

**Order of Worship**  
**October 18, 2020**

(Read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud.)

**Prepare for worship:** Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments.

**Call to Worship:**

*Sanctuary*

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,  
pure and holy, tried and true.  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living  
sanctuary for you.

From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2164

**Centering Words:** If you want to see God, make plenty of room for Him.

**Affirmation of Faith: The Apostle's Creed**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Prayer of the Day:**

Dear Heavenly Father: Please edify and ease the pain of those of your children whom we named at the start of the service. Please heal them of their ailments, Lord. Please comfort them in their sorrow and in their struggles. Please give us all strength, God, when we stumble, when we cry, when we feel disappointment and when we feel fear. Bind our wounds and remind us of Your Love for us. Remind us that nothing can separate us from Your Love, Lord. And because of that, remind us and teach us to love others, including those whom we think, always wrongly, we should not love. Forgive us of our sins and grant us the strength and the love to forgive others. It is in the Precious Name of Your Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that we pray, Who taught His disciples to pray...

**The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your Word O Lord our Rock and Redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

**Psalter Reading:**                   **Psalm 99**

**Epistle Reading:**                   **1 John 4: 12, 20-21**

**Gospel Reading:**                   **John 1: 14, 18**

**Special Music**

**Old Testament Reading:**       **Exodus 33: 12-23**

**Sermon:**                               **“Seeing God”**

**Hymn:**

*Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus*

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
look full in his wonderful face,  
and the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
in the light of his glory and grace.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist  
Publishing House, 349

**Benediction:**

Now may the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you  
all. Amen

**Response**

*God Be With You till We Meet Again* (UMH 673)

God be with you till we meet again;  
by his counsels guide, uphold you,  
with his sheep securely fold you;  
God be with you till we meet again.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist  
Publishing House, 673

## **“Seeing God”**

**By Tom Geddens**

(Sermon begins after a reading of Exodus 33: 12-23)

This is the Word of God for the people of God! Thanks be to God!

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, strengthen my heart as I deliver this message. And I pray that it is Your message and not my own. It is in Jesus’s Name that I pray. Amen.

The verses that I just read provide a treasure trove of fascinating topics for Christians to dive into! But the one that I want to dive into today is the one that I have taken for the title of this sermon: “Seeing God.”

This scene from the Book of Exodus reveals one of the most extraordinary exchanges ever documented between God and man. The first time that I read the entire Book of Exodus was many years ago, and what I thought that I remembered of this dialogue between God and Moses was that this is the scene where Moses asks God if he can see God’s Face.

One of the fascinating things about God’s Word is that so often you have to focus on what is being said while at the same time making sure that you are not deceiving yourself with what is not being said. We have all heard the old saying, “The Devil is in the details,” but when it comes to understanding the Bible, the truth is: It is God that is in the details! Make sure that you are not overlooking anything. One word or one nuance can make a huge difference.

Now, if someone had asked me the first time that I ever read those verses, “Why do you think that Moses wanted to see God’s Face?” I might have replied, “He wanted to know, like so many people, if God is real.” But at some point, it struck me: “Wait a minute! Moses may have had doubts about many things during the extraordinary odyssey that was his life, but surely by now, he could not have had any doubts about the existence of God! After all, he and God were having a conversation in this very scene! And it was far from their first! And all the miracles that God had blessed Moses and the Hebrew people with! I mean, how could Moses forget the parting of the Red Sea!

So no, I do not believe that Moses uttered his remarkable request because he desired further proof of God. He had been blessed with as much proof as anyone in the history of mankind has probably received! I do not know why, but maybe my mind had defaulted to that earlier, misleading theory,

because we have often heard nonbelievers insist that they cannot believe in God because they cannot see Him.

Why then would Moses ask to see God's Face, I still wondered? Then I thought about this: Have you ever had someone who was very helpful to you? Someone who helped you, not in person, but over the phone or by e-mail? Maybe someone at your bank, or your insurance company, or an employee at a government office?

And then one day, you walked into that person's office and met that person. And you said, "You were so helpful to me over the phone or by e-mail! I just had to come here and meet you! I just had to put a face to a voice, or a face to a name on the e-mail!"

In other words, it is not as though that you doubted that the person with whom you have been talking to on the phone or the person with whom you have been exchanging e-mails actually existed! You knew that the person was real! You just wanted to meet that person to show your gratitude for his or her help! And it just seemed to you as though once you had placed a face with a voice or a name on an e-mail that the journey that this person had helpfully guided you on can finally be complete.

