

Which Mountain Have You Come to?  
Hebrews 12:18-24

Exodus 19  
Ephesians 2:1-10  
Psalm 125

This week we will be looking at verses 18-24, as we read this passage this morning notice that dichotomy the Author here sets up, as we read this we will see this picture of 2 mountains, which shows the nature of God, his holy righteousness, and his loving gracious mercy. Just as we talked about last week covering verses 12-17 we see here this larger picture of God. We see a God to be feared, and revered, and a God who is gracious and loving who should be praised and worshiped, not out of fear of retaliation from an angry God, but out of Love for a God who, through his own mercy and grace saved us from the wrath to come.

So let us read this passage this morning, but I want to start at verse 12, and let us read through to verse 24. So right off the bat in verse 24, we see again the Author's heart and mind toward these to whom he is writing, And just like before we see that he accounts them as his brothers and sisters in Christ. He is approaching them as ones who have been redeemed, who have been saved from this wrath that he speaks of here in these verses. And we who are Christians today are including in this as well, for these are truths for all Christians through all generations. In verse 24 for he says, that you have not come to this mountain, this mountain of power, of judgment, and of death.

As we see in the account recorded in Exodus of mount Sinai, that when the presence of God descended upon that mountain, even Moses was exceedingly afraid and trembling. Even this display of God's power is nothing more than a miniscule representation of who he is. The very God who set the sun and the stars in their place, and by which they remain and who has set the boundaries of space and created this planet to sustain life is far greater, and far more powerful than what is displayed here. We are talking an infinite, unfathomable power that even this small little display recorded in Hebrews was enough to strike abject fear into Moses, one who has had direct communication with God.

There are a few things that I want to point out with this account here on Mount Sinai that I think are worthy to mention. In our reading of this account this morning, there is one major thing that stands out I think. Notice how God called Moses and Aaron to go up the mountain, but said to instruct no one else to approach, for doing so would be death. Does this remind you of anything that we know about scripture? Namely the Gospel? This gives an early glimpse into God's nature and his sovereign call. By that I mean, if we think of this in terms of the gospel, all those who approach God who are outside of those called by God, are meet by a righteous, and holy judge. But those who have been called to approach God are invited into his very presence. Just as Paul said about the gospel, to one it is the aroma and life, and to another the stench of death. We see this same sort of thing here, any who approached the mountain in which God was present died, except those whom he called.

And even those in whom he called, trembled and were afraid. In a sense this too is our account when we are first brought to the presence of God. The awareness of our sin, and the understanding of God's holiness, and our unworthiness which causes us to cry out to him for forgiveness. It is a scary thing to be approached by God, even in the accounts that we see when Angels have appeared they struck fear into those who had an encounter with them. In the presence of this God, we are nothing more than dust mites, yet....he chose to love us, and calls us into his very presence to be with him.

How amazing is this, the God who created the universe and all its mysteries in which is in itself powers that we can barely even begin to comprehend has stooped down and loved us, chose us, has made that which is insignificant to be significant for his good pleasure. Think upon this for a minute, think about how vial, and awful this makes mankind's rebellion. Our denial of him, we stand on the legs he has given us, on the earth he has created for us and we look to the sky in which he placed an infinite amount of stars and in our arrogance and pride, shake our fist at him, cursing him.

These will be meet by this God who is a consuming fire, who is vengeance, and who's wrath is poured out upon the unjust and rebellious sinners. There is no escaping this God, for all will see him. And the reality is, that this is each and every one of us...unless God himself calls us into his presence. For only those called to enter will do so and live, all others will be cast out into the eternal fire. And both, those who are saved, and those who are cast out are both for God's glory. We, that is mankind tend to think to highly of ourselves, that we are something special, and we deserve something special. It seems there is an idea in the religious world that God owes us for our faith, or our actions....but who are we to demand, or expect such from this mighty sovereign God, who by only speaking, brought all there is into existence.

This is Roman's 8 isn't it, "But indeed oh man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, why have you made me like this?" What power do you have as the thing created to speak out against he who formed you? God owes you nothing. He has created you, he has formed you, you are his to do with as he pleases for you have been made for his purpose. As Paul continues to say, "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" I know that we have been over this before, and it is something that we all believe and understand but it is such an important point in understanding God. As Paul says, out of one lump to make some for honor and some for dishonor. There is no defining features, no defining characteristics, God did not for see who would believe and then save them, he took them, out of the fallen lump of humanity and chose, by his own sovereign will, for his own sovereign purpose to mold you into his vessel of honor.

But Paul goes on, saying, "what if God, wanting to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his Glory on the vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory." There is so much here in these few verses that can be unpacked, the vessels of glory he prepared beforehand....these he foreknew, he also called, and these he called he also justified, and these he justified he sanctified. The point being here, that it is God, not man who determines our fate, it is he who chooses who may, or may not approach this mountain. Only those who he has called, only those vessels he prepared beforehand to show mercy may approach him without fear of destruction. Outside of God's grace and mercy, there is only death and destruction. And we must remember, it is justified, for mankind as a whole is one lump all destined to be destroyed, and it is only by his grace and love that any are saved.

This all plays into I think our need to have larger understanding of who God is, we must again taste the awe and wonder that is our Lord. We can not, and must not take this faith for granted, we can not and must not become complacent, for we have been called to be a people of action, by a God of action, who is not impersonal, but who is with us. And this is why the Author here in Hebrews when writing to these believers says, You did not come to mount Sinai, in the presence of an unapproachable God... but you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly of the church of the firstborn.

