

Sermon Text for February 24, 2019

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Exodus 32:1-6, Acts 7:35-41

"How quickly we forget"

It is so great to have you all here on this preschool Sunday. I think this is our fifth or our sixth annual. I wanted to take this time and thank the teachers, Lynn, Heather, and Laurie, but I also wanted to take the time to thank you, the parents, for trusting us with your child, the most precious thing that you have in your life, with us for a few hours a few days of the week. It means a lot to us that we have full classes year after year and that you allow us to have an impact upon your child, an impact which we assume you think is positive. We think we are, but we thank you for trusting us.

It is hard to trust these days. The political and cultural undertones these days is pretty acerbic and so being able to say that you trust someone or being able to trust what is being said is a pretty big step. This is especially true when you can't necessarily see, touch, or feel something and then are encouraged to believe it and follow it and even base your very life on it. And then when you try and you feel like your prayers aren't being answered or your requests aren't being met on a timely basis it is so much easier to revert back to where you were just trying things out on your own on a trial and error basis.

We set up certain parameters in our lives where we allow God to work. Lord, I don't know if I should take this job, or stay in this relationship, or you fill in the blank, but I'll give you three days to let me know by sending me some kind of a sign. The three days will inevitably pass and it is then that we take matters into our hands and say this must mean that I should take this job that has a 50% percent pay cut, worse hours, and 3 hours from my house, or I should break up in a 5 year relationship or whatever the blank is that you created. We can get so creative to make sure that things work out the way that we always wanted them to work out in the first place when we feel that God is late in coming up with solutions to our problems.

We see this happen all the time in Scripture, especially in our Scriptures for today. Our Exodus reading began by stating that Moses delayed in coming down after meeting with God and this delay becomes the catalyst for the Israelites to take matters literally into their own hands by taking their most prized possessions, both men and women, and they created this Golden Calf that they could worship. Once you stop waiting on God and think that you know a time frame that is better than God's then very quickly that becomes the way that you will ordinarily do things and you stop relying upon God and God's timing for anything. The end result is a

rejection of God which comes about because we get tired of waiting for God and we begin to think that we can do this all on our own and on our own time. Let's learn from this.

READ SCRIPTURE

Today is our last day with Moses now for a while. We've been going through his life according to Stephen over these last few months so I hope you've become very familiar with his story and have learned from it. We have seen all of the main benchmarks in Moses' life: remember the providential placing of the basket among the reeds, the coming out experience from his castle, the burning bush, and today the final event that was probably his most intense God-experience of his life.

But what Stephen has highlighted in Moses' life throughout this sermon, is that in all of these moments of his life filled with God experiences, each one has been accompanied by the people of Israel rejecting him personally and then ultimately with each of these rejections, they have in essence rejected God. Let's start at vs. 35 and again keep your finger in Exodus as well. In the Greek what you don't get in the English is that from verses 35-38 the writer begins with "This Moses", listen to how it sounds. So if there is any doubt in your mind about the importance of Moses, and by now there shouldn't be, the author is basically saying, Moses was the man. But this man, vs. 35 states, they rejected. He came out and tried to help but they turned on him and said: "who died and made you king?" He gets to Egypt to lead them out and they ask who sent you and all he is equipped with by God is the name I am. They were not impressed. He leads them out and they complain because Pharaoh is coming up behind them. Move out of the way water, another God event. They get hungry and thirsty, here comes the food and water, and today he is spending too much time on the mountain with God. Let's take matters into our own hands. God event followed by rejection, the story of Moses' life.

Do you ever find yourself on a Sunday morning uplifted, ready to take on the world, with a song on your voice, and God clearly placed before you. Then you go out into the world and the first day at work someone comes and tells you about their exploits the night before, your boss asks you to do something which you consider unethical, you go to lunch and are surrounded by coarse language. All of a sudden that God experience on Sunday seems very far away and it is only Monday and you have yet to get out of lunch. Think of Moses who truly had a personal relationship with God, face to face, surrounded by the Israelites who knew how to bring them down. Sometimes that happens in the church. You are on fire for God and someone comes to you, from your own church, your own sister or brother in the faith, and says something that just brings you down and makes you think, what's the use. There must be another place or another

way that I can have a relationship with God and be on this high without these people bringing me down. Wouldn't that be nice to just have to love God and not deal with people? Well, that just isn't possible is it.

Today Moses finds himself in the most intense God experience of his life. Up in the mountain, clouds, lightning and thunder. Think of the final scene of Ghostbusters and you'll get the scene pretty well. And it was all for him. He was face to face with God and would live to tell about it, again. He was receiving the 10 commandments while all of this is taking place here in Exodus 32. The 10 commandments that even to this day we use as the basis for our legal system and as a way to understand God's commands to us. It was an unparalleled God event.

But it did not last did it? Both Exodus and Acts give us the reason that it didn't last. Stephen in Acts has the people say: Moses was around here, but he disappeared and we can't find him. Aaron, can you make us something that will lead us since our leader is gone? How easily we associate our leader, be it a pastor or someone else, as God or God's presence. It wasn't Moses that led you out, it was God. We have a hard time differentiating sometime.

Exodus says that they rebelled because: Moses delayed. Moses was late, and so the people had to keep on living and going forward so they did it the best way they knew how. By themselves and by creating something with their own hands. Not all waiting is bad. God calls us to be quiet and wait more often than he calls us to speak and take action. That is hard for us to understand in a society where we are so used to having everything instantly. We don't want to wait, especially when someone is late and they haven't told us that they were going to be late.

Moses hadn't given them any warning that he was going to be late, maybe he wasn't even going to be coming back at all. After all, that mountain looks pretty scary and God can be so fickle so maybe he took him out. How in the world did they forget all of the other times that Moses had come through to them and the promises of Abraham that they had learned since they were children that God would make them a great nation and that there would be one to lead them out and be the facilitator of that nation. They had forgotten Moses' track record. Think of all that Moses had done for them and they had completely forgotten it in their haste to attribute Moses' delay to being late. Vs. 36 in Acts tells us that Moses did wonders and signs, he led them out of Egypt, across the Red Sea and the wilderness. He really covers all of the God incidents from after the burning bush to now with the Golden Calf.

How can you turn your back on a Moses? How can you turn your back on someone who has shown his devotion, dedication, loyalty, trust, time after time sticking up for you when you turned your back. Look at the extent of the rejection. Aaron gathers the peoples' most precious

commodities. The earrings from the men and the women. And then Aaron makes a calf and listen to what he says in vs. 4. These are the gods, O Israel, that led you out of Egypt. This is the first case of revisionist history, where you take a historical event and spin it so that it sounds good and so the people will be able to make sense of the present because you just made the past match up to the present. This is what led you out of Egypt, something that we created, something that we did.

Scripture is full of people who refuse to wait on God's messengers and even God himself. Think of Jesus and the parallels to the works that he does as signs of his divinity and as signs that if you would just wait and see you will find a better way. I will lead you to the kingdom of God. Jesus had actions, miracles, healings, and teachings and every one of them were God experiences. But the people turned their backs. From his birth and the slaughter of the innocents to his praying in the Garden and his very disciples not able to wait up for him. They fell asleep. Jesus dies, it is over, let's go back fishing. Peter do you love me, yes Lord you know that I do, then wait after my sheep or tend my sheep.

This is Stephen's whole point in these verses and you see it highlighted in verse 39. We have a history of turning our backs on God. Think of God's track record in your life. First of all, think of how blessed you are that you won the very first race of your life that made you a winner 9 months before you were born. Think of God's grace in allowing you to be born in this country and live the type of life that you have lived. Think about God giving you life, protecting you. How God has been by your side and smiled as you celebrated in your life and held you close when you wept. God's track record is pretty good.

Every time we reject God and turn our backs on God or get impatient with God we forget God's track record and we forget that God has the type of collateral that has paid every debt that we had in his Son Jesus Christ. Every time that we think we can do things on our own we forget the one who walked this earth before we did and paid it all so that we could graduate from this school of life debt free and with a diploma that says saved on it.

Oh, but it is so tempting to get impatient with God, after all we have all lived our own lives and had our own experiences. A lot of you are waiting for an answer from God for different things in your life. An answer about a relationship, an answer about a child, an answer about a job, an answer about your health. I know that you are praying and sometimes it doesn't seem like God is answering. Don't come up with your own answer, God will do that for you. Help the time go by, by remembering the faithfulness of God as we find it in Scripture. Read about a God who is never late, is always on time, if we would just wait for him. Amen.