

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**  
**Worship This Week July 27, 2025**

**SCRIPTURE INTRO** – Moses has just climbed Mt. Sinai for the first time, where God appeared and met with him. God reminded Moses what He did to the Egyptians, how the nation was carried on eagles' wings. God then delivered His command: "If you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation." Moses returned and gave that holy message to the people, who replied: "We will do everything the Lord has commanded." So Moses brought the people's answer back to the Lord.

**SCRIPTURE** – [Exodus 19:9-15](#)

**MESSAGE** – After Moses reported to God what the people promised – to listen and obey – God told him to go back and prepare the people for His arrival. The vital importance of preparation and boundaries is underscored by the extreme penalties for people who refused. At first glance, it is tempting to dismiss this as ancient history. We live under the New Covenant, in which the Lord commands us to forgive and love our enemies. If someone sins, the last thing we would do is execute someone by stoning or shooting them with arrows for crossing the boundary or even touching another person or even an animal which has done so. It is a little extreme.

Jesus even quoted the Old Testament about what NOT to do. "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles" – Matthew 5:38-41. The most we are counselled to do is shake the dust off our feet and don't waste any more time on anyone who refuses to listen. The most extreme action we should take in the church is to remove them from membership if they refuse to repent – and that's after a series of efforts to reconcile.

We live under this New Covenant, not the rules dictated to Moses. While that is true, we must be careful not to ignore the underlying truth. God's methods change according to the era and the situation, but God's essential nature, truth

and his law are unchanging. The issue here is how we are to receive God's word and how to worship. There are three things that we are commanded to do.

First is the need for **preparation**. The people are commanded to put on clean clothing. In ancient times, this was taken literally. Most people had a single outfit, two if they were fortunate. Only the wealthy had a wardrobe of clothing. If an entire population was to do this at the same time, it would have been a big deal. We don't worry about such things because for the most part, we bathe regularly and do not wear dirty clothing when we come to church. Clean clothing symbolized a new beginning, a fresh start, like the start of a new job, a new school year or New Year's Day. What does doing the laundry mean in 21st century terms? I am going to suggest that what God is commanding is for each to prepare – mentally and emotionally – for a fresh start or an awakening every time we enter the church, show up at Bible study, open the Bible or as we begin a time of prayer. Come in eager anticipation of what God is trying to tell us. Put on our listening ears. Allow our minds to be amazed at what is saying, what God has done, what God is doing and what God promises to do.

The second act is to set **boundaries**. The boundary around Mt. Sinai, the mountain of God, is not to be crossed. This should not come as any surprise. Human nature needs boundaries. In setting these boundaries and providing the death penalty for breaching them, God showed Israel that obedience is more important than their feelings. We don't doubt that some bold Israelites *felt* like going beyond the boundaries, but they were to submit their feelings to obedience. Another aspect of this boundary is that it illustrates the great distance between us and God. Distance in this case refers not to communication. Spiritually, God is very close; He is just a prayer away. He always has been. Under the New Covenant, God demonstrates this in a powerful way by putting on human flesh and coming to live with us. And He left behind His Holy Spirit – which can actually dwell within us and fall upon us. Nothing can be closer than that. Distance here refers to goodness and purity. God is without fault or sin. Not so with us. The natural condition of humankind is sin. Jesus is wearing a white robe all the time. By comparison, our clothes will always be somewhat stained. No matter what we do or how hard we pray, the stain of sin will be upon us. That's the distance between us. Another way of looking at it is in terms of emotions. Two people can be in the same room but be worlds apart. There can be great emotional distance between people. The term, "we come from different worlds or different planets" comes to mind. Distance also refers to respect. We must not view God the Father, God the Son or

God the Holy Spirit as friends or equals. They will always be above us. We will never come close to the power, goodness and purity of God. Jesus was human, but first He was God. We must not approach God casually. We come as sinners before the Throne. We are not worthy. This is not to belittle ourselves or beat ourselves up. Rather, it's to elevate God.

Finally, there are **commands**. The people of Israel were to wait for the long blast from the ram's horn before they were to finally approach the mountain. The people had to wait until the third day. We are impatient. It is part of the human condition. Scripture is filled with examples of people who gave up on God and wanted things done yesterday and took matters in their own hands. Or people operate under human pride, in which we think we know best. We instruct our kids to "stop, drop and roll" if their clothing catches fire. We are wise to "stop, drop (to our knees or drop what we are doing) and pray." When we listen to these commands and obey, practising them regularly, then God will be more willing to reveal His presence to us. Recall the words of Psalm 24.

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Saviour. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob. Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty — He is the King of glory."

The degree of our obedience to God determines the degree of His empowerment for our lives. It's simple cause and effect. More of one leads to more of the other. It's similar to the laws of physics – every action has an equal and opposite reaction and what goes up must come down (which no one questions). All of this is easy to understand. Actually doing it is another matter. This takes desire – we have to want to. And we have to be focused and not allow the enemy (the forces of evil) to tempt us to go off course. The enemy loves to get our attention off God. This requires self discipline. And a lot of faith. The deeper we go in our faith, the more we become like Christ.

Again, it takes work. It takes perseverance, trust, discipline – all that. It is not always easy. The payoff can be immediate, or it could come in small increments, or it could take a long time. But when it does – watch out. That’s when the world changes – in our lives, in our families, in our communities and in our nation. Like Jesus tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 – “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Amen