

The Season of Formation

Romans 8:29 Mirror Translation

“For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the exact image of His Son.”

March 1, 2026

Sermon Title – Living at the Base of the Mountain

Sermon Text – Exodus 19:16–17 The Message

On the third day at daybreak, - there were loud claps of thunder, - flashes of lightning, - a thick cloud covering the mountain, - and an ear-piercing trumpet blast ... Everyone in the camp shuddered in fear ... 17 Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God ... They stood at attention at the base of the mountain.

INTRO

Eight weeks ago – we began a journey ... A journey that will radically change – all who choose to climb the mountain – that has been set before us ... I began this journey by describing the dangers and pitfalls that we may discover along our journey to the mountain top ... Well – let me be clear – the enemy of our soul – will surely try to derail us as we journey upward.

Now that we have completed our preparation stage ... We have come to a defining moment – a moment of decision so to speak ... The journey before us is a call to intimacy – a call to unity – a call into complete oneness with our Lord – that will fully conform us into the exact image of Christ.

As we now sit at base camp – so to speak – preparing for our journey ... I am reminded of the story in Exodus where the Israelites are seated at the base of mount Sinai and Moses is about to ascend the mountain ... I think this is a great analogy and parallels what we are about to journey into ... Let me paraphrase our opening text.

Mt Sinai is in fully blown manifestation mode ... There are sounds of thunder and flashes of lighting – all coming out of a cloud filled mountain top ... Along with that display – is an ear-piercing sound coming from the mountain that resembles a trumpet blast ... This was such a specular display that everyone at base camp was shuddering in fear ... Moses then leads all the Israelites over to stand at the base of the mountain ... Now this specular display has become up close and personal.

So – here we are – at the base of the mountain ... We may not see a literal mountain covered in fire ... But the invitation is the same ... The Father has set a journey before us ... A journey that – if undertaken – will transform you ... But – the reality is – many will not take it ... Many will choose to remain at base camp ... So – let's examine three possible reasons why.

Exodus 20:18–19 The Message

“All the people, - experiencing the thunder and lightning, - the trumpet blast and the smoking mountain, - - were afraid – they pulled back and stood at a distance ... They said to Moses, - ‘You speak to us and we’ll listen, - - but don’t have God speak to us or we’ll die.’”

Fear of a Personal Divine Encounter with God

“All the people, - experiencing the thunder and lightning, - the trumpet blast and the smoking mountain, - - were afraid – they pulled back and stood at a distance”

Let me remind you – these were covenant people ... They saw the mighty hand of God deliver them from Egypt – drown Pharaoh’s army – Ate manna in the desert – and drank water from a rock ... Here we are only three months after leaving Egypt ... Can you imagine personally experiencing all these magnificent miracles of God in this short period of time and yet – they were afraid of their God?

Spiritual Nugget

Deliverance doesn’t bring about transformation ... These people were delivered – set free – every need met – yet they shuttered in fear – before their loving and merciful God ... But how can this be? ... This doesn’t make any sense – or does it? ... Just because these people were

removed from Egypt – Egypt was still fully alive in their soul ... The “external events” they experienced – did nothing to transform who they were on the inside.

Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 1:7 - - - “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.” ... So – if God did not give us the spirit of fear – where did it come from? ... Why would an encounter with the God – Who clearly demonstrated His love and care – for these people cause them to fear Him? ... Let me just bottom line it for you ... They were still functioning from a separation mindset ... They believed God is distant and to close that distance was a threat to their wellbeing ... Fear will keep you from leaving base camp

ALERT

As we proceed on this journey – there will be things I say – that you may not understand – or you may disagree with ... That is OK ... You Do You ... You travel your journey at your own pace ... Just remember – growth and change require stretching and renewing of your mind ... I am simply leading us up the mountain – it is a journey – not a race.

They Still Possessed a Slave Mentality

“But don’t have God speak to us – or we’ll die.”

Pause and consider that statement ... God had already revealed Himself as Deliverer and Provider ... Yet when the mountain shook and the trumpet sounded – they concluded that if God spoke directly to them – they would die ... That conclusion wasn’t based in evidence – but exposed a slave mentality ... Even though they were no longer a slave in Egypt ... They were still in emotional and mental slavery to an Egyptian mindset.

Slavery conditions you natural being to fear authority ... It trains you to expect punishment – if you choose to disobey those in power ... It teaches you how to survive while in bondage – which disconnects you from any form of relationship ... So – when divine power was in full blown manifestation before them – they interpreted it through the mindset of slavery ... They

saw death – when God was inviting them into a loving – divine encounter – that would bring about transformation.

Separation ideology leads to fear ... Fear leads to a slavery ideology ... A slavery ideology leads to death through non-compliance ... Sound familiar? ... This process was evident in the covid-era ... But let's bottom line this point ... We see and understand the progression here ... What I want you to grasp is this ... No matter what God does for you in your life – you will never experience freedom – until you choose to walk away from your slave mentality ... Now let's look at the last reason people will never leave base camp.

They Preferred a Mediator Over Intimacy

“They said to Moses – You speak to us and we'll listen.”

Notice how they were comfortable with a second-hand encounter with God ... They wanted Moses to journey up into the mountain – engage with God – then come back and share with them what He said ... They wanted him to carry the weight of the encounter – rather than them having to deal with the struggle and discomfort that came with the encounter.

This concept is still prevalent today in our Pentecostal churches ... People want the preacher to do all the study – listen and engage with the Lord – then share with them what was said ... People want the prophet to seek the Lord on their behalf – then share with them what the Lord had said ... Isn't it amazing how over all these centuries – people have not changed very much ... They prefer someone else to engage with God on their behalf ... They simply prefer information and instruction over intimacy and communion.

But here is the problem few realize ... When you outsource intimacy – you also outsource responsibility ... You create a religious system where leaders are elevated to a position they were never designed to hold ... And a real consequence of this system is people can get hurt and abused.

TAKE AWAY

1 Corinthians 2:14 New King James Version

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Although the Israelites had been physically removed from the land of slavery ... Although for three months they had witnessed miraculous signs and wonders unlike any people before them ... None of those external events transformed what was happening on the inside ... In fact, the signs and wonders didn't change them – they exposed them ... They had left Egypt geographically – but Egypt had not fully left them mentally ... God had shown Himself to be faithful – powerful – and present ... Yet they still viewed Him as distant – dangerous – and unapproachable ... They had been outwardly delivered – but inwardly – they were still enslaved.

Let me ask you – as we stand at the base of the fiery – cloudy filled mountain of intimacy ... Are you willing to take the journey? ... Are you willing to allow the journey to expose what truly resides on the inside of you? ... And when those things are exposed – will you be humble – and allow the Spirit to burn those things out of your life?