

Moses' Intercession

△ Exodus 33:12-23

First Intro

We are starting with a series on prayer

Based on material from Alice's book

Treasures in the Darkness

We move through Exodus, John, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Acts

We also move through Alice's book through different chapters

But they all have Prayer in common

Intro 2

At the heart of Prayer is a relationship

Prayer is not just a liturgical act

someone in from of the Church saying some words

That we may choose to listen to, or not

Prayer is not a wishlist of all the

Prayer is not a moment or an act
things we would like to happen or
have

Like God is one cosmic Santa Klaus

That we can ignore for the rest of the
year

Prayer is a conversation

A conversation between us and
God

And in a conversation both speak
and both listen

That we see in our passage of
today

What we also see in our passage
of today is that this is not a normal
conversation

It is a conversation with God

Who is the almighty one, our
creator, our Father, but also the
one that worship

And also our judge

Context in Exodus

We find our passage part of three
chapters, that form one unit

^ Ch 32-34

This fits in between the giving of
the law

Moses up to Sinai

Meeting with God

The inscribing of the 10
commandments on two stone tablets

And further detailed instructions
how to implement it

The instructions how to make the
tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant

Israel in rebellion

But in between we find here these
three chapters

Chapter 32 relates that

Moses came down the mountain

And the people under leadership of Aaron

Have started to worship a different God
then Yahweh

The Golden Calf

And on seeing this

Moses gets angry

and destroys the tablets with the law

And God gets angry

punishing the people by bringing a plague

Chapter 34 relates the renewing of the
covenant

That Israel broke

Reissuing the law

On Mount Sinai

Moses going up the mountain again

for 40 days

And in Chapter 33?

God's rejection of Israel

He tells Moses to tell Israel

to go to the promised land

He even will send an angel

To help capture the land for the people

But he will not go with them anymore

As they are a stiff-necked people

As Israel has rejected God

God is now leaving them to their own devices

Moses' conversation with God

Then we get this remarkable passage

Moses isolates himself in the tent of Meeting

The place before the Tabernacle

That Moses used to pray / speak with God

Moses:

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 favour in my sight." ¹³ Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your

I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.'

△ v12-13

He approaches God by reminding what he has promised

The promise to Moses personally

That he will not let him alone leading the people

He also reminds God that Moses himself has found favour with God

He then argues if there was anything that Moses did that was displeasing to God

then he can let him go

But if not

Then help me to understand you, so that he can know God better and continue to find favour with God

Moses wants to know God better!

He values his relationship with God and he does not want to lose it

He is quite insistent

Knowing that God is God!

But then he widens his request: remember that this nation is your people

You cannot just turn your back on them

You have made them your own

God responds:

“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

^ v14

The you is a singular 'you'

God says, Moses I will not leave you alone

But he does not respond to Moses plea about the people

His promise is only to Moses alone

Moses tries again:

‘If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favour 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.’

^ v15-16

He now asks on behalf of himself and the people

Moses cannot remove himself from his people

He effectively tells God, if you are with me, you should also be with your people

Do not leave us alone!

Then he reminds God: how can others tell that you are pleased with me, and with God's people if you do not go with us?

And then "we shall be distinct from all people"

Only the presence of God makes the people God's people

And not only locally, but across the whole world

God replies

'I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name.'

Yea! God is answering

But it is interesting to note that God speaks to Moses on a personal note

God will not leave the people of Israel, because Moses has found favour in God's eyes

God will go with the people as a personal favour to Moses

Moses then pushes the boundaries:

'Show me your glory, I pray.'

Moses feels he can ask this, as he is now so close to God

He wants to know God better, and like any other person he wants to see him

But he veils it in the request to see God's glory

But then if I see you in all your glory:

then I see everything of you!

More than you wish me to see, I am sure!

God then also honours Moses's request, but also indicate his boundaries:

‘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. ²⁰ But’, he said, ‘you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.

God promises Moses that he can see God, but not his face

But also, and perhaps more importantly, he reminds Moses who he is

The Lord

Gracious and Merciful

But not automatically, but according to his will

He is not only saying: you cannot see my face

But also: do not take your familiarity with me for granted!

And am still God!

And not just another human being

There is a distance between God and humanity

He has created us

He is Lord over us

Yes, we can plead and pray to him

But we need to continuously acknowledge who God is!

God continues with practical instructions:

See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; ²² 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; ²³ then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen

We actually do not see this happening

In Ch 34 - next chapter - we see Moses and God meeting on the mountain but not in this specific way

But perhaps we can take for granted that this was the way that God met with Moses on the mountain

Applications

Moses was daring to speak to God on behalf of his people

He took risks in his questioning

He remind God of who he was

And we see that more often in the prayers
in the Bible

He almost barter with God and God
barter back

Up to a certain limit

And God call he halt

But God is not angry with Moses

It is as if God expects Moses to relate
to Him in this way

The people of God are nothing
without the presence of God

This is Moses' main point

How can we be your people if you are
not with us?

But it also reminds him and the people
of Israel too

That they are nothing without God

And the warning is there for us too!

How can we be Christians without
Christ!

Without having a relationship with
Christ?

Just coming to church and living our
lives as best as possible, is not having
this relationship

Prayer is the basis of the

relationship

Prayer is the way that we speak to God

God speaks to us often in different ways

Moses has the privilege to be in direct verbal communication with God

And some Christians have experienced this

But most of the time God/Jesus speaks to us through the Holy Spirit

a feeling, a certainty, images, words

And he often now speaks to us together

Prayer takes time

We do not know how long Moses was in the tent of meeting

But for the Law to be given the first time, the people got impatient

In our time they would have reported him missing

The second time God gives the law, Moses is on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights

²⁸ He was there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water.

[^] Exod 23:28a

Do we make time to pray / to talk to God?

God remains God

Even with Moses there was a limitation in how he could have a relationship with God

The limit was that Moses could not see God's face.

The apostle Paul also commented on that

⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

^ 1 Cor 13:9-10

¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

^ 1 Cor 13:12

We are still dealing with a God that is totally foreign to our conception and our ability to meet with him

He is God

The God above the whole universe

Through Jesus Christ we can approach him in his throne room

But he is still God and we are still people

What if God does not seem to partake in our conversation with him?

Why does God sometimes not seem to answer us?

answer us:

This is a difficult question

Are we on the right wavelength with God?

Moses spoke to God about his people in a crisis

The people that is chosen by God

God's and Moses's purposes were aligned

Maybe what we want from God or what we want to use God for is not in line with what he wants

What if we start the conversation with: "God, how can you use me?"

Instead of "God, how can I use you?"
