

Sermon 14, Why We Worship, Exodus 4:27-31

Proposition: God provides, and when His servants announce that provision, His people ought to respond in faith and worship.

- I. God Provides, vv. 27-28
 - A. He Keeps His Promises, v. 27 with vv. 14-15
 - B. He Brings Brothers Together, v. 27b
 - C. He Provides Instruction Through His Prophet, v. 28
- II. God's Servants Announce His Provision, vv. 29-30
 - A. They Gather God's People, v. 29
 - B. They Speak God's Words to His People, v. 30a
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- III. God's People Respond in Faith and Worship, v. 31
 - A. They Believed
 1. That God Had Visited Them
 2. That God Had Seen Their Affliction
 - B. They Bowed in Worship

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I have told you repeatedly that this book of Exodus takes us from slavery to worship via the knowledge of God. And it does so with tremendous literary artistry. Our passage this morning seems pretty vanilla. Compared to the tremendous climaxes we've already witnessed, such as the announcement of God's name and the "bridegroom of blood" episode, and the high drama of Moses and Aaron confronting Pharaoh that we're about to witness, these few verses seem to have little to offer. The commentators shoot over them very quickly. But clearly the narrator intends us to see yet another climactic moment here — the moment when deliverance is announced to the people of God, and they bow their heads and worship. One commentator noted that of the thirty-some times "Afterwards" is used in the Bible, it only indisputably begins a new section once, in Ezra 7:1. That may even be true. And yet it has always seemed to me that the text pauses right here to let the implications linger for a moment. They bowed their heads and worshipped! And we need to learn that same lesson. When we see how God provides, and listen to the announcement of that provision, we too need to believe and worship.

I. God Provides, vv. 27-28

This point is really simple. God provides. And yet it is one of the things we are most likely to forget as we try to live the Christian life. We start to look everywhere else for what we need — money, stuff, health, pleasure, and so on. But God begins here with a reminder that He is the one who gives us what we need. Let's just take a quick survey of what He does for Moses here.

A. He Keeps His Promises, v. 27 with vv. 14-15

Our passage this morning begins with a flashback. We were told back in v. 14 that Aaron was already headed out to meet Moses. Now we are told why. God had come to Aaron and said “Go out into the middle of nowhere and meet your brother.” Even today, Mt. Sinai is a healthy distance from anywhere. Today, it will take you five and a half hours to drive from Cairo to Mt. Sinai. Imagine how long it would take to walk the whole way. In this pre-automobile era, the mountain of God was truly in the back of beyond, the “backside of the desert” as the KJV has it. But God had promised a helper for Moses, and He duly sent the helper in good time to meet Moses.

When you are thinking about ridiculously improbable events, such as your brother that you lost touch with long ago, somehow getting a prompting from God that will bring him to meet you at a place where you have never been together, do you trust that God will actually bring them about when they are needed? Do you have faith in His provision when it is not something you’ve experienced? I know, it’s a tough question. I have a lot of faith that God will pay my salary through your donations to this church. You’ve done it for yours; He’s done it for years. Nothing seems likely to stop it now. But what about faith that if I go into a concentration camp for preaching Jesus, He will still provide for me there? That is harder to believe. It’s unprecedented in my experience. But it is something God can do. Trust Him to continue taking care of you, wherever you are and whatever happens.

B. He Brings Brothers Together, v. 27b

Notice, too, that God brings brothers together. One of the things I’ve noticed and commented on over the years is that there are virtually no famous ministry duos consisting of two brothers (John and Charles Wesley are the only one that comes to mind!). There are plenty of brother-based organizations in the business world and the entertainment industry. One need only think of the Russo brothers, markers of spectacle for Marvel. But one would be hard-pressed to find brothers who pastor together, now or at any period in church history since the twelve sons of Jacob (all brothers, of course) or the apostles James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Scripture does not record James and John ministering together — leaving Moses and Aaron as the lone brother-based ministry duo in the Bible. That should not surprise us one bit, though. Though brothers don’t naturally minister together, God can make it happen. Are your brothers believers? Thank God for it. Are you able to serve side-by-side in His Kingdom with them? Thank Him even more!

C. He Provides Instruction Through His Prophet, v. 28

Well, we also see that God provides instruction through His prophet. God could have told Aaron everything He needed to know. But that is not how God works. As we have seen many times, only a few prophets are invited to hear directly from God. He generally works by telling us what we need to hear through the mouth of the one to whom He revealed it. Revelation comes from the Father through the Son by the Spirit, usually with one or two additional steps — perhaps through an angel to the prophet who finally announces it to us.

Why does God do it this way? Because He wants to include more people in the process. The gospel message is not just for me; it's for us. God doesn't just have a relationship with me, but with us. And also, He wants us to focus attention on His Son, as The Mediator par excellence.

