



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, October 18, 2020

Crisis Leadership

by Garland F. Pierce

Exodus 33:12-23

33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.'

33:13 Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

33:14 He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

33:15 And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here."

33:16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

33:17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

33:18 Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray."

33:19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

33:21 And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock;

33:22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand

until I have passed by;

33:23 then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many things; health and economic disparities and the digital divide are being felt in unexpected ways that are profound, painful, and hard to deny. However, at the top of the list of things exposed by the pandemic has to be the quality of leadership, whether we speak of leadership at the various levels of government or speak of leadership in education, health, or the church. Nothing shines a light on leadership like crisis. During a crisis, we need strong, wise, effective, and ethical leadership. Without it, crisis deepens and worsens.

Many lift up Moses as an example of strong and effective leadership in the Bible. One of the hallmarks of his leadership is advocacy. Moses seems to constantly advocate for the people before God. The Israelites are in the wilderness. They have a crisis of identity, turning to another god and another leader—a god of their making—a golden calf and to Aaron who was a leader quick to go along to get along. Yet, Moses advocates for them.

Some read this passage of scripture as Moses being arrogant, asking to see God's glory. Perhaps, arrogance is involved but so is advocacy. Leaders can slip into arrogance and selfishness; but, we pray that in the midst of crisis, that the arrogant focus on the one gives way to advocacy for the many, the least, and the last. Moses said, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

In the US this weekend, many churches and faith communities observe the Children's Defense Fund Children's Sabbath, a weekend set aside for communities of faith to pray for children and to recommit to advocate for the well-being of children. During this pandemic, we do remember the children who are hungry and homeless because of job loss related to COVID-19. We remember and advocate for quality healthcare and education for every child. We pray and advocate for every child to have a safe and loving home. We pray for children and families who struggle to navigate this crisis called COVID-19 pandemic whether it be because of virtual learning or the loss of a loved one. We pray for every Black child that he or she may grow up and be seen for their potential rather than as a threat to be feared, viewed with suspicion, caged, or killed.

We are in a crisis. We are called to lead. Leading calls for advocating. LORD, show us your ways, so that we may know you and find favor in your sight.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—During this pandemic, for whom are you called to advocate?

PRAY:

**God, please use us to stop injustice,
the killing of innocent children
by violence at home and in faraway lands.**

God, please use us to stop injustice,

**the killing of innocent children
by poverty at home and abroad.**

**God, please use us to stop injustice,
the killing of innocent child spirits
by vanity and greed in our land and others.**

**God, please use us to stop injustice,
the assault on precious child dreams
by neglect and apathy near and far.**

**God, please use us to stop injustice,
so our children may live
and love and laugh and play again. Amen**

Prayer by Marian Wright Edelman adapted from *Guide My Feet: Prayers and Meditations on Loving and Working for Children*

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, start to think through and make a plan as to how you will advocate for those you identified. For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take: Participate in the current democratic process (voter registration, voting and encouraging others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org>.) For everyone, advocate by practicing social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me
AMEC Hymnal, #328

1. Rock of A-ges, cleft for me,
Let me hide my-self in Thee;
Let the wa-ter and the blood,
From Thy wound-ed side which flowed,
Be of sin the dou-ble cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.
2. Could my tears for-ev-er flow,
Could my zeal no lan-guor know,
These for sin could not a-tone;
Thou must save, and Thou a-lone.
In my hand no price I bring;

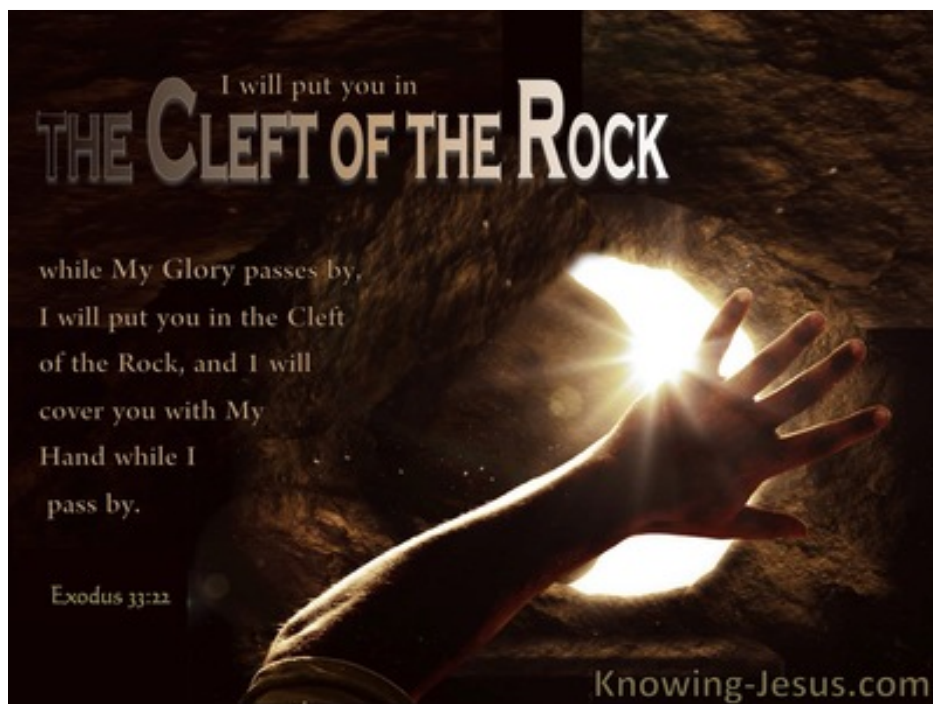
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

3. While I draw this fleet-ing breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds un-known,
And be-hold Thee on Thy throne,
Roc of A-ges, cleft for me,
Let me hide my-self in Thee. A-men.

Alternative Song: *For Your Glory* by Tasha Cobbs: <https://youtu.be/7fixMYR1qYA>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.