

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy

Exodus 33:1-34:35

Key verse 33:19

„ And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

Last week we learned that the people of Israel sinned seriously against God out of their slavish mentality by making themselves an idol in Moses' absence. If a leader acts without responsibility and backbone, an entire people can be thrown into ruin. But through a leader, Moses, who loved and interceded for his people, God's heart was moved. Let us learn to, like Moses, treat sin with consequence and to be intercessors before God for our neighbors and for our people. Today we learn that the intercession of Moses, a shepherd and mediator who had a friendship relationship with God, restored the covenant between God and his people. Because of this intimate relationship with God, Moses was even allowed to see the glory of God. Let us learn from Moses to ask for God's mercy and grace in times of crisis and difficult situations, so that we may see and experience the fulfillment of God's wonderful promise and the resurrection in our country.

I. God talked with Moses as with his friend (33:1-23)

Let's look at verses one to three: „Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” God promised Moses that he would fulfill his

promise to the Israelites. But he himself would not go with them. God loved his people, but he was so angry at the sin of the Israelites that he would destroy them if he moved on with them. It was like a gilded letter of divorce. The Israelites would receive worldly blessing, but they would lose the spiritual blessing to be God's chosen people, a royal priesthood with his vision and mission. Verse 4 says, “When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments.” Through the clear rebuke of Moses in the previous chapter, they had realized that their life with God's blessing was meaningless and fatalistic without a personal relationship with Him. They realized that the loss of God's blessing as his chosen people was the greatest loss. They suffered and took away all the ornaments they had received from Egypt. When they lost the spiritual blessing of God, the ornaments they had worn with great joy until then was no longer fun.

In verse 7 we see that Moses took a tent, pitched it some distance away from the camp, and called it the “tent of meeting”. But it was not yet the tabernacle that God had ordered his people to erect according to his instructions. Perhaps Moses called it by this name to remind God of his hope and promise for his people. Anyway, Moses did not give up fighting for his people. When God wanted to leave his people, Moses continued to fight in prayer for his people and even made a place of prayer for them. His unceasing prayer struggle kept the people of Israel alive and with God. We too can build such places of prayer, e.g. in our

house church or through our Bible Study groups at the schools or like the house churches on the different campuses pray for the salvation of the young people of Germany and Europe.

Let's look at verses 7 to 11. Whoever wanted to inquire of the Lord had to go to this tabernacle. When Moses went there, all the people stood at the entrances to their tents and watched him until he went in. When Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud came down, and stood at the entrance of the tent. When this happened, everyone kneeled in their tent door. So, the Israelites were full of repentance. In this way they showed their repentant heart that longed for God. The Israelites seemed to be low animals, who sought to satisfy their desires. But here we see that they sought God. They had a penitent heart because Moses had helped them through clear and harsh speech. That was the basis on which the relationship between God and his people and the spiritual blessing for his people could be restored. In Deuteronomy 4:29 Moses told his people before they entered the holy land: „But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.“

Let's look at verse 11: "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." Moses had a deep relationship of love and trust with God. That's why he could talk to God like a friend. Here we see a different type of friendship than what people think of as friendship. People think of an ideal friend as someone who listens to them endlessly, and who would accept them as they are without judgment, and who is always available to them. In truth, our true friends are those who tell us the truth, such as the servants of God who pray for us and help us to have God's guidance in our lives.

To be a friend of God is a privilege entailing the development of a very personal relationship with God through the study of his word. John 15:14 "You are my friends if you do as I command you." This relationship

with God we can renew every day by, for example, daily early prayer. Many want God to be their friend. But conversely, they do not strive to be friends of God. May we be friends of God who understand his heart and work with him for the salvation of one soul. Moses was in fact a friend of God when he fought for his people of Israel based on the promises of God. We can become God's friends by fighting for the salvation of our entrusted sheep. H. Jochen is a friend God, because he prays for Olaf. Joshua is a friend of God because he prays daily for the salvation of Johann and Tom. Let us grow as friends of God who pray for 12 disciples.

It is interesting to note that verse 11b mentions that his servant and disciple Joshua, the Son of Nun didn't leave the tabernacle. Our next generation can also, just as Joshua remained constantly in the tabernacle, remain in the fight of prayer and the relationship with God through the common life with their parents and the servants of God. Then they can also grow up to great leaders and friends of God.

Let's look at verses 12 to 18. Moses loved the people of Israel, and he pleaded with God that he would accept them as his people again. Verse 13 says, "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." Moses did not demand that God fulfill his shopping list of requests. He first wished to know the way of God. And he asked God, that he would accept the Israelites as his people. God promised that he would accept them as his people and to go ahead and bring Moses to his rest. But Moses was not satisfied with this.