Moses told Aaron all this stuff because that was going to be Moses' job — to tell everything to the people of Israel. If you can't evangelize your own brother, how could you evangelize anyone else? Better, if you can't tell God's word to your own family, how could you ever think of telling it to the whole church?

So God provides. He provides help, a brother, an opportunity to practice getting the message straight in a one-on-one setting before taking it to the masses.

II. God's Servants Announce His Provision, vv. 29-30

But that is what Moses and Aaron do next.

A. They Gather God's People, v. 29

Again, as we have recently seen in Acts, this is part of the church's ministry. Gathering is a key part of what we do. Individualized ministry is great. But the Bible focuses pretty heavily on ordinary public gatherings. Again, the Christian faith is corporate; we form the people of God, brothers and sisters in one family. If we're not gathering, we're doing something wrong.

B. They Speak God's Words to His People, v. 30a

Then they tell the people everything. And of course, the text will go on to show that the people did not actually comprehend the message. God had clearly told them up front that Pharaoh would not be amenable and that the proposed exodus was not actually going to work until Pharaoh was compelled by a mighty hand killing his firstborn son. The people knew that. And yet when Pharaoh responded exactly as God said he would, they panicked and turned on Moses and Aaron.

Good thing the church today would never do that. Oh wait.

Brothers and sisters, God has told us that the Christian life is going to be hard. He has told us that worship is work. He has told us that we will be carrying around an instrument of torture and murder called a "cross" if we want to follow Jesus. Do we actually believe that? Or, like Israel gathered before Moses and Aaron, do we hear what we want to hear and let the rest drain out of our heads and puddle on the floor somewhere?

C. They Demonstrate God's Power to His People, v. 30b

Finally, we have an absolutely crucial part of announcing God's provision. Moses and Aaron did the signs. Now, it's easy to imagine a sort of awkward magic show, in which they did the whole rod-into-snake thing, and then got their leprous hands cured, and then made Nile water into blood. I have no doubt but that you all would enjoy those signs if I were to do them right here, right now, in front of you. At least, it would give you something to talk about for a while.

But how does this apply today? Simply this: Anyone who sets out to talk about God and bring His message to His people today better show that he has access to that power himself. I'm not talking about the ability to do tricks. I'm talking about the kind of real power that transforms lives. Marvel has shown us some pretty incredible tricks. But anyone who is going to say "Thus

says the Lord” needs to show that the power of God is actually at work in his own life, taking away his sin and making him into a better servant of God. Do you have that power? That is, when you say “Kids, God doesn’t want Mommy to be angry, so He sent His Spirit to help her have patience with you,” will your kids actually believe that? Will they say, “Yeah, Mommy, I’ve seen you control your anger in a way that I can’t do. I believe that God really did send His Spirit to you”?

The theological way to say this is that the Word and Spirit of God always go together. You can’t actually have one without the other. Someone who seems to have a lot of the word, but no power for a godly life, is not the least bit credible. You can’t take him seriously as a Christian because he doesn’t appear to have the total package, and therefore it’s hard to believe that he has any of it.

So seek the power of God to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Without them, God’s message will be treated as worthless.

III. God’s People Respond in Faith and Worship, v. 31

But with God’s power doing these signs, the message was heard. The people responded in two ways. I want to discuss both of these ways tonight.

A. They Believed

First of all, they believed. They exercised faith, which is a combination of knowledge, trust, and assent. They held it to be true that God had visited and seen their affliction.

1. That God Had Visited Them

This verb “visit” is an interesting one. Most modern translations censor it and replace it with “was concerned about,” which is translational malpractice. The verb means just what it says — to come to someone. God actually came to them! That was what the people heard, and what they believed. They no longer thought that God was far away; they understood that He had come to them. Sometimes the Bible uses this word “visit” to refer to coming in judgment; other times, it uses the word to refer to coming in salvation. This time, God came in salvation.

Do you believe that God has visited you? That He has come to you? That He’s not far away, but close, actively present for your salvation?

2. That God Had Seen Their Affliction

The other thing they believed, then, was that in coming close to visit them, God had seen their affliction. They understood that He was not oblivious or disengaged. As we’ve seen, God reserves the right to do something about our suffering on His own terms. He acts in His own time, and sometimes we suffer for what feels like a very long time before He acts to save. But He will act. Until He does, it’s our call to live in faith — to hear the message of God from the messenger of God and believe that God is genuinely going to come and save us from our sins.

God provides everything we need for faith, including a believing heart. But it is still our call to take those tools and use them to believe.

B. They Bowed in Worship

Finally, God's people enacted their faith by bowing in worship. They physically tilted their bodies forward to show their submission to God. Do you worship Him despite your suffering and problems because you are convinced that He has visited you and seen your affliction?

Obviously, the fact that you are here at evening service implies that you believe in coming to worship. Don't give that up; don't stop now. Faith and worship; those are our tasks in this moment, when deliverance has been announced but not yet consummated. God has told us that He will come and save us. So believe Him, and live. Amen.