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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
July 19, 2020  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Romans 7:15-25a, Matthew 11:25-30

Hymns: 388; 376; 315:1,5,6; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Exodus 33:12-23

Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say 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 grace in My sight.' <sup>13</sup> Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

<sup>14</sup> And He said, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

<sup>15</sup> Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. <sup>16</sup> For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth."

<sup>17</sup> So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

<sup>18</sup> And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

<sup>19</sup> Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." <sup>20</sup> But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." <sup>21</sup> And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup> So it shall be,

while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Facing the Journey --

Sometimes we get tired just thinking about what lies before us. So it was for Moses when it came to leading the nation of Israel on the long and arduous journey to the Promised Land. The thing of it was, Moses didn't know the half of it. Moses had no idea that because of the hardness of the people's hearts this great pilgrimage would be extended by 40 years. He already understood that it was going to be a challenge.

This conversation between Moses and the Lord that is recorded for us in our text took place at the base of Mount Sinai. Moses had already ascended the mountain and stayed there for forty days *the first time!* Near the close of that period of time the people had coerced Aaron into making them gods they could see, and so the golden calf was molded and the people had fallen into the sin of gross idolatry. The Lord sent Moses down to the people, and had clearly stated that it would be an option for the Lord to destroy the people and raise up from Moses a new nation. In his response Moses reminded the Lord of His gracious promises to the patriarchs, Abraham Isaac and Jacob, and that the Lord in His grace should preserve this people for His own name's sake.

Then the conversation of our text took place, which began with the Lord stating that He would not destroy this people but that His presence would **not** go before them as Moses led them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Suddenly the task that lay before Moses, the journey to the Promised Land was overwhelming. Moses pleaded with the Lord --

## **THEME: Seeking Rest from the Rigors of Life's Pilgrimage.**

Such --

### **I. Rest Is Found only in the Lord's Presence.**

Moses knew he needed the Lord's presence. As children of God we understand what Moses was feeling. When the trials of life assail us we can't imagine facing the problems and the grief that comes in life apart from the Lord. We may actually wonder aloud, how do others that don't know the Lord face life with all its ups and downs and stress and trials? The only answer we can come up with is that it must be very hard. Indeed, it must be exhausting!

Moses knew that he needed the Lord's presence. The angel that the Lord had promised to take the Lord's place was not enough. Moses knew he needed the **Lord's** presence. More than that, Moses knew that the people of the Israel needed the Lord's presence. The nation which the Lord had called to be His own people could not exist, it could not survive the trials that lay before them unless the Lord was with them guiding and protecting them, providing for them all along the way.

Moses pleaded with the Lord that the Lord be present, and lead the people just as He had up to that point for those first three months of their journey. Already so many crises had come upon them, and without the Lord all would have been lost. It was too much for Moses, and it would have been too much for the people of Israel.

But how could Moses prevail and convince the Lord to continue to abide with a people that had turned against the Lord and had fallen into grievous sin? Moses could not make any argument based upon merit. He had none that could stand before the Lord. The same was certainly true for the people of Israel. Moses' argument was based upon the grace of God.

**Exodus 33:12-14** "Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say 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 grace in My sight.' <sup>13</sup> Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way,

that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”<sup>14</sup> And He said, “My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”

Moses laid it before the Lord that if Moses was going to do as the Lord had commanded him, and lead this people into the Promised Land of Canaan, then they needed the Lord’s presence. To be assured of the Lord’s presence Moses called to mind the words and promises of God. God had already assured Moses that the Lord knew Moses by name and that Moses had found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

So also when we call upon the Lord for His presence, for His strength, for His help and blessing in our time of need, let us follow Moses’ example. God has called us to be His people. He assures us every bit as much as He assured Moses that He knows each of us personally. He cares for each and every one of us. In His grace the Lord declares of all His children: “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.*”

(Isaiah 43:1)

Even as Moses called upon the grace of God for the blessing of God’s presence, so also the Lord responded according to His grace. The Lord said, “*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*” (v. 14)

Rest is not simply a matter of taking a break from the challenges of life. Rest is the strength of the Lord sustaining us. The Apostle Paul declared, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” (Philippians 4:13) We have that same promise and the same blessing for our life pilgrimage that Moses and the people of Israel had for the journey that lay before them. It was to be a difficult journey, and for many, certainly all mature adults, a pilgrimage that would last the rest of their lives. Through it all God’s grace prevailed. So throughout our lives God’s grace in Christ prevails. Jesus has promised to be with always, even to the end of the age, **to the end of the world!** (Matthew 28:20)

That is where we find our strength. It is the Lord’s presence that sustains us. It is the Lord’s presence that gives us rest. In our

gospel lesson we read Jesus' own words of invitation; *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:28-29).

Rest for your souls: that is such a magnificent concept to ponder. It begs the question, "Rest from what?" From sin's oppression is where we start. We read Paul's description of sin's oppression in our epistle lesson this morning. As much as we wish to do good and not sin, we find sin in our lives. With sin comes guilt and condemnation. How can the sinner stand before a holy God when sin so easily has its way with us?

Moses' conversation with the Lord provides the answer. We are --  
**II. Secure in the Cleft in the Rock.**

It seems to be an odd request for Moses to make. He was already in open communication with God, and yet we read this:

**Exodus 33:18-23** And he (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." <sup>19</sup> Then He (the LORD) said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." <sup>20</sup> But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." <sup>21</sup> And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. <sup>22</sup> So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

As sinful beings we could not see the glory of the Lord and live. He is holiness! We would be consumed by His holiness! Even for Moses there was that limit. While Moses was in direct communication with the Lord during that lengthy encampment at Sinai Moses' face would shine, reflecting the glory of the Lord so that Moses had to cover his face with a veil when he came out to tell the people what the Lord had revealed or commanded. Even so, not even Moses could see the full glory of the most holy God and live. However, God did grant Moses a special glimpse of His

glory. This glimpse started with all of God's goodness passing before Moses. With that goodness came the declaration of the name of the Lord Jehovah, the covenant God, the God our salvation. With the name of God comes the gospel declaration: "*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*" (v.19) Then the Lord shielded Moses in that cleft in the rock as His glory passed by, and Moses saw a glimpse of the glory of God that had already passed by.

Perhaps we wonder what it would be like to see the glory of the Lord! Well we also need to remember that "*Our God is a consuming fire!*" (Hebrews 12:29) However, God has revealed Himself to us in a most wonderful way. **He has made all His goodness pass before us by calling us to faith in Jesus Christ.** The Lord has had compassion on us in our fallen state. God has been gracious to us in bringing us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life through faith in Jesus. He has revealed a spectacular glimpse of His glory while shielding us from the consuming fire of His holiness! Jesus Himself is our Cleft in the Rock which protects us while at the same time showing us the glory of saving grace that is the Lord our Redeemer, the holy One of Israel!

Rest from the rigors of life is exactly what the Lord provides each and every one of us through faith in Christ Jesus. **We have rest** knowing that the Lord sustains us with His abiding presence. He will never leave us or forsake us. God is faithful! Add to that the revelation of grace and glory that comes to us in the gospel of Christ crucified, and we know the rest from sin's burden that is ours in Jesus. He is the Cleft in the Rock that shields us from the glory of God's holiness, and keeps us safe until we reach the end of our pilgrimage and enter into the Promised Land of heaven.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.