



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

***Sermon for Lent 2 Midweek***

*March 19, 2025*

# 40 for Life Moses: God's Presence for Life

## **Exodus 24:9-18; John 6:66-69**

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

40 days and 40 nights. For 40 days and 40 nights Moses was on Mount Sinai. For 40 days and 40 nights the presence of the Lord and the glory of the Lord appeared like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain. For 40 days and 40 nights Moses was in the presence of God, in the cloud, *listening*. God had much to say.

Like with the flood, this was no small thing! The people of Israel were terrified at the sights and sounds they saw. The presence of God among them was at the same time both awe-inspiringly wonderful and frightening. And into His presence God called Moses. For 40 days and 40 nights. So long that after a while, the people assumed Moses was dead and wasn't coming back. So, they made plans to go on without him, and with gods of their own making.

Again, like with the flood, God could have chosen to do this whole thing more quickly. It surely didn't have to be 40 days and 40 nights. But 40 days and 40 nights He chose, because this, too, was a significant event - to journey from death to life.

Israel was on a journey at this time, from their slavery in Egypt, from which they were now free, to the Promised Land. But there was a journey even more significant than that: not from slavery to freedom, but from death to life. And the only way to life, true life, real and eternal life, is the presence of God and Word of God. Israel's golden calf and their own words about it couldn't do it. In fact, that robbed them of life. Only God and His Word give life.

So, I could have titled tonight's service: *God's Word for Life* instead of *God's Presence for Life*, but it's really the same thing. Where God is, there is His Word; and where His Word is, there is He. He comes to us through His Word, and most notably, His Word made flesh. The flesh and blood of Jesus.

So, in our 40 days of this Lententide, what brings us life is the Word of God. What brings us life is not what we give to God or give up for God, but the Word God gives to us. That's why the first of the Lenten disciplines is **prayer**. Prayer that doesn't start with us but starts with the Word of God. We learn to speak to God by God speaking to us. We hear, then we speak. Israel's mistake at



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Mount Sinai, when they made that golden calf, was that they did and spoke before first listening to God speak and do. They decided what to do. They decided how they wanted to worship. They decided what was good for them. And it turned out not very good at all! What was in their heart and what came out of their heart *was idolatry*. Life-destroying idolatry. No Word of God, no presence of God, no life of God.

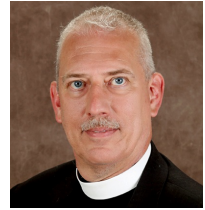
The Word of God is what Moses went up on Mount Sinai to hear and bring to the people. What is sometimes forgotten, though, is *all* that Moses heard. It wasn't just the Ten Commandments. God didn't need 40 days and 40 nights to speak them, or even 40 minutes - closer would be 40 seconds! Yes, God spoke the Ten Commandments to Moses. Yes, this is how my people live. Yes, this is to be the way of their life. But for Israel, as for us, this is a condemning Word of God. For we do not live this way. We don't fear, love, and trust in God above all things. ALL things. We do not use His Name as we should. We do not treasure His Word as we should. We do not love our neighbor as ourselves. I do for *me*, and if I have time (and usually if there's something in it for me!), then I'll do for you. The Law of God shows me how sinful I am.

But God spoke more than that on Mount Sinai. Much more. Not only Law, but also Gospel. God gave Moses the instructions for the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices. For God wants to dwell with His people, in love. Not just lead them through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, but be with them to bless them, and forgive them. But when God came down in His glory on Mount Sinai, the people couldn't handle it. They were terrified. So, God would dwell with His people in a different way, a way that would not terrify them, a way where He could still speak forgiveness and life to them. The Tabernacle. The construction, the service of the priests, the sacrifices - it wasn't easy. But it would be good. And for the good of His people.

So, God spoke both Law and Gospel to Moses. Words of life. The Word of Law, that we turn away from our life-stealing sin, and then the Word of Gospel, so that we turn to the One who can give us life, and receive that life from Him.

And so, it is today for us. For us who are also on a journey from death to life. If left to ourselves, without the Word of God, we would be like the people of Israel, because what's in our hearts and comes out of our hearts is idolatry. The Law of God exposes that, and that should terrify us. He has told us the way of life and we have chosen the way of death.

But the Word of God Tabernacled among us. The Word of God became flesh. The Word of God brought life into our world. Healing the sick, restoring the afflicted, casting out demons, forgiving the sinner. He called people into His presence and welcomed them, to bless them. And even when the people built not a golden calf but a wooden cross and sacrificed Him on it, Jesus gave life. He spoke. Words of life. Words that gave life. *Father, forgive them. Today, you will be with Me in Paradise.* And when swallowed up by death, He then swallowed up death! Forever. Completing the



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journey from death to life in His resurrection and ascension. Life that He gives and is still giving, and wants to give, to all people.

And so, Jesus calls us into His presence here, where He has promised to be for us today, to hear Him speak His life-giving Word to us. Some, sadly, don't want to hear it. They want to speak, not listen. They think they know the way of life, but it is not life at the end of that road. So, as we heard, ***some turned back and no longer walked with him.***

But Jesus then asked His disciples, and the question is for us today, too: ***Do you want to go away as well?*** And Peter answered: ***Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*** You have the words that not just speak of eternal life, but *give* eternal life. Here He speaks and here we are healed, here we are restored, here we are cleansed, here we are forgiven, here we are blessed. Until we complete the journey from death to life. When we who received and lived in Jesus and His Word and died with Him, then rise with Him to life.

He speaks, and we hear. He speaks, and is present for us. He speaks, and we have life. The presence of God for life. That's what these 40 days of Lent are all about.

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.