How glorious is this, this alone should cause us all to bow down and worship him. As I said last week, understanding what we have been saved from should only drive us to love and worship him who saved us even more. Having an understanding of this Sovereign God, who is both wrath, and love should cause us to praise him all the more. You, Christian, are a vessel made for honor, who God chose, and knew before the foundation of the world have not come to this mount that burned with fire and blackness and darkness this mount of death, you have come to the mount Zion, you have been called to the very presence of the Lord of life.

And because of this, we have access to God himself. We can come to him directly in prayer. The God who holds infinity in the palm of his hand, has made the way so that we may approach him. We have a God who treats us as a loving father treats his children. As the Author here said earlier, in chapter 4 “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need.” Our God is the approachable God, the personal God, who has called you, out of the lump that is humanity, to have a personal relationship with. This truth just strikes me every time, who am I that God should love me? I associate with David, for I am a worm and no man, an insignificant being in the vast eternal cosmos, a vapor who is here one moment, and gone the next...yet God loves me...he loves me. He loves you as well dear Christian. Do you ever contemplate his love for you?

His love that spans the gulf of time, for you? God, the everlasting, the eternal, the mighty, who himself is justice, peace, and love looked upon you, sees you, knows you, loves you. What great hope we have in this, our savior, our God, our king. And I think that if we can just see, and taste a small sample of his love, if we can just fathom a miniscule of his heart, it will change our lives! Oh my fellow brothers and sisters...Moses witnessed only an after thought of God's power at Mount Sinai, and he trembled, God had visited upon Egypt the plagues, even the angel of death came and killed the first born, he appeared to them as a pillar of smoke by day, and a pillar of fire by night, he parted the red sea, he provided for them food and water, all of this he did for this people Israel...how much more has he done for what scripture has called the true Israel?

By sending his Son, he has drawn his people out from the slavery of sin, he guides us and is with us through this wilderness of life, and one day, when it is his time, each and every one of us will enter into the true promised land, into his very presence, as verse 23 says, to the general assembly and church of the first born who are registered in heaven. This should not only make us bow down and praise him, but it should also give us boldness, and peace. We have this God with us, what should we fear? He said he has overcome the world, he has defeated the devil, his is victorious over death, and not only that...he says all of those who are in him are the same. Through him, we also are victorious over death, we have this God who sees our struggles, who knows us to the inner most, and who is always with us for he says that he will never leave us, he will never forsake us. Like with Israel, who saw a physical representation of God's presence with them always, even though we may not see him as they did, he is here with us always.

For he indwells in us, we have become a part of him, we are each members of his body. We, who have been redeemed, have been grafted in to the life giving vine, who provides for us all that we need, not only in this life, but has provided for us so that we may enter into the next as justified, sanctified, and holy. He has parted the red sea as it were, for you...the impassable gulf of separation so that you may walk upon dry ground and approach him, so that you may enter into his holy temple, and approach the throne of the God of all creation.

We have not come to the mount of death, but to the mount of life. Verse 23, “To God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.” These two mountains here, represent not only various aspects of God's nature, in one we see the God who is mighty, just, and holy, in whose presence we can not stand and live, all who approached this mountain unworthily is put to death, and on the other mountain we see the God who is merciful, gracious, loving, who has prepared and made a way so that we may approach him, and not only live, but has himself also given us life. In these 2 mountains we also see a representation of the 2 covenants, mount Sinai the old, and mount Zion the new.

God gave the old covenant law to Moses on mount Sinai, this mountain that represents God's judgment, his power, and death. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, speaking of this law says, “If the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the spirit not be even more glorious? Mount Sinai, the law, the old covenant, a ministry of death. As Paul said in Romans, 7 “ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was to bring life, I found to bring death.”

The old covenant is this mount Sinai, the law shows that we are unworthy, incapable, to be righteous, to be holy. For the law convicts, the law brings death, the law is God's righteous judgment. But if you are God's children...you did not come to this mount, but rather to mount Zion, you are under the new covenant in his blood, which was shed for you. His holiness, his righteousness has been accounted to you. This new covenant is not a ministry of death as was the old, but it is a ministry of Life. The old covenant provided a law, that brought about condemnation, and shame. But the new covenant has brought mercy, and peace in which there is no more condemnation, there is no more shame, for Christ has taken it all and sacrificed it upon the cross.

God has made the way straight, he has laid the path for our feet, he himself has provided for us a way that we may approach him, that we may come to him that we maybe worthy to approach him. He has brought us to Mount Zion, his holy mountain, to the promised land, to the city of the living God. What glorious news, what wonderful grace, what a powerful savior. It is my hope that through his word this morning that we all can have a greater understanding of this God, of our God. A God who is unfathomable to our human understanding, yet who has made himself to be known to us, who ministers to us through the holy spirit so that we can know him, so that we can see him. It has been pressed upon my heart these past few weeks to contemplate the vastness of God, to see as far as I am able his glorious nature, to grow in my understanding of his power, an attempt to see God as big as he is. To set aside our feeble understanding and tendency to see God sorta one dimensionally, We can not truly fathom his power, his sovereignty, and like wise even his grace and mercy to it's full extent, but I believe that we should be challenged to ever understand him more, to see him more as a sovereign God of power, who has not only the whole universe in his hand, also knows, and sees, and maintains the smallest atom.

There is nothing outside of God, and there is nothing he doesn't see, he doesn't know, or is out of place. The God who holds eternity in the palm of his hand, knows you...sees you, loves you. Rest in that, rest in him, seek after him, run to him, for he has made the way for you to come to him, for we are his children There is nothing more glorious than that.