

Have you ever felt that you met God? Have you had an experience when you just knew God was there? It feels different from one person to the next. For some it's a sense of the peace that passes all understanding. For others, it's like the song – *you can hear the brush of angel's wings*. Or, you feel this sense of holiness and you just know Jesus is present. I've felt that and I know some of you have, too, because you've told me.

Today God meets the children of Israel; they experience God's presence in the most incredible and magnificent moment recorded in the Bible. And at that meeting these people are called out to be God's special family, among all the people of the earth, chosen as God's holy nation, a kingdom of priests. They had quite a calling and we'll talk about that this morning.

Let's recall how the story began. It was about one year prior to that very day:

Moses had led his father-in-law's flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the very place he stood now. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up . . . When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the bush . . . "Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt." And that day Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?" God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain." (Excerpts from Ex. 3)

Now here he is at that very mountain; here they stand! Moses, who couldn't do a thing, saw God's work accomplished. Can you imagine?

God gave Moses a sign. A sign is a miracle. Moses experienced this huge prediction of God coming true. God thinks big, and at first Moses hadn't believed it. But he did it anyway and it worked! So when they actually arrived at Mt. Sinai, Moses rushed up the mountain that very day. I imagine him running to the very spot where God spoke to him. Wow it happened! It all happened! It was an incredible, holy moment. Surely the presence of the Lord was there at that place.

During that meeting on the mountain, we realize God is also eager to see Moses and the Israelites there, for God extends this message to Moses – *"Tell them, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'"* Can you see it? Can you see God's love? God does exactly what God says; God is true to His word, even though it seems inconceivable to us.

Once a man named Len Newell worked with a people group in the Philippines translating the Bible into their native language but he had virtually no success. Even though trying to help them know God was present, few people believed. One day the wife of the only believer from the village had a baby. But she developed complications and began hemorrhaging. No help was

available. Soon she showed no vital signs. But Len and a woman named Mary wouldn't give up. Mary asked God for a sign, and immediately the story of Jesus healing the woman with the issue of blood came to mind. (Luke 8) She clung to that promise as they transported the woman five hours to a doctor. When they got there, the doctor was unavailable. But that afternoon, she miraculously revived. God had intervened, and at the end of the week she was able to walk the five hours back to her home.<sup>1</sup>

That's the kind of meeting with God Moses experienced. Like Moses, these people saw and experienced the work of God. From that experience thousands of people have become Christians from that language group, just like thousands of Israelites stood there that day to commit themselves to God.

Moses and the people of Israel were there to seal the contract with God. Through it Israel became a nation governed directly by God, a theocracy. The contract took shape around three things, conditioned by the people's acceptance.

If they said yes, they would be God's treasured possession. Now that sounds really good, but what exactly does that mean? It means you are "beloved;" you are "the crown jewel of God;" you belong. It means you are especially distinguished; you are God's pride and joy. Because of that you get to enjoy the special privileges of God's power and presence.

It all depends, though, on you giving yourself fully to God. The Israelites said, "We will do everything the Lord has spoken." Have you fully committed yourself to God?

Once a rich young man came to Jesus saying, "What do I need to be God's? I've committed everything." Jesus said, "What about your wealth? Will you give it too?" And the young man went away sad, because he had a lot of wealth. Jesus commented, *'it's hard to fully commit because so many things pull humans away from God. But it's not impossible, because with God all things are possible.'* So if you are struggling with that same thing yourself this morning, realize that God will make a way for you.

Then Peter said, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." And Jesus said, "Truly, there is no one who has left house, family or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age-- houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions-- and in the age to come eternal life" (Mk 10:17-30).

The same is true for you. Being fully God's means you experience God's blessings. Have you fully committed yourself to God or do you hold back? When you give yourself fully to God, God rewards you a hundredfold.

But this is an invitation; God does not force you. Joshua said, "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15), not "you must serve God." And if you so choose, God shows us how; God helps us.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.jaars.org/files/audio/LenNewell-2.mp3>, accessed 5/7/2010.

Choosing to serve God means you experience God's power and blessing, and you are part of God's good news. But it does not mean you won't have troubles. Jesus experienced persecution, and so will you. So let's not misunderstand or have false expectations. Being God's treasured possession means when problems come, God is there, and nothing is impossible for God.

Secondly, God's people are called a priestly kingdom and holy nation. We take God to the world; we extend God's Presence to others. That's our charge. We act like priests in that respect. Most people don't walk into a bookstore, buy a Bible, and learn about God. You are how they learn. You pray, you heal broken hearts, you extend welcome and teach Bible stories. We do this not in our own strength, but by depending on God, through God's power, and according to God's plan.

Therefore, you are called to do something. This church has a calling. Are you willing to say yes? It involves spreading God's story and God's incredible miracles. We are already seeing them.

Thirdly, we are to be holy people - Often in this culture we talk self-esteem or self-image. Just read our magazines. When you belong to God's priestly kingdom, your self-image is defined by "becoming" - becoming transformed into God's image. Being in a committed relationship with God changes, heals, and transforms you. Are you seeking healing and transformation today? Be dedicated to the distinctive lifestyle of intimate involvement with God. That means God is first. You think about God, talk to God, talk about God and see life through the lense of a Christian perspective.

That day the people of Israel all answered, "Everything the Lord has spoken we will do."

What about you? Have you uttered those words to God?

Could we do that together here at FPCD, as the children of Israel did? We have an answer to give to God. They backed up their words by consecrating themselves to meet God. And meet Him they did!

God was undeniably present, majestic beyond description - in the natural disturbance of a cloud, lightning, storm, fire - it was not a volcano. The mountain trembled and the fire came down, it did not reach up.

Have you consecrated yourself so that you can experience God's presence? You do it through prayer, bible study, and worship, as you commit yourself to seek, listen, and obey.

- When you pray, God will give you what you ask
- When you read, God will reveal things to help you know God and experience God's power
- When you worship, God will fill that hunger deep inside

Why is all this important? Look at the benefits of being God's child. God bears us up on eagles' wings; heals us, acts on our behalf; has plans for us; fills our lives with blessing; gets us through

trouble, and uses us to bring God's salvation to others. Nothing could be better in life than being God's.

AMEN