

Exodus: Redemption: Their Story is Our Story

Author Cormac McCarthy is known for his bleak, stark, poetic, and unflinchingly raw writing style. His prose tends to strip away anything unnecessary and offers a hauntingly brutal portrayal of whatever unfolding narrative he's writing. You may not have read his books, but you might be familiar with a few of his films, *No Country for Old Men* or *All the Pretty Horses*.

There's a bleak disparity in his work, but none of those works touch the depth of his 2007 Pulitzer Prize winning work, *The Road*, which is a post-apocalyptic portrayal of a journey of a father and a son who, throughout the book, remain unnamed. They're walking through a burnt-out wasteland of America, going somewhere, although the somewhere is a little bit less important than the fact that they're on this journey. There is no destination, just survival. Just one more day. Just one more hour with survival seeming like a thin hope.

As you watch these two, the father and the son, struggle to just keep up with the demands of food scarcity and secrecy, they're trapped between despair and an unknown future. At one point, the father looks at the son and says, "Nobody wants to be here, and nobody wants to leave."

So, how do the father and the son continue on? How do they move forward through each day? Well, in a word, McCarthy asserts that it's "presence." It's simply the presence of one to the other, their whole world wrapped up in each other, that keeps them going one day after another. It's that presence that allows them to continue on no matter what darkness may come for them.

This morning, we're at a turning point in the story of Exodus, where Moses is wrestling between the people of God and the presence of God himself. For the past multiple weeks, we've been homing in on the experience of the Israelite people. But this morning, I want to look at the story of Moses and his experience in this particular time. In this moment, you see a whirlwind of emotions.

In Exodus 33, there's a moment of bleakness where you sense an exasperated Moses walking between God and the people. Yet on the other end, you see this exuberance in which he experiences the very presence that McCarthy points to as well. The presence of God in the midst of bleakness is what carries us forward.

In Exodus 33, they've been in the wilderness. They've been camping out at Mount Sinai. Moses has been up on the mountain for quite some time, and at the bottom of that mountain, there was this whole golden calf incident unfolding. The people of God, in a moment of weakness, fall into deep idolatry in which they begin to worship this god of their own construction, falling back on all that they knew in their slavery in Egypt.

Moses comes down and counters this and then returns up the mountain to God, where he has this exchange in which he offers himself in place of God's anger, asking God to take his life, not theirs. This, of course, echoes the sacrifice of Jesus because Moses is nothing but a shadow of the greater reality, which is Jesus.

When we get to Exodus 33, some time has passed. They come down the hill, and God is now camping outside the people. It says they are outside the camp. We talked last week about that exchange. The promise was that God would dwell right in their midst. That was the tabernacle. But here we see the devastating fallout of their actions with God now outside the camp. Moses must go outside and go into what he calls the tent of meeting, the tent of presence, to be with God. It's there that God says, "Go to the land I promised you. I'll send an angel ahead of you to clear the way."

But that's not enough for Moses. Moses will demand and seek the presence of God. He will confront God and say, "Listen, it's not that I just want an angel to go with me, Lord. I need you to go with me." Put yourself in the place of Moses. He's exasperated. He's tired. He's on this unknown journey, not knowing if God would go with him, not knowing how he would lead the people. So there is where we pick up in Exodus 33.

Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." Exodus 33:12-13

I love the exchange here, and it's been a subtle theme throughout. Remember up at the top of the mountain when God said, "Your people down there are doing idolatry, the ones you brought out of Egypt." Now Moses is in the tent of meeting and he's like, "Hey God, you've been telling me to lead these people. You're the one who told me to take them and lead them into the wilderness to the promised land."

Moses is reminding God that he was the one who fundamentally called Moses to walk with the people. So he says, "You didn't tell me who you were going to send. An angel's not going to cut it, Lord. I need your presence to move with me. Don't forget, Lord, this is your nation, your people."

"The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest'" (v. 14). I just like to envision what this must have been like for Moses. He is exasperated, looking to God to show up for him. Moses hears these words. "My presence will go with you, I will give you rest." It is an interesting response from God because it isn't quite what Moses asked. Do

you remember that Moses was talking about the whole nation of Israel going, and God seems to veil the response and say, I'm going to go with you, singular.

