

Exodus 34:5-9  
Pastor Steve  
Proper 16A  
8/23/2020

### Get to Know the LORD

So, what's God like? If you had to try to explain God, the true God, the LORD to someone who had no idea who God is, how would you do it? Would you try to bring out the big Latin words you maybe learned as a kid? Most of us would start out with the basics. God is the one who made all things. God holds everything together. God provides what we need every day. God hears our prayers. Or maybe you don't know much about God and you're looking to find out anything. What's God like? Everyone feel a bit overwhelmed? You should! God is above us. The LORD is beyond our understanding in so many ways.

And yet, we **get to know the LORD**. This is one of the amazing things about Christianity. God reveals who he is again and again in the Bible. He helps give understanding so that we know everything we need to know. He calls all of us to **get to know the LORD**.

In the little sermon preview for this week I said that if you really want to get to know someone, go through something tough together and it'll tell you a lot about them. What we're going to look at is an intense betrayal for God and Moses by the Israelites. And their reaction reveals to us who they are.

What happened before this was inexcusable. God had saved the Israelites from hard lives in Egypt and brought them safely out to Mt. Sinai. He gave them manna and meat and water as they traveled through the desert. On top of Mt. Sinai he had come down to make these people his people through special promises. And Moses was the one God chose to lead the

group and relay things to everyone else. But when Moses came down from talking with the LORD he found the people worshipping a piece of gold shaped like a cow. Aaron, his brother, was the one who had made it. The people could have cared less about Moses and the LORD. What a mess the Israelites had become for God and for Moses.

If you're on social media like Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat you know what the number one rule is. You don't post anything that would make your life look messy! You only let other people how put together and good your life is. If you're not on social media, guess what? You do it too. You try your best to hide it when things aren't going well. It's just harder to keep it hidden. You feel this cultural influence, right? We're kind of conditioned to put walls up so people can't see who we really are. And it's what we expect from other people too.

That's why how you get to know the LORD is surprising. It's different. He doesn't hide who he is. He wants you to know. It's out there in the open for just about everyone everywhere. So, **get to know the LORD.**

Moses needed to know. Instead of railing against the people for their sin, he wanted to know who God was so he could hold God to his promises. He had asked to see God and do you remember how God was going to cover Moses so he'd only see his back? Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. This took Moses back. This was the name God told him to share with the Israelites before he went to Egypt. God's name is "I AM." Hearing that name would have confirmed that the LORD was the one who would do everything he said he'd do.

But God didn't stop there. **Get to know the LORD** more. He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and

sin. **Get to know the LORD?** Ok! This is awesome. God describes himself with words like compassionate and gracious. He is overflowing with love and faithfulness. And it's not just for a few. It's for many! Keeping up his love and forgiving more than you can count. **Get to know the LORD,** check.

But God didn't stop there. He does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation. **Get to know the LORD?** This side, I'd rather not. This doesn't even sound fair. God punishes sin and it has effects for generations? I know a part of me doesn't want to hear it. I wonder if this made Moses nervous for what would happen to the people.

This is the trap that the devil loves for us to fall into. Instead of getting to know LORD, we make him be who we want him to be. We raise our views and opinions above God's. See if this sounds familiar. God doesn't care about what I do, at least not the little things. If I feel strongly about something or if lots of other people do too, it can't be sinful. Flip it around and see if this hits home. God should judge and punish that person who hurt me. God's love is big but maybe not big enough if you sin sexually, or if you steal, or if you murder someone. Do you see it? The devil paints these caricatures of who God is so you never **get to know the LORD.**

Who is the LORD? We gotta go back and find out. The LORD hold himself to his promises. That's why he gave you this name to use! And it tells you that God shows compassion and grace to you and forgives you for raising yourself above him. How can that be true if the LORD also punishes sin? God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood... so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. For God to be just, someone had to be punished for sin but it wasn't you. Jesus took it in your place. And now you are forgiven. This is why Jesus says Peter and the disciples are blessed! They know he is their Savior. They know the LORD.

You **get to know the LORD** too. All your sins have been lifted off of you. Wickedness, rebellion, and sin are three words that cover all kinds of sins. In the Hebrew language, every single sin would fit under one of those categories, especially putting yourself above the LORD. And if you were on our own, you'd have to try to hold up under the weight of all of them. But Jesus has forgiven or lifted them off you. **Get to know the LORD** and you'll know how your heart can be light and free.

Old Testament believers turned these verses into an answer for the question we started out with. Who is God? Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness... Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He'd fulfill his promise to have Messiah take their place. And because of that promise, their sins would be forgiven.

They knew it well because they lived it. Remember the betrayal? Then Moses asked God for this: Let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance. LORD, even though they betrayed you, come with us and make us yours.

Do you have a treasured possession? That's really what that word inheritance meant. What thing has God blessed you with that you love? Can you imagine life without it? That's how God views you because of Jesus. That's who you are to him. **Get to know the LORD** and you'll find out that you are his.

And when you get to know the LORD, you can't help but proclaim who the LORD is, not who you think he should be. He's compassionate and gracious, just and the justifier. He's the one who goes with you and won't leave you. That's what the LORD did for Israel. He forgave their sin and went with them. Moses relayed who God was to his people and kept reminding them when they sinned. That's what God wants for you. So, thank God, it's true, you **get to know the LORD** too. Amen.