



Mt Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Making and Growing Followers of Jesus

May 2, 2024

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Do you have a place that carries a special meaning to you and your family? Perhaps a place where you can be reminded of God's faithfulness? Being back in Oklahoma last month was a reminder to me. We moved there when I was in middle school, a thousand miles away from all our loved ones and in the days before internet when long distance calls were really expensive. We said it was like all our loved ones died at once—the grief and shock of it was awful. And yet visiting that town again, I remembered God's faithfulness to us while we were there. He provided new friends and unexpected opportunities. I wish I could go back and tell my 12-yr-old self that everything was going to be okay.

This week, as we look at Exodus 19, Moses has a chance to go back to a place where he had a life-changing experience: Mt. Sinai, the place of the burning bush. The Lord had promised Moses, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (Ex 3:12). Of all the powerful signs Moses had seen, this must have been the most overwhelming as he was able to bring his people to this mountain in fulfillment of God's promise.

Just as Moses had a lesson in holiness when he had to take his shoes off on that holy ground, now God is meeting him again with all the people and beginning their lesson in holiness. He wants them to wash their clothes and prepare themselves to be in the presence of the Lord. He calls them to do this in order that he might bless them and renew His covenant with them. He tells them, "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6).

What does that mean to be a "kingdom of priests"? This phrase is repeated twice in the Bible, once here in Exodus and once in 1 Peter 2. The main job of a priest is to be the person who brings others into the presence of God. Priests teach about God, they offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, and they lead others into worship. The Israelites were not just to be a priesthood for themselves. They were to be Yahweh's ambassadors to the world, bringing others into the presence of God. We see a taste of this in Solomon's court, when all nations came together to learn about Solomon's wisdom and the God he worshiped.

Peter picks up on this idea in his letter and now includes all Christians in this promise as well. You and I are set apart to be God's holy representatives to the world. We once were outcasts, left to our own devices, but God has brought us together and made us into His people. We are not His people just for our own sake. We are His people for the sake of the whole world. This is part of the original covenant with Abraham when God said to him that all nations would be blessed through him. You and I are a fulfillment of that promise, and we are now stewards of that promise to the rest of the world.

As you prepare your hearts for worship this week, ask God to reveal His holiness to you and to help you understand what it means to be His holy child, set apart as one of His own. Ask Him how you too can be a blessing in the world where He has placed you. You are blessed to be a blessing!

Blessings,
Pastor Carolyn