

LET'S CONTINUE TO LOOK AT EXODUS 32

Moses returns to the people from being in the presence of God. Look at Exodus 32:19-20.

- What is Moses' reaction to the golden calf scene?
- How should we respond today when we see other people in the church using wealth and possessions unwisely?

Remember back to Malachi 3. In this we learnt that God looks with displeasure on his people if they are withholding from God what rightly belongs to him. It was important that they stood faithfully together in this.

- Aaron has an opportunity to lead the people in the right way, yet he doesn't. What do you think made him fail?
- How can we do a better job in encouraging one another to be faithful to the Lord?
- What practical steps might this entail?

In Exodus 20, we read about the 10 commandments. The first and the last are helpful bookends, as they help us to keep our hearts in the right place, but reminding us of our need to be givers rather than takers. Take a moment to read these two commandments again.

Reflection

How have you grown in your understanding of the things that you have and what the Lord asks of you in response to his love, grace and mercy showered upon you?

Have your priorities before God always been right? Are they right now? What do you need to do to enable yourself to be a cheerful and generous giver? Pray that the Lord will give you the strength to do it.

Read these wonderful words, from a hymn we know well that we often sing at Easter and other times, and pray that you may live them daily:

**When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Resourcing God's Mission

Week 5



**Our vision is to be an inviting community,
welcoming people to know Jesus Christ,
equipping them to live and serve, and sending
them to proclaim His love.**

A Verse from Scripture:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

This is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son.

He is the sacrifice for our sins,
that we might live through him.

If God loves us so much
we ought to love one another.

If we love one another
God lives in us.

Make up a list of all the different things that you spend money on over a month. Once a list has been compiled, divide these into three categories – essential (I can't live without), desirable (not essential, but things that help me keep going), and luxury (things I enjoy but I could go without). This is quite difficult – take food for example: it's clearly a necessity, but how many luxury items get squeezed in to our weekly shopping? Different people will also have differing views as to what is essential for them, but with creativity a rough grouping in to three categories should be possible. After this is done, consider the following questions:

- Was giving to church in there at all? Which category is it in?
- If people are to increase their giving, they will need to spend money differently. What might you move from desirable to luxury? Could any essentials be moved to desirable instead?

Read Exodus 32: 1 - 26

This is a challenging story, as it shows us how easily we can turn from the Lord. Think through these issues:

- The people of Israel find themselves worshipping the Golden Calf. What made them do it despite the fact that they had depended on God for so long?
- Are you unsure of God's presence in your life? What is the effect of that uncertainty?
- Why is it easier to centre our lives on things we can see than trusting God?

Jesus is very clear about the need for the right kind of disciples. He uses some very strong language to make his points. You might also want to re-read Luke 18: 18 – 25 that we looked at in week 3.

Living as we do in the affluent West, it is important not to read these passages thinking that it only applies to others. We're going to reflect on this and the challenge we might learn to our own discipleship and walking with Jesus.

- Why does Jesus ask the young man (in Luke 18) to give everything away? He didn't ask this of other people who came to him. Was he unfairly singled out because he was wealthy?
- In Luke 14:33 Jesus says that we have to give up everything to follow him. If God's grace is free why is discipleship so costly? Do you think Jesus is expecting too much from us?
- If you've seen the film *12 Years a Slave*, you will have been shocked by the way the owner treats his slaves simply because he owns them. Paul, writing to the early church uses a very similar idea (1 Cor 6:20). How comfortable are we with the idea of belonging to God? Does this help explain why Jesus' call to discipleship in Luke 14 is so demanding?
- It is really important to remember as we struggle with the cost of discipleship the way in which our Father loves us, cares for us, equips us and guides us. Remind yourself of the many things that God does for you, that you have experienced.

Time to think and pray things over:

This passage asks two questions of us. Are we fully committed to being a disciple of Jesus? When we look back at all he has done for us, are we willing to follow him?

If we are to follow him, we are told that we need to pick up our cross to follow him. This speaks of self-sacrifice. As we think particularly about giving, what might it mean for you to pick up your cross? What is God asking of you?