

Intro – Thank team for their leading last Sunday!

- Review of series:
 - Exodus 1-2: God is still working.
 - Exodus 3-4: God hears us & responds.
 - Exodus 5-6: God is in control.
 - Exodus 7-15: God reigns.
 - Exodus 16: God graciously guides.
 - Exodus 19-20: God who covenants.
 - Exodus 32: God who is worthy.
- Context for today: Ex 32-34 is one long unit.
 - We can't go over every detail, so focusing on key things here. Ed covered the frontend last week with the golden calf story. I'll focus on Ex 34:1-10 today.
 - Like the previous messages, we want to focus on the theme these stories point to about God. Today's theme is an important one: **God is gracious!**
- Let's pray and then we'll get started.

To recap last week if you weren't here – the passage was about Israel screwing up big time!

- Israel gets impatient waiting for Moses to return from talking to God, and they create this golden calf, this idol. Why is that such a big deal? We find out why in 32:4:
 - **And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" Exodus 32:4**
 - This is the nation saying someone else other than God rescued them! The 10 plagues, the defeat of Pharaoh, the freedom won, the mana and quails, the leading them along the way – it was all some other god, this cow statue – it wasn't Yahweh. What?!?!
 - This isn't like someone cheating on their spouse. This is like someone is married for 20 years, cheats on their spouse, and then makes a public statement that the life they have built over the years is all because of their mistress!
- We need to grasp though – the Exodus 32 story is one messed up story! And what happens?
 - God is furious at their behavior. They are breaking the commands as He writes them!
 - Moses intercedes for the nation with God, then goes back down the mountain from where he was in God's presence and to the people who are worshiping the calf:
 - **And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it. Exodus 32:19–20**
 - That might seem harsh, because it is. There are consequences for sin. In a culture that does everything to avoid consequences, this part of the story is important for us.
 - Know this: God's existence is not dependent on our understanding or agreement with His ways. But, if you join Carrie Underwood singing about taking a Louisville Slugger to a cheater's car, then maybe we can understand Moses' reaction and the Lord's.
- This is the context that leads up to Exodus 34:1-10, this is the backdrop to our seeing just how gracious our God is. Here's the first thing to see...

God graciously gives undeserved second chances –

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.² Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. ³ No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain."⁴ So

Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. Exodus 34:1–4

- The tablets mentioned are what God wrote the covenant out on, they represent the covenant.
 - These are the tablets that were broken because of their betrayal and unfaithfulness to God; broken not just metaphorically, but quite literally! The tablets were shattered.
 - This mirrors things in the garden, where Adam and Eve failed and humanities' connection to God was broken.
- But what does God say? Let's get you some new tablets.
 - He wrote the covenant with his own hand before, and here he says He'll do it again!
 - Jerry Bridges, defines grace as "Grace is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him. – Jerry Bridges"
 - God's love isn't dependent on us keeping things together; He loves us even when we break things; there's no mess up too big that will break God's love for you!
 - **Other scriptures talk about this:**
 - But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Psalm 86:15
 - Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. Micah 7:18
- So, know this, God gracious gives you more and more second chances. He doesn't give up on you. He is the God who restores and makes things new.
- **Why does He do this? That's the next thing...**

God's grace is who He is –

⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:5-7

- Remember, the series has all been about how Exodus helps us know God and what He's like.
- Here in this passage, we have it laid out for us. He is:
 - **Merciful** – He is gracious and loving toward us, even when we are antagonistic.
 - **Gracious**– He gives us love, care & His presence, even though it's not deserved.
 - **Slow to anger** – not reactive!
 - **Abounding in steadfast love** – no limit, no end.
 - **Abounding in faithfulness** – unable to go back on a promise!
 - **Forgiving iniquity & transgression & sin** – He is not dispensing shame & guilt!
 - **Doesn't clear the guilty?**
 - Peter Enns says, "forgiveness does not mean overlooking their sin, nor will he leave the guilty unpunished."
 - God being merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness and forgiving doesn't mean he IGNORES sin – it means He deals with it appropriately! We'll get more to this in a moment.
- But I want you to see the description of God they are being given – the reminder of who He is that they are being given, after their horrible, betrayal moment!
 - He doesn't change who He is because they mess up! He responds toward us, regardless of whether we're doing good or messing up, true to Himself.
 - **I'm guess we need the reminders also. I know I do at times.**
 - We need to remind ourselves not to be afraid of God – he's not a tyrant!
 - We need to remind ourselves we don't have to impress God to get His love.
 - We need to remind ourselves that God doesn't expect perfectionism.

- We need to remember that God doesn't cover us with abounding shame and guilt, He covers us with His abounding love and faithfulness.
- God isn't asking you to beat yourself up, He's asking you to receive His love.
- God isn't asking you to complete tasks and earn life, He's asking to receive the gift of life He has for you.
- **Let God show you who He is, let this reminder paint the picture –**
 - Too often His followers get it wrong. And I'm really sorry if that's your experience.
 - This is who God is! He's merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving, and expecting holiness from us.
 - Of course God is going to be gracious toward you...that's who He is!

God graciously forgives and restores –

- In the last part we read that God **will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.**
- Moses hears that and then prays this:

⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. ⁹ And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

- Moses' response to being in the presence of God and being reminded of who He is worship!
 - When we truly know God and know what He is like – we worship!
 - But Moses also intercedes for himself and the nation: we are a stiff-necked people God, stubborn, selfish, and continually failing in sin. We are exactly the type of people who need a God like you always with us, walking with us, forgiving us and guiding us!
- How does God respond to Moses prayer?

¹⁰ And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Exodus 34:8–10

- This doesn't sound like God simply leaving them to the consequences of their sins for generations to come. This is God forgiving them, renewing the covenant, and telling them more is to come for them! "I'm going to do marvelous things! You are going to see awesome things done by my hand! We aren't finished – in fact, we're just getting started!"
- God hears Moses' interceding for himself and the nation – and He responds.
- The scriptures tell us that Jesus intercedes for us, is our advocate with the Father:
 - **And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. 2 Corinthians 5:18–19**
 - **For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. Romans 5:10–11**
 - **For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. Colossians 1:19–20**

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Close –

- God makes things new. God forgives and restores. God makes broken things beautiful.

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