

Theme: God gets personal

What are you all about? How would people know? Maybe you make it obvious by looking the part of whatever it is you're into, superfan stuff. You tell people up front in detail, so much detail, all the detail. Or, maybe you play close to the vest and let people get to know you gradually, revealing things about yourself as a relationship develops.

God does both of these things. In recent events before these of Exodus 34 at Mt. Sinai, God's displayed some serious power in the Ten Plagues and the Red Sea. In covering the summit of Sinai with dense, cloudy fire and causing the mountain to rumble when he spoke, God made clear his majesty, complete authority. But here, after having established with Moses a long relationship, God gets deeply personal and really explains his name, who he is, what he's all about. Along with overwhelming glory, God reveals his deep, rich, multi-dimensional self to Moses impressing upon him the magnitude of his compassion, grace, justice, and forbearance.

From within the cloud of his glory, God passed in front of Moses announcing, *"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."* (**Exodus 34:6**) At the burning bush, God made known his self-sufficiency, the ability to be perfectly independent, now God becomes personal revealing his grace, his goodness, and that he is all-sufficiency for us. Twice saying his covenant name as an underline, God lets us know who he really is. God is compassion, his heart goes out to people, he doesn't treat us according to our sin because the springs of God's mercy are always full, the rivers of his mercy always flow. There is more than enough mercy in God for everyone to cover every sin. God pays forward goodness and love to people who do not deserve it at all, this is grace. God is the master of grace, he's the best at it, has the most of it, uses it to powerfully change lives for the eternal better. God's patience is equally inexhaustible. He is long suffering, not losing his cool even over such a long time. His loving kindness is steadfast. God is faithful. God doesn't change either, so later on when God chooses to more narrowly define himself by just one word, one quality, God says he is love! So his love and kindness will abound always.

Jesus, God made flesh, is all these things. To really know Jesus is to really know that all these traits of God, God's full majestic self, is fully contained in the person of Jesus. The God of the burning bush, Red Sea, who forgave the idolatry of the calf, who covered Sinai in glory, this is Jesus! The great I AM, the LORD, Yahweh, is Jesus. Who else, therefore, could have his level of compassion and ability to provide relief? Who else has the grace to dine with sinners of less than stellar reputation and make a tax collector his disciple, is long suffering to endure beatings and crucifixion he didn't deserve, and loves his enemies enough to die for them so they, through his death, would become his family? Only Jesus. All of these most excellent qualities of God Most High are found in Jesus. Jesus is the loving kindness to thousands God spoke of to Moses on that mountain top within that glory. Jesus takes away sin, lifts the guilt of it off us because the covenant LORD forgives, it's who he is, it's his name and what he's all about! *"Maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."* (**Exodus 34:7**)

God knows his people though, doesn't he? Almost anticipating this reaction said by those seemingly blind to their own sinfulness, "But what about sin?? Aren't you gonna do something about the sin out there??" God certainly does. Make no mistake. The covenant LORD is very much in the business of maintaining his justice. Of himself, God says, *"Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."* (**Exodus 34:7**) Guilt doesn't go unpunished. God sees it, knows what's done, and holds the guilty to account. Always. Every time. Judgment is thorough, four times over. Judgment is God's.

This is true, most certainly, and this aspect of God's being is not something to be trifled with. God's judgment is inescapable; it's eternal. But think about this: God's judgment has been entrusted to the Son. Jesus said so. Jesus, the friend of sinners. Jesus died for sinners! So if the very one who died for sin judges the ones who do it, don't you think he's gonna pull out all the gracious stops for them? Of course! God pursues his justice four times over, but his grace is ours thousands of times over. God's defined by a gracious, patient, forgiving nature.

When Moses learned this, really knew who God is and what he's all about, he worshiped. The same happens to those who don't know God, when they learn of his grace and what it does for them, they worship him. What about us? We know God. We believe in him. Do we worship him? Potentially silly question, right?? Here we are in worship! But is worship limited to time spent here? Goodness, no! We gather here, are fed here, and then we worship by how we live, offering our very selves as living sacrifices. Sometimes, yes, but if we really knew and appreciated the mercy we've received, we'd not be so stingy with it. If we really valued God's justice, we'd hold ourselves to account in light of his law first, repent, then, empowered by forgiveness, we'd see to justice for those whose voices have been silenced in its pursuit. If we could come anywhere close to fully seeing the enormity of the patience God has for us, nothing anyone else ever did would upset us. What can so often happen is this, we let our worship of God be reduced to knowing some Bible passages and reminding ourselves we love our Jesus, we lull ourselves into a false sense of security not realizing Jesus' words in **Luke 6:46** are for us, "*Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*" We know him and his words! Right?? "Be holy as I am holy! Be like me!" So why aren't we love like he says he is! We can't be because we are who we are. It's a good thing, then, that God is who he always was, the I AM WHO I AM, the gracious and loving forgiver.

Moses prayed for himself and the people to be in the presence and good grace of God that much more. Moses prayed this in light of God's mercy, he knew they were stiff-necked, stubborn, slow to repent. We are too, but boldly make the same prayer for Jesus' sake knowing he's the reason it's granted. We ask God to keep us near him as his very own, to more and more know Christ and his saving love for us that we live it in love with all the drive he provides, causing others to see God as great by explaining to them God's person, his compassionate, slow to anger, forgiving, and abounding in love nature. Lord, help us always better know and share your saving love. Amen.