Let us read verses 15 to 17: "Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" And the Lord said to Moses, "I

will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." Moses' sense of responsibility and prayer moved God's heart. God wanted to accept Moses' prayer and restore his people as his people. The people of Israel did not deserve this at all. The only reason was that the servant of God, Moses, had a close friendship with God and prayed to God for his people. The relationship and prayer struggle of a servant of God, Moses, changed the fate of an entire nation. How gracious it is to see that God's heart was moved when Moses so imploringly prayed to God. How thankful can we also be for our shepherds who so interceded with God for us at various moments of our lives so that God might have mercy on us? In what way may we also do this, so that God might also declare that for our sake he wants to have mercy on our country, for example, or on campus students or school friends? From Moses we are able to learn the prayer struggle of a shepherd. It is relatively easy to pray once for someone and then to forget about him, or for someone you like or who doesn't necessarily stand out so negatively. It is easy for us to criticize quickly. But to lead the faithful prayer fight for a soul to the end, so that its relationship with God is restored, always requires to come to God humbly and to intercede. It requires devotion and perseverance. At a time when I wanted to exclude God from my life, I had shepherds, especially my parents, who understood God's heart and will for my life and interceded for me. They did not tell me what I wanted to hear, but the truth of God. Only in this way could I finally recognize God's guidance for my life and make a decision through Mt 6,33 to give my life completely to God. H. Peter and M. Sara Ryu were successful and very lovable people, but without God they also had no orientation for their lives. But they also had friends of God in their lives, like the servant of God and their parents, who prayed for them for many years, lived together with them and helped them to recognize God's will for their lives based on the Bible. In this way, they were able to found a blessed and beautiful house church last year. Do you know why Monika,

the mother of Augustine, is always depicted with a jug? This represents the many tears she may have shed in prayer for Augustine. When she did this as a friend of God, Augustine became one of the most influential figures in Christianity. As friends of God, pray that 10,000 One-to-One Bible Study teams will be set up on Bonn campuses and that many young people will come to salvation in Jesus.

Verse 18 says, "Then Moses said, Now show me your glory." In the time of deep crisis, Moses had faith and desire to see God's glory. It was his deepest desire and he longed for God and wanted to be close to Him. That is why he could also see God's glory in this time of crisis. Let us read the leading verse 19 together: "And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God's glory shows God in his goodness, grace and mercy, although these are completely undeserved. God showed His grace and mercy in His sovereignty, which overcame all iniquity and transgression, when Israel showed His penitence and when there was a servant of God, Moses, who took responsibility and became God's friend in prayer. Because we have an intercessor Jesus who atoned for our sin by his death on the cross, God also wants to show us his mercy and kindness when we come to him in repentance.

We learn here from Moses to pray in times of crisis and to desire to see God. In times of crisis we often try to deal by ourselves or we instinctively exclude God and live in calculation and disbelief. God alone can, and wants, to show us grace and mercy in his sovereignty. In difficult times, like Moses, we can develop an even deeper relationship with Jesus by praying to Him and deepening our relationship with Him. Then we can and will see God's glory. When the servant of God clung to God's Word in the difficult time of persecution, we could see God's glory through the growth of shepherds and

the next generation. By faithfully studying and obeying the Bible, we can see God's glory in a difficult time, e.g. through the Young Leaders Evening, through the Bible Prayer Group at Helmholtz-Gymnasium and through GLE. My wife is currently in hospital and tied to her bed. Sometimes I feel helpless because I cannot do anything with my own strength as I often do. I can only pray. But God wants to give us His mercy. If we trust in God, instead of seeing the difficulties, and humbly pray to Him by firmly believing in Mt 6:33, then we will not only see God's mercy but also God's glory.

II. God renews the covenant with the people of Israel (34:1-35)

Let's see chapter 34, verse 1: „The Lord said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.” Moses was to chisel out two stone tablets and to come up on Mount Sinai. No one was to come with him. God met Moses there. Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped: “Lord,” he said, “if I have found favor in your eyes, then 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.” What was God's answer? Let's read verse 10: “Then the Lord said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you.” What a wonderful promise! Although the people had rejected him several times and even made themselves another God, God wanted to make a covenant with them again and appoint them again as his chosen people. But a covenant is not a non-binding agreement, but a firm relationship like a marriage covenant. God's grace and hope for his people was incomprehensible, that he wanted to restore them as his people. But they should love his word all the more and respect his grace so that they would not lose the blessing again. Therefore, he gave them clear laws, also called covenant duties, to which

they should adhere. Let's see verses 12 to 17: „Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same. “Do not make any idols.” God warned the Israelites above all against the sin of idolatry, for this was the very thing that had led them to destruction. Idolatry is a serious sin that separates us from God and brings us to destruction. Furthermore, they were to keep the feast of the week and the feast of unleavened bread, keep the Sabbath faithfully and sacrifice or consecrate all the firstborn to God. Many young people, even among Christians, do not want to be obligated to anything and keep everything open and thus pull themselves out of any responsibility. As God's people we must take our part of the covenant seriously and keep it, then we can experience God's blessing.

Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. When he came down, he had the tablets of the covenant law in his hand and he had the reflection of God's glory on his face. His face was radiant. We see that after work and after dealing with the problems of everyday life and especially after sin, people's faces are mostly dark. But after Moses had spent 40 days studying the Bible, his face became radiant. In this time of crisis, like Moses, we can go into prayer and deep fellowship with God. Then we can see God's glory and also have a radiant face.

Through today's passage, we learned that God is a God of grace and mercy to whom we, as friends of God, may come in intercession for others. In times of crisis, we can deepen our relationship with God and even see God's glory. We also got to know the prayer struggle of a shepherd who stood up for his people and restored Israel as God's chosen people. Let us faithfully keep God's covenant by avoiding idolatry absolutely

and by faithfully studying his Word. May God do his wonderful works and establish three mission base camps in Istanbul, Cairo and Dubai, using Germany preciously as a missionary sending country.