son who is close to the Father's heart and makes him known. Part of what John is setting up there is this idea that Moses brought us the law and Moses was human. He did the best he could to understand God, but Moses wasn't able to look directly upon God's glory. Moses brought the law, but Christ brings grace and truth. The true revelation of God's character in Christ, fully human and fully divine. Jesus fulfills the law and the prophets and brings clarity to God's character in God's love. Another part of what we see in the Transfiguration is the disciples witnessing God's glory revealed in Christ. As Jesus is there with Moses and Elijah, we see that glory revealed. That we see grace and truth there revealed in Christ, so that God's glory shines forth and the law and the prophets are united.

As we get closer to Lent, I was thinking about these connections between Moses and Christ, and there's some good reading out there if you would like more information. But one thing we can look at right now is the way that Christ's teachings build upon the understanding of God's character as revealed to people like Moses. That the revelation made to Moses? It's about a God who loves justice, a God of mercy, a God of forgiveness, a God of faithfulness, and a God of love. That is the character of God revealed to Moses is the character of God expounded upon by Christ. One problem we have is that we sometimes miss that connection to the Old Testament that helps to reveal God's character, to reveal God's love. I think it is important that we do make that connection, and the Transfiguration is a great opportunity for

us to remember those connections. Because there is so much to look at in that one interaction. That when Christ appears with Moses and Elijah, we can look at those connections. This week we look at Moses and how Moses receives the law. But part of what we see is the way God's character is revealed to Moses as the law is revealed to him. I think that in many ways, that is the more important takeaway in this account of Moses. Because we can get too hung up on the law and lose sight of the character of God. I say this because I interpret the law through Christ. Because of this, I see the law through Christ's love and what Christ reveals about God's character as well. Because the law is interpreted, reinterpreted, ignored, and reworked throughout the Bible. It isn't as static as we like to imagine. To have a consistent view, I view it through the truth and grace revealed in Christ. So, when I think about the law and the prophets being fulfilled in Christ, that is how I am thinking about it. I am thinking about the way that God's character was revealed to Moses and revealed through Christ. Because of the grace and truth of Christ, I trust that we can all understand God better by experiencing God's love and grace better. Because the law can be interpreted and forgotten but God's character is still there. I'm not so much focused on individual laws as I am in understanding the message that God has about how to live and love one another. That we can understand what we should do and how we should act because of the revelation of God's character. That it strengthens us, guides us, and leads us to a stronger understanding and a stronger bond in Christ. Not because we have clung to the laws that we want to enforce but because we know all things through the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. In this way, we can see God revealed in Moses, revealed in Christ, and revealed through our interactions with each other. And we see that we serve a God of love, a steadfast love revealed to us in grace and truth through our risen Savior. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Our Current Series – Relational God**

Our current series takes inspiration from the story of the Transfiguration. Each week we look at a different relational aspect of God and move through the first chapter of John. We look at Abraham, Moses, and Elijah and finish with the story of the Transfiguration of Christ.

January 22nd – *God of Creation* – Genesis 1:1-2:3; John 1:1-5

January 29th – *God of Declaration* – Genesis 17:1-8, 15-22; John 1:10-13

February 5th – *God of Revelation* – Exodus 33:12-23, 34:4-9, 27-29; John 1:14, 16-18

February 12th – *God of Transition* – 2 Kings 2:1-14; John 1:6-9, 19-21

February 19th – *God of Transformation* – Matthew 17:1-9; John 1:29-34

## **Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Eric Veach	Ed & Verna Titus
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Tricia Adkins
Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gabel
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Brittany Gilbert	Jackie Potter	Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr
Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks
Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz	Donna Carlen
Ernie Peters	Jess shoot	Alberta Darling	Family of Janet Dixon
Stanley Kiser	Family of Kyle Lehman	Corrine Howard	Stacy Janes
Family of Ann Pennington	Don Gilmore	Griffin Neidigh	Shirley Jester
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Nick & Leana Ochoa	Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Kristen & Zach Morecraft	Greg Williams
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Lavon Figgins
Janet Freeman			

Rev Camron D St. Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

[cdstmichael@outlook.com](mailto:cdstmichael@outlook.com)

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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