

**“Answering the Call”**

**Sermon Title: “Called to Follow”**

Preaching Text: Exodus 34:29-35

FUMC—Arlington, Texas 76011

Transfiguration Sunday—7 February 2016

“When the water reaches the upper level, follow the rats”

(—Claude Swanson: 1862 - 1939).

+++++

29 Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; 34 but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him (Exodus 34:29-35).

Pharaoh’s Order to Kill Firstborn  
The Birth and Adoption of Moses  
Moses Flees into Midian  
Israelites Groan in Slavery  
Moses Sent to Deliver Israel  
The Ten Plagues and Exodus Begins  
The Israelites at Mount Sinai  
Moses Receives the Commandments/Law  
The Golden Calf and Moses’ Anger  
Moses returns to Sinai

In Exodus 33, Moses asks to see God’s glory — a request that God graciously grants. But God must protect Moses so that Israel’s leader is not consumed. As we read in verses 18–23:

“Moses said, ‘Please show me your glory.’ And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.’ And the Lord said, ‘Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and

you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.’”

Now Moses descends the mountain again. His face is radiant: an expression of his privileged place as servant close to God: he reflects God’s glory. Perhaps “returned” (v. 31) is an echo of the Golden Calf incident. Moses dons a “veil” (v. 33) to avoid overwhelming his hearers with God’s reflected glory. Again Moses speaks with God.

One account (33:11) says that “the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face” but another (from a different source) says that God only allowed Moses to see his back (33:20-33) not God’s full glory (that is, His face).

In the Bible, we are warned that no one can see the face of God. There is danger in God’s exaltedness; to presume to look upon the Divine is to invite destruction.

Moses had a long and rocky relationship with Yahweh, but one that continued to grow to the very end.

Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. 6 He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. 7 Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. 8 The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended. . . Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. “He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, 12 and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (Dt. 34—selected verses).

The hand of God guides every step of Moses’ life—as it does ours—just sometimes we do not see it.

One night I dreamed a dream.  
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.  
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.  
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,  
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,  
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.  
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,  
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,  
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.  
“Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,  
You’d walk with me all the way.  
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,  
there was only one set of footprints.  
I don’t understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me.”

He whispered, “My precious child, I love you and will never leave you  
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.  
When you saw only one set of footprints,  
It was then that I carried you.”—by Mary Stevenson

David Neil Mosser, FUMC Arlington, Texas 76011