



**Servants of Christ**  
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*Our Mission: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

*Our Vision: As Servants of Christ, we envision a transformed community, growing in Jesus, in the grace of God.*

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## We Will Look Back

Exodus 33: 18, 21-23

18 And Moses said, "Show me your glory."

21 The Lord said, "Here is a place by me; you will station yourself on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and will cover you with my hand while I pass by.

23 Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen."

There is a difference between a problem and a crisis. A problem is a situation in which we have the resources to address it. A crisis is something over which we have little control. When we are in crisis, all we have is our response. We cannot control the behavior of others. We really cannot control our initial feelings. But we can take a breath and respond.

We are used to hurricanes. My friends in Florida say they would feel a lot better if they knew if this virus was a 'category 4 or 5.' We know what to buy (batteries, water, canned goods). We might even have storm shutters. But now, the world is like Galveston on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1900 when the big hurricane came ashore. Some residents did not believe a storm could strike Galveston, and apparently some were enjoying the large ocean swells the day before. September 10<sup>th</sup> was a new crisis, for many an unknown one. For us, the storm rages on.

The Israelites were in a pivotal time in Exodus 33. God was calling them to leave Mt. Sinai and go into the Promised Land, a completely unknown experience. The people were used to God's rather physical presence up until then. God said he would not go with them in the same ways he had before. The people mourned. Moses was perplexed. God said his presence would be with them. With nothing to lose, Moses says, "Show me your glory." In other words, "In this stressful time show me yourself in stronger ways than you ever have. Show me everything about you now." A familiar prayer for many today, I'm sure.

I like what Rabbi Pesach Wolicki says about the following verses and I have to share it with you. In verse 23 God says Moses would see his back. But the Hebrew for 'back' has nothing to do

with a physical part of the body as we would use it. The Hebrew word refers to something that is past. You know when you have experienced other trying times and you got through them, and you could look 'back' on them with new eyes, kind of like being a Monday-morning-quarterback?

In Moses' trying situation, he wanted all of God but that was not possible. God passed by. God was working while Moses was in the cleft of the rock without being able to see anything because God's hand had covered him. The glory passed. The glory was there. And Moses could only look 'back' on what God had done.

When we have very little control over something, the best response is to give it to the One who is passing by. I am reminded of many times when people have received devastating news during a phone call: All of those calls that begin with, "Are you sitting down?" I have seen some responses that have shocked me, but maybe the most shocking are those that begin with some version of the Serenity Prayer:

"God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
Forever in the next.  
Amen." (Reinhold Niebuhr)

Maybe we are in the cleft of the rock right now. But we will look back.

Peace,

Pastor Chris