

We will be reading from Deuteronomy 34 which is the end of the story of Moses. Moses as we heard last week was the person that God called to an important task since he was a little baby. God protected Moses as a baby and then God spoke to Moses through a burning bush that God wanted Moses to lead God's people out of slavery into a new land. A land described as flowing with milk and honey.

Moses confronted Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, God supplied plagues to show Pharaoh who was in charge, and then Moses was permitted to lead the people for 40 years to the land that God promised them that they could go. Obviously it was not an easy journey.

It was a very difficult journey which included being pursued by the Egyptian army, lack of food and water until God provided what they needed, deaths of key people, disobedience by the people resulting in threats from God to abandon them for their sin. But in the end, after 40 years, Moses led the people to the place that God yearned for them to go.

So for 40 years Moses led these people. He put up with all of their whining. He put up with all of their unfaithfulness. Moses had a very direct and challenging conversation with God in which Moses reminded God that God needed to remain faithful to these people because God's reputation depended on it.

So you would think that after all of these great acts of faithfulness that God would reward Moses with something special. After all for 40 years he was the leader of these people and got them to their destination. You would think that God would order some special bronze statue to be erected at the place where the Israelites see the land that they had been promised.

You would think that they would have some type of ceremony and honor Moses for all of his faithfulness.

You would think that they would have some type of ceremonial first pitch type of event where Moses is the first one to set foot in the Promised Land. You would think that God would direct them to name the place after Moses. After all, Moses was one of the greatest leaders of all time. Surely he deserves something significant to mark his achievement.

So let us read about how Moses is honored for leading the people for 40 years to the Promised Land.

Read Deuteronomy 34: 1-8

Really. Really? Moses leads these people for 40 years and he does not even get a grave marker? We are told that he is buried and to this day no one knows where? After leading these people for 40 years Moses does not get to set foot in the place that he was being led by God to lead these people to?

And what is really odd and stupefying about this is the reason cited as to why Moses cannot enter the Promised Land is a pretty weak excuse in my opinion. Back in Numbers 20 the people complained about not having water to drink. God instructed Moses and his brother Aaron to strike a rock and that water would then come gushing out of the rock.

Moses listened to God's instructions and got his walking stick and struck the rock two times rather than once. Water came gushing up from the rock and the people were nourished. But God then chastises Moses for not being faithful. God says that because Moses struck the rock twice rather than once that this showed unfaithfulness.

And because of this technicality, God says to Moses that he will see the Promised Land but that he will not be allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Really?

Moses guides these people for 40 years through all of this whining and hardship and struggles and God says that Moses will not set foot in the Promised Land due to a technicality? Come on God. Moses deserves better than that right?

Stephen King, the famous writer, says that his dream of becoming a writer started as an adolescent, and by the time he was 14 years old he had received so many rejection letters from short-story publishers that the nail he used to hang them on the wall would no longer support their weight.

King says, "I replaced the nail with a spike and kept on writing." King didn't sell a short story until he turned 19. His first published short story, "The Glass Floor," earned him \$35. His best-selling book *Carrie* received 30 rejections before it sold to Doubleday Publishing for a \$2,500 advance. Today, King's books have sold more than 350 million copies. Why has King been successful? King says that the reason he became successful is because he didn't take rejection personally.

For so many of us, though, we think that it is all about us. Not to pick on music directors, Dena and David, but I was with a group of 3 teenage choir students on Friday and they told this joke. What is the difference between a conductor and God? God doesn't think he's a conductor.

They also told the joke about how many sopranos does it take to change a light bulb? One to hold the light bulb and then wait for the world to revolve around her. I'm just retelling the jokes. I'm not a singer so I don't know what they mean.

But if we are honest with ourselves we know that in our own human sinfulness we think that it is all about us. We think our lives are about us. We think our place in our families is all about us. We think that the church is all about us and our wishes and our wants and our desires.

But we need to be very careful if we keep the attention on us. For if we think that it is all about us then we are ultimately breaking the second commandment. If we think that our lives, our families, our jobs, our life, our church is all about us then we are placing ourselves before God and making ourselves out to be the idol.

You may have heard about Pygmalion in Greek mythology. In Greek mythology, Pygmalion was a sculptor. He created this beautiful piece of work of a woman that he became so enamored with that he fell in love with it. The only thing that he could fall in love with and devote his life to was something that he created.

Or maybe we remember the story of Narcissus. The Greek character that saw his reflection in a pond and fell in love with it. He was so attracted to his own reflection in the water that he eventually drowned. So it seems that the Greeks knew something about the human tendency to think that it is all about us.

I wonder if the reason that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land and was buried in an unmarked grave really wasn't about a technicality of striking a rock once or twice. I wonder if this story of the death of Moses as he sees the Promised Land but can't enter it is not a story about Moses after all. I wonder if this is all a story about God. That the reason that Moses can't enter the land is to remind us that what we do is not about us but it is all about God.

In the service for Vicky Gallman this past week, I read from a devotional that Vicky had saved and that she wanted read at her funeral. I don't have that devotional with me as I returned it to the family. But this devotional was about how rather than asking for God to bless our dreams and visions we need to seek to follow God's dreams and visions. That life is about God and that life is not about us.

So many times we demand what is best for us. Our needs. Our wants. Our desires. Well guess what; what we may want may not be what God wants. What we think may not be what God thinks.

Every one of us, me included, needs to be reminded that we are the butt of the joke about the soprano and the conductor that there are times when we think that the world revolves around us and that we know what God wants.

Well guess what. Sometimes we don't. Sometimes we don't know what God wants and sometimes what we do is not what God wants us to do. That includes you and that includes me.

Moses not touching the Promised Land is a reminder to all of us to keep our focus on God and not on ourselves. Again, I think this brings us back to the seven spiritual practices that we are reminded to try to incorporate in our lives. To be in worship, prayer, service, fellowship, study, living healthy, and resting. Practices which remind us to be focused on God and not ourselves.

Moses seemed to understand at the end of his life that it was not about him. We would do well to keep focused on God and not on ourselves. Breaking news: The world does not revolve around us. AMEN.

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-Given: October 26, 2014 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)

-Voza, Stephanie, http://www.fastcompany.com/3037517/how-to-be-a-success-at-everything/4-habits-of-people-who-follow-their-dreams?utm_source=mailchimp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=colead-daily-newsletter&position=2&partner=newsletter&campaign_date=10242014