

The Intercession of Moses

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

(SLIDE) I love it when a plan comes together... That was a tag line from the 1980's TV series, The 'A' Team. I love it when two completely different things come together and create something better than the two were when separate.

(SLIDE) Salt and Pepper, Toast and butter, peanut butter and jelly and even peanut butter and chocolate. We missed it this summer, but last year PJ and I went to the Bacon Fest at the Frazee. There were all kinds of bacon creations. We loved the bacon toasted cheese sandwiches made on Texas Garlic toast. One combination that I really liked was the Bacon-banana pudding. At first it doesn't sound so tasty, but the sweetness of the banana pudding mixed really well with the savory, smokie flavor of the bacon. I'd have it again!

One thing I can tell you that does not mix well together is our God and Father in Heaven, who has admitted from the beginning to be a jealous God, and idols of any kind. This story of the making of the Golden Calf is so rich in meaning, it's difficult to narrow down the topics to just one or two for a short sermon. To begin with, I have a few questions. Where did former slaves get all that gold? (SLIDE) I mean enough to make a Golden Calf would be a lot of ear rings. I went back to re-read the story of when Pharaoh let the Hebrew people

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leave Egypt. In chapter 12, verses 35 and 36 it says, “The Israelites had done as Moses told them; they had asked the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold, and for clothing, and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And so they plundered the Egyptians. Now if Moses wanted to ensure the people of Israel had enough provisions for a long, long time of wandering in the wilderness, why would he tell them to ask the Egyptians for silver and gold? Why not ask for cases of bottled water, preserved meat, or produce to eat along the way? Apparently, this was a foreshadowing of a Golden Calf to come...

Golden Calves and our Heavenly Father do not go together. (SLIDE) They never mix well. Another thing in this story that makes me wonder is the translation of the Hebrew word we have in English as gods. In some translations it's singular as god, but in others it's translated in the plural as gods. The meaning in Hebrew is uncertain and that's why different translations say it differently. The real issue that stands out for me, isn't whether gods should be singular or plural, the real issue is a word that isn't ambiguous in the least. It's the word make. The people ask Aaron to make them gods or a god. Instead of worshipping the creator, they want something to worship that is made by human hands. (SLIDE) I would think that should have been like a flashing red warning sign to any Hebrew person who was paying attention. Unfortunately, we humans are so easily duped. We want a god

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we can see, feel, and most importantly control. God almighty who controls everything is downright terrifying to us. A God who can't be seen is a God that all too easily is forgotten and replaced by wealth, fame, power, likes on Facebook or Instagram or TikTok. Martin Luther once said anything that comes between you and God is your idol.

Our jealous God doesn't mix well with our desire for false or fake gods. After Moses was delayed on the mountain and the people began worshipping the Golden Calf, (SLIDE) God, who of course knew exactly what was going on, immediately distanced himself from "those" people. He told Moses he intended to consume them and start over with Moses' own offspring. Here's the third thing I noticed about this incredible story. Moses talked God out of killing all the Hebrew people. The Bible says God actually changed his mind! (SLIDE) In case you ever doubt the power of talking to God in prayer, this story should empower and renew your faith in (SLIDE) God. Moses reasoned with God and showed God that killing this stiff-necked people would gravely damage God's reputation. People would say God brought the people out of Egypt just to kill them on the plains of Mount Sinai. I don't know why all our prayers don't seem to be this effective, but apparently God is open to logical arguments and persuasion. Maybe that's why so many of my prayers seem to go unanswered. I appeal to God out of emotion rather than

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logical persuasion. Then again, God has not appeared to me from a burning bush either...

Here's one final thought before we move on to our Creed and prayers. My favorite President was Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was known for firing his generals when they failed in battle. (SLIDE) One time, his newest general had lost a key battle in his first outing and the President was asked if he intended to fire him. Lincoln's answer was that he wouldn't throw out a new gun just because it misfired one time. (SLIDE) Our just and righteous Lord could throw us sinners away into hell the first time we misfire, and he'd be perfectly correct to do so, but he hasn't. God's love is so strong for his people that he first overlooks our sin and then becomes one of us to remove our sin from us altogether. God didn't throw out the Hebrew people for misfiring. God won't through out you or me either.

(SLIDE) The scene can be described like this... God is like an invading army. The army has created a breach in the wall surrounding the city where the Hebrews dwell. Normally in a battle of this sort, the enemy army will pour through the breach in the wall and overtake the inhabitants of the city. In this case, Moses, the Chosen one, steps into the breach and appeals to God. (SLIDE) His appeal doesn't try to convince God the Hebrews deserve another chance. He doesn't try to excuse their bad behavior. Moses doesn't even try to justify what

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they did by explaining their impatience when he took so long on the mountain.

Instead, Moses appeals to God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (SLIDE)

He reminds God of his covenant and further appeals to God's great love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Moses is successful in getting God not to see these stiff-necked people as dirty, rotten, scoundrels and sinners, but as God's own beloved children, made in God's own image.

Moses intercedes on behalf of Israel. Now that's two things that naturally do go together: God and intercession. When we intercede on behalf of others it gets God's attention. Do you know that right now you have someone who is interceding for you with God? In John's Gospel the Evangelist writes, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (SLIDE) Jesus Christ is the one who intercedes for you and me before our Heavenly Father. Sometimes we people forget to pray for others. We aren't the most faithful intercessors for each other. Thanks be to God, we have Jesus, who never fails us. Christ sees all our sins, but then immediately reminds his Father that he took care of every last one of them.

May we keep God as our one and only God and learn to reject all false gods as the man-made idols they truly are. May we trust in our Savior, Jesus Christ who

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made us pure and Holy through his sacrifice and resurrection. May we live in thankfulness and gratitude knowing for certain the intercession of Moses and Jesus is able to convince God to see each one of us as His beloved and cherished children. Amen.