Moses is evoking the idea that the whole people need God's presence. But what we may not see in the English translation is when it says, "My presence will go with you, I will give you rest," These are a singular "you." It's God looking at Moses. "I will give you, Moses, rest." What's even more interesting is that the phrase "with you" is actually not in the Hebrew language. The translators are helping us make sense of the sentence because the word presence is really this idea of God's face. So, in a very strict literal translation, it would say, "My face will walk, and I will provide rest for you."

The translators help us out, but there's something for us in this. God is saying, my face, my presence, my countenance. In the ancient world, the face was the most expressive part of a human. So, to have someone look you in the face or have their face turn to you is emblematic of the fullness of their presence. God says, "My face will go, and I will give you rest." It's this idea that the fullness of God's presence will turn and encounter with Moses in this moment of need. God says, "My whole presence, my countenance is here. I will walk. I will give you rest."

Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." vv. 15-17

Moses responds back to God and says that it is good that God's presence is going because if it doesn't, the people are not going to leave. Moses said, "I'm all in, but you take the first step toward the promised land, and I'll follow you." Moses has this beautiful exchange in which he harkens back to the covenant that was made with Israel. That's what verse 16 means.

It's the presence of God that makes the difference between the people of Israel and all other people, between all others who claim to walk the earth. This has been the promise all along, that God would walk with his people. Have you ever had that experience and encounter with God? You've been walking with him for some time, and there's a sense that that journey seems more bleak than it typically does. You wonder where God is. "You promised that you would be with me."

Many of us can actually relate to this moment between Moses and God. It has historically become known as the Dark Night of the Soul, which is a phrase coined by a 16th-century Spanish Carmelite friar, Saint John of the Cross. He was a Catholic reformer around the time of the Protestant Reformation. He wasn't a Protestant. He wanted to stay within the Catholic Church and try to bring reform to the church from the inside.

That was a tumultuous time in which much of the Catholic Church didn't want to change. So, John's work from within the Catholic Church didn't bode well. He ended up getting arrested and thrown into prison

for his efforts to change the church. During his arrest, he would occasionally be cast into solitary confinement. It was during this time that he would pen his most famous work, *The Dark Night of the Soul*. He wrote, "The dark night is when those persons lose all the pleasure that they once experienced in their devotional life. This happens because God wants to purify them and move them on to greater heights."

St. John of the Cross functioned on this idea that the spiritual life, just like any other aspect of life, is one that can develop, grow, and mature over time. He believed that we are on a journey with the Lord. You see this all over the scriptures. You see this in Jesus' life. You see this at the end of the Gospel of John when Jesus looks at Peter and says, "You once couldn't even take care of yourself, and then you're going to be this strong person." Then he says, "But at the end of your life, someone else will stretch your hand out." Jesus is saying that your life will mature and grow over time.

You see this in all sorts of different places in the Bible. This idea is that we begin in one place, but God works and matures our soul. Think of Paul in Corinthians when he says, "When you began, it was like you were consuming spiritual milk, but now you're consuming meat." It's the same thing. We often don't think of the spiritual life as one that progresses over time or grows in maturity. But that's what you see happening with God and the Israelites throughout the wilderness. God brings them out into this space to work with them to help them develop and mature.

What St. John understands is that the early stages of following Jesus tend to be filled with joy. For example, when you watch a friend come to Jesus, you say that they're on fire for God. That's a beautiful experience, where it seems like every time that person, on fire for God, opens the scriptures, they're just feasting on the Word of God. It's like there's a direct access between them and God, and they're filled with joy and delight. They can't wait to wake up the next morning and open the scriptures. In the early stages, it's a beautiful gift and a grace from God that he fills us with delight and joy.

It's the similar way in which couples who get together for the first time, we call it the honeymoon phase. Their hearts are being knit together. There's joy in which they just can't seem to spend enough time together. There's an emotional piece here that's helping two hearts be knit together in the same way that God is pouring that delight and joy into the new believer.

But there comes a time in following Jesus, just like in any other relationship, that as you grow deeper with that person, the emotions tend to drift away. Where all of a sudden, it isn't quite filled with joy. You wake up early, and you're just dragging to the coffee pot, open the scriptures, and you probably fall asleep because you're tired. It isn't a moment that's filled with joy. What is happening in those instances?

Those are times in which the commitment to the other, the commitment to God, deepens and grows if we lean into it. This is why, at a wedding, we say the vows that we do. For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. Lindsay and I have been married for 15 years, and I've learned that those vows weren't just really nice, cute

words you say at a wedding. That there are times when it's richer and poorer in sickness and in health.