Was that it, I wondered? Was Moses wanting to show God his gratitude and just assumed that he had to see His face in order to do so? And maybe he was also simply curious: It was driving him crazy to know what God looks like! Perhaps I was getting warmer. Just a little!

I read a commentary online on this scene from Exodus. It was eye-opening to me, in part because it reminded me of how important details can be in God's Word. As I said earlier: God, not the devil, is in the details! It also reminded me of how we tend to remember certain things from the Bible and how repeated readings can help smooth out some of the rough edges of what we remembered. My memory of this scene had long gone like this: "Oh: This is where Moses asks God to show Moses His face." But this commentary reminded me that what Moses actually said was: "Show me your glory."

I guess since God responded to Moses by telling Moses that he could not see God's face, I had just assumed all these years that Moses was using the word "glory" as a synonym for "face." But the commentary that I was reading pointed out that the word "glory" comes from the Hebrew word "kabowd." This word means "abundance." Moses wanted to see God in His abundance. Moses wanted to see all of God.

I remember that famous skit on Saturday Night Live many years ago with actor Christopher Walken, where he keeps saying, "More cowbell!" Moses was saying, "More God! More God!"

God knew that seeing all of Him would obviously include His face. He informs Moses that no one can see His face and live. God tells Moses that when He passes Moses that Moses may then see His back but that would be it. God's face, he shall not see.

Both our Gospel reading and our epistle reading this morning were from the same author: John, the disciple whom Jesus loved the most. In those verses, we hear John point out that "no one has seen God at any time." Some people may be tempted to say, "Hey, John: Did you forget about the time that Moses saw God's back?"

Say that you witnessed a crime, and a police detective has you in his office along with a police sketch artist. The sketch artist has her pencil and her drawing pad in hand. The detective says to you, "Describe the suspect." If you reply, "I saw his back," the sketch artist is probably going to put her pencil down and the detective is probably going to say, "It doesn't look as though I'm going to be breaking this case anytime soon!"

Seeing someone from the back does not make for a good testimony! I am sure that John understood this. I am sure that John meant that no one has seen God's Face, because no one has seen God the Father as He really is: In His Heavenly State. And yes, John is the only one of the four Gospel writers to record Jesus telling His disciples at the Last Supper, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father," but I believe that John understood that Jesus was saying that He was the personification of God and not that the earthly face of The Son was literally the same as the Heavenly one of The Father.

Moses had asked God to see "His glory," and we know that "glory" here meant "abundance." "Abundance" means "having more than enough." We may not be able to see God's Face in this life, but how can we be filled by Him now to the point where we have more than enough? If you are having a guest stay with you but you have a lot of junk in your guest room, then guess what? You get rid of the junk! Letting yourself be filled by God's abundance means getting rid of a lot of your personal abundance and a lot of the World's abundance. No, this does not mean sacrificing your personality and your individualism. It means instead that a lot of the things that you get distracted with and that you become consumed with that are more about you and more about the World need to be pushed out so that you can make more room in your life for God.

We heard in the epistle reading, where John asked, "How can someone hate his brother whom he has seen but say that he loves God, whom he has not seen?" John said in that same epistle, "If we love one another, God abides in us..."

Jesus was asked, "Which is the Greatest Commandment?" Without hesitation, He said: To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and great commandment." And although He was not asked, He went on to say, "And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Many of us have heard it said that there are two types of bosses: there is the By-The-Book Boss and there is the People Person. And while undoubtedly there are many bosses and managers who neatly fall into one of those two categories, there are probably more who share shades of both. Those shades can come out depending on what is currently going on in their lives. In the same way, I believe that there are many Christians who are great at following the First Commandment and then there are those who are great at following the Second. I often feel as though my Christian walk is a seesaw. One period in my life, I will find myself emphasizing one while not giving much thought to the other. And then at another period, I will end up doing the reverse: doing well with one while not so hot with the other.

But as I said earlier: It is important to focus on what is said in the Bible as opposed to what is not said. Jesus said that one commandment is The Great Commandment and the other is just like it. I do not recall Him saying, "Either/or!"

Being filled with God's abundance means clearing your heart of the junk of this World and of the junk of yourself. Being filled with His abundance means striking a balancing act between the Two Great Commandments that Jesus cited and living your life according to them both. No one has seen God at any time, but we have seen our fellow man, woman and child. God made them in His image. If we love them, we are honoring His image.

At the same time, do not neglect God. You can do all the good deeds in the world and still forget about God. Do not forget about God! He needs your love as much as you need His!

Make room for God in your heart in this life and you will see Him in all His Glory in the next.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen.