

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Exodus: Set Free, Live Free

TITLE: God Responds

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 33-34

DATE: April 23, 2017

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We are in a series on the Book of Exodus from the Old Testament. Why study this book? Exodus is the Old Testament story of the salvation of God's people that points forward to the great salvation that comes to us by faith in Jesus.

How do you respond to irresponsibility? When someone else is irresponsible, what do you do? Or maybe we should say "what *should* you do?"

- When you're waiting to hear back to see if you got the job, and they said they'd get back to you within a few days, but it's been over a week.
- When coach says you're definitely going to get more playing time, but you're still sitting the bench.
- When a friend says they can't go out so supper because they're busy with their family, but you see them on Facebook at a concert with other people.
- *How should you respond?*

How we answer this question says a lot about us. And oddly enough, God is the one we see responding to Israel's irresponsibility in Exodus 32-34. And how he responds tell us about who he truly is.

God had just freed Israel from slavery, and after arriving at Mount Sinai they built a cow out of gold and bowed down to it. In response to this, God has an intriguing conversation with Moses. And then Moses asks to see his glory or "his goodness" (33:18-19). Yes, something interesting passed in front of Moses, something that his eyes actually saw. But what God wanted Moses to take away from this experience is what God *said* to him. God declared, in no uncertain terms, that he is a God of ceaseless mercy and of justice (34:6-7). And because of his mercy, he was going to renew the covenant he made with the people in chapters 19-20. God's response of mercy and covenant renewal is staggering in the face of Israel's rebellion with the golden calf.

But this points us to God's clearest display of his own glory and goodness, the coming of Jesus. Just as Yahweh was full of mercy and justice, the Apostle John says Jesus is full of grace and truth. Both descriptions include a kindness and a standard. And both lead with the kindness. Meaning, God responds to our irresponsibility with grace.

Do we reflect God like this? Do we respond graciously to those who don't deserve it? Do let our sense of justice be the primary way we engage with others?

And how does thinking about these things help to answer our question about how we *should* respond to such things?

Well, if it's true that in Jesus there is "grace upon grace" (John 1:16) for all who trust him, this means...

There will never be a day when Jesus runs out of mercy for you.

And if this is the ultimate example we have of how to react when someone near us has acted wrongly, then our answer is simple:

How should we respond to irresponsibility? With far more grace than I think I should.

We usually judge a situation based on what we think someone deserves. But our sense of justice is not as informed as God's. So, we are called to lead with mercy and grace. More mercy than we think we can muster.

- With a disobedient child, start with grace...
- With a rebellious family member, lead with love...
- With an arrogant employee, mercy first...
- With a faithless friend, begin with compassion...
- With a distant spouse, forgiveness no matter what...

Why should we respond like this?

Because this is what God has done for us in Jesus. In him there is grace upon grace upon grace upon grace and it doesn't stop. He is the divine well of mercy that doesn't run dry.

For Discussion —

1. When, in the past month, have you reacted and responded primarily out of your sense of justice?
2. Who is someone you know who responds to others patiently and with this kind of grace?
3. If you had to explain the big idea of this message to someone who missed it, how would you paraphrase it in a few sentences?
4. In what relationship, right now, is extending mercy the most difficult for you? What excuses do you come up with for why you shouldn't lead with mercy?