What I have also found in those 15 years is when I've stayed within that commitment and leaned in, and when she has been gracious to walk me along this road of marriage, there's a richness and a depth of the relationship. That is something we couldn't have imagined early on when we said those vows. So there's something in the progression and growth of a soul into the way of Jesus in which we find these ebbs and flows of feelings, but there's a deeper richness that happens beneath the surface. We have to pause here and know what happens when we progress, what's happening with Moses here in the tent of meeting.

Inevitable

The first is that the dark night is inevitable as a follower of Jesus. You will either have in your past, are currently, or will experience a dark night of the soul. A season in which God seems to remove his felt presence. Hear me correctly, the presence of God is not removed.

Your experience of it is the felt sense of God's presence. God's promise is clear throughout scripture. He is always with us. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me," the psalmist would say. The presence of God does not depart. But there are times in which the felt sense of God's presence is removed.

But this is a grace of God because what God is doing in this season is maturing our faith in him. He's moving us from the feeling of being with God to genuine faith in God. Think of the experience of a relationship. If I didn't feel like loving Lindsay and walked away, that would be a problem. More probably the other way around because I'm a little more difficult than Lindsay. If Lindsay didn't feel like loving me, she probably would have walked away quite a long time ago. But there's something about this deepening, this staying within the commitment.

What happens in those moments is a richness that takes place when, even though you may or may not feel it, you lean into it. There are times in our relationship with God when we may not feel like loving God. We don't feel God's presence. Yet the dark night of the soul is one of the ways in which God tests what's beneath the surface, but not in a shame-filled way. Not like in a way where if you pass the test, then you get it. It's not that. It's more of a revealing. It's a deep maturing in which he pulls the curtain back, and we begin to realize we've been more connected to the feelings God gives us than God himself.

What we ultimately want is what Moses wants. Lord, if you won't go with us, I don't want to go. That's the prayer we're trying to move toward as we develop our relationship with the Lord. God is bidding us to follow him, and often, what we experience is this pain and tumult, whether it's life circumstances or just a dullness in life.

There's something in here in which God is provoking us to draw and connect more with him by not having the feelings that we once felt. They may come and go. It isn't to say that you'll never feel that connection, but it's that your faith isn't rooted on it anymore. It's not dependent on it. That's a deeper faith. Think of what Paul says in Romans 8.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Romans 8:18-21

I love this because Paul is saying that you will experience that suffering. I consider this current moment where it feels like it hurts, it's painful, and it's difficult does not compare with the glory that's to come. If you hold on, continue on; there's something that awaits you, this future glory in which all of creation is liberated. He's speaking specifically of suffering, which overlaps with the dark night of the soul but isn't always one and the same.

Sometimes we just make mistakes and sin, which creates a block in our presence with God. That isn't the dark night of the soul. Other times, the brokenness of others impacts us, and we feel that suffering. But note Paul's overarching point. He says the present moment, what you feel in this moment, does not compare with what is coming. It doesn't compare to the glory that will be revealed in us.

God is present; whether you know it or not, God is there, and our hearts are knit toward that. Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Then Paul goes on several verses later and says, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*" (v. 28).

Notice that Paul does not say God causes all things and then uses them for our good. I don't believe that. I don't believe God causes all suffering. But I do, with strong conviction, believe that God will use all things for the good of those who love him. As we experience that brokenness, we can trust and rest assure that God's presence is with us, working to take that and reconcile and redeem it for our good, knitting our hearts further and further into the very heart of God.

Formative Power

The second is the dark night's formative power. This is true of any relationship. At some point, we have to move from existing with God, chasing after what we would call mountaintop experiences in which we have this addiction to the very connection and emotional feeling with God, which is a grace and a gift of God, but is no way to sustain a relationship with anyone over the long haul.

If my emotional being with Lindsay had to feel like our relationship early on or our wedding days, that's just not sustainable. I would argue it's actually not what your heart longs for. There's a deeper richness in which Lindsay, who has seen me at my absolute worst, still loves me. That's a deeper love than the emotional high of those moments in which it seemed like it would just transcend time. We have to be able to push further than that.

I remember early on in our relationship when we were dating, we used to spend hours talking to one another. We would push through closing

and say goodbye to the people who were shutting up shop, still sitting out front talking for hours and hours. It was beautiful. God was knitting our hearts together, but then rewind to last Friday, Valentine's Day, 18 years later.

