

“Mt. Pisgah”

Deuteronomy 34:1-6

“Almost” is a bad word. I tell Malinda, “I almost did what you asked me to do.” Or, we almost won the game. He almost came to church. They almost believed in God.

Mt. Pisgah, also known as Mt. Nebo, is the great almost mountain of the Bible. The children of Israel were almost ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses was almost ready to turn over the reins of authority to Joshua. And from that mountain, Moses almost got a feel for Canaan; except his feet would not touch it – at least not yet. He would come close. He would almost be there, but not quite.

It was his fault. God had told him years before in the wilderness to speak to the rock and water would come out. On other occasions, Moses had been instructed to strike the rock and water would come out. And on this one occasion, when told to speak, so as to make a show for the people, he chose to strike instead. God said, "That was rebellion. You will not enter the land."

Some may see God's condemnation of Moses as being harsh, but we are reminded that "to those whom God has given much, much will be demanded."

We are also reminded that God is gracious and merciful. When it came time for the children of Israel to go into the Promised Land, God took Moses up Mt. Pisgah to give him a view of the land. He would see it, but he would not enter it – not yet. He was almost there, but he would die on Mt. Pisgah.

All of our life can be lived on Mt. Pisgah in a sense. Separated by sin, we have no hope of entering the Promised Land. We look across the valley and see

the Promised Land. But because of sin, we must stand where we are. We must stay and die on Mt. Pisgah.

If Pisgah were the only mountain in the Bible, that would be our fate. But a prophet greater than Moses has come – Jesus the Son of God; the Lord nailed to the cross; the man of Mt. Calvary – the greater mountain than Mt. Pisgah.

By His blood, He invites us to come down from Pisgah, He takes us across the Jordan River, and we enter our home: The Promised Land; God's Kingdom of mercy and grace.

On Mt. Pisgah, Moses was reminded that God does not play favorites, and yet He is a Lord of mercy and grace. Moses does not die without hope. He will not stand in the land of Canaan during his life on earth. But he will stand in the Promised Land of Israel. He stands with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration just weeks before Jesus goes to Jerusalem to die.

Moses sees the Promised Land from Mt. Pisgah, but he only stands in the Promised Land because of Christ. Moses' sin of rebellion must be paid for: either by Moses or Jesus. Either Moses must stay out, not only of the Promised Land of Canaan, but also out of heaven; or Jesus must go up to Mt. Calvary.

Even if you were as great of a prophet as Moses, you would still be held accountable for every act of rebellion against God's commands. And God does not play favorites. The gates of heaven are only open to us because Christ made the sacrifice to atone for our sins. Without that sacrifice on Mt. Calvary, we could not even make the claim that we are almost righteous in God's sight.

But because of Mt. Calvary, there is no more "almost" for the people of God. We have been given the sure promise that we will stand with Christ in the eternal home that has been prepared for us. The Promised Land is ours.

Amen.