We had a lovely dinner. It was excellent. We had a movie that was going to start at 9:30 pm, and we did a date halftime. After dinner, we went home and changed into our sweats before we went to the movie. We had a great time. I fell asleep in the movie, and it was excellent. The best nap I ever paid for.

Was that any less sweet than those early days? No, it just looks different. The depth of our connection is different. There are times you can talk for hours, and there are other times when it's just silence, but I wouldn't trade that for the world. The same is true in our relationship with the Lord. At times, we're in prayer for hours, and it seemingly won't end, but we're just ecstatic about that. Then there are other times when we sit in the presence of God and fall asleep like I did in that movie, but we're spending time with one another, connecting with one another.

Richard Foster wrote this about the dark night of the soul: "To desire spiritual maturity without the dark night is like an athlete hoping to become a champion without training or an author expecting to produce a great book without thinking." We're not talking about salvation. You don't earn that. That's already been established. But as we develop and mature in our relationship with the Lord, we must recognize that, at times, God will do what's best for us, even if it doesn't feel right. That often means this removal of his felt presence to knit our hearts deeper into his heart.

So what do we make of this experience? Let's go back to that scene in Exodus, in which Moses had laid that out before God. "If you don't go, I'm not going to go." He's asking and seeking God's presence. We pick up in Exodus 33:18.

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Exodus 33:18-20

Moses makes a pretty good request. It's in that moment, particularly in the dark night of the soul, where often you cry out and say, "God, show me your glory!" The Hebrew word for glory here is the word *kavod*, which the idea is like a weightiness, a heaviness. It has a connotation of God's power, strength, and reputation. Moses asked God to show him who God is. He asked for this because all of us experienced that in that dark night. You're like, "God, can you show up? Let me see your strength."

We think that's what we need, but did you notice that God actually doesn't give him the glory? God says something different in 19. It says, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you." Now, this is the Hebrew word *tov*, and it's translated as the goodness, the richness of God. It's in the dark night of the soul where God makes the call for

Moses. What was needed was not a felt sense of God's power. It was a sense of God's goodness and richness. That isn't to say that God isn't powerful. That's not at all what's happening here. God is saying that what he needed, at this time, was God's goodness.

I can't help but think of the whole story of Exodus and God thinking that Moses had seen God's glory. Do you remember the plagues? Do you remember the Red Sea? Do you remember the manna? Moses has seen all these things of God's power. What he needed to experience to carry him through this desert dark night season was an experience of God's goodness. Taste and see that the Lord is good, the psalmist would say.

Then Moses goes into this experience in which God says the he would show him God's name. "I will have compassion on who I have compassion and mercy on who I have mercy." What's happening here is there's this rebellion of the golden calf threatening the relationship between God and his people. God looks at Moses and says, "I'm in control of this. I will have mercy on whoever I choose to have mercy and compassion on who I have compassion." So, if Moses wants to see the goodness. God is goodness. God would show Moses his goodness through his own sovereignty of knowing who gets mercy and compassion.

The beautiful thing about all of this is that it has nothing to do with our performance. It has everything to do with the very character of God. And if God is good, we rest in our failures. We come back and confess, and we lay ourselves before God and say, "Lord, would you forgive us." And his goodness shows up over and over.

Moses says, "I want to see your glory." God says, "I'll show you my goodness." Then he says, "But I can't show you my face." You might be thinking that just a few verses earlier, it said that Moses and God sat face to face. Yet here he says that he can't show Moses his face or else he will die. How do we reconcile that? In Exodus, there is this tension between God's transcendence, glory, and powerful being, but he's also quite intimate and present.

That tension between the transcendence of God and the eminence of God is exactly what most of our relationship with God is. This is what is meant by that phrase: the fear of God. It's recognizing that we are in the presence of someone so much more powerful than us, yet we can meet with God personally and individually. It's a stunning tension that we live in

Here, it plays off this goodness versus the glory, that image of glorious weight. It's as if God's saying, "If I were to show you all of my glory, it will literally crush you. It will destroy you, but I can show you my goodness." And he also shows his intimacy. Then, stunningly, God and Moses had this encounter.

Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen." vv. 21-23

What a fascinating encounter in which God allows his glory to pass by. I love the protective heart of God. He says, "I'll cover you with my hand, but then when you can experience it. I'll remove my hand so you'll see the back of me." Don't get too caught up on what exactly Moses saw. There's a reason it's a bit ambiguous. We'd get into all sorts of weird, twisted things if we knew exactly what took place there.

What I want you to see is God's graciousness in which he allows Moses to see a little of his glory but not the fullness to protect him. He showed Moses the amount that he was ready to see. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 picks up on this. You'll see so many connections between Paul's writing and the Exodus story.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 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. 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. 1 Corinthians 13:9-12

Paul says that there was a day coming in which we will experience the fullness of God's presence. That is in Revelation 21 and 22, where God promises that at some point, God will be all in all. There will be no sun because the very presence of God will illuminate all of new creation. There's a coming a day when we will be able to see God face to face, but he says right now we see in part. We see as though we're looking into a mirror dimly. We can't fathom the fullness of God's experience and transcendence now, but we can see in part.

Moses is there in the cliff of the rock, wondering what to do. As he's in this moment, asking for God's presence. God says, "I'll sustain you with just what you need in this moment, and we'll go forward."

This idea of the dark night of the soul is one that I talked about as being inevitable. A few years back, I was in a season like that in which it was the dark night of my soul. It was a combination of a few things. I felt like I was coming into a season of the dark night of the soul, and then we had a crisis in our family. It wasn't because of that, but rather, it seemed like when I opened the scriptures, I just couldn't find the presence of God. It was very much like opening up the Bible, and I sensed dryness and drought like a desert. Then, all of a sudden, this crisis enters our family, and I'm struggling with God asking the same questions. "God, where are you? Why would you not move? Show me your glory, God." And that lasted for a long time.

That whole season was probably more than two years, in which I felt the dryness of God. I wish I could say I walked through it perfectly, but I remember sitting with a spiritual director one time, and she's been so gracious in journeying with me through that season. The Lord put her in my life at a time when I didn't have a relationship with her before, and God just landed her there.

So I met with her monthly, and I remember her pointing out that God was taking me through this desert stream by stream. He's not exiting. We don't know when I would exit the desert. But I remember her saying

those words, and me having that felt sense of thirst of longing to experience the fullness of God.

She said, "Could it be enough for you to go stream by stream and be content? It was God doing all the work that I've talked about, stripping the felt sense of the spiritual highs and saying, "Would you trust me with just this?" In many ways, it seemed like God was putting me in that rock, covering me, and protecting me, knowing in that time that I couldn't take more than what he would provide.

But I didn't know it at the time. I just wanted to shake my fist at God, which I did. I just wanted to express my anger with God, which I did. It was as if God was asking me if I could remain faithful in that season to just get to the next stream. I'd never related to God like that in my life. The reality is I did not have a category for how I related to God when it felt more like absence than presence.

I'm not the only one who's had this experience with God. Life is one that's never promised to be easy. It's never promised to be simple. It is not promised that God will remove all your circumstances. In fact, quite the opposite. God, just like he was with Israel, says, "I'll wander the wilderness with you, but we're still going through the wilderness." We're still walking through the desert.

Seek His Presence

So what do you do in that dark night of the soul? What we see in the text is three things, and it's nothing revolutionary. They'll be quite simple. The first thing we do is we seek his presence. You see that with Moses. He is exasperated, tired, trying to intercede for the people, trying to intercede with God, and he says, "God, if you don't go, I'm not going. I need you." We seek his presence. We press forward. We lean in. We take the next step, not the next 20. Just the next one and ask God for his presence with us in this season.

Just keep seeking his presence. Keep showing up. The hard part about the dark night of the soul, and as I've talked with those who've been through a season like that, is there's no knowing how long it is. That's for God to know, not you. We often give up so quickly because we're addicted to that experience of God rather than God himself. I wonder if we give up just short of when God is doing this deeper work, which leads to the second point.

Stay In Your Commitment

Second, stay in your commitment. Moses looked at God and said, "Listen, if your presence doesn't come, what makes us different than anyone else?" The call for us is not to solve it, not to do it well, not to nail the dark night of the soul. It's simply to stay in our commitment. Map this onto marriage, map it onto any relationship with a friend, a significant other, a roommate, or whatever it is. The relationship deepens as you stay within your commitment.

Often, the deepest work that God does is the slowest, which is challenging for us. We want things quick. We want it to happen fast. But what if the felt presence of God has been removed in the dark night, and

instead of abandoning your commitment to the Lord, what if it's in that space that God is doing a deeper work?

What will happen is in that moment is when the feelings are taken away, you will begin to search everywhere to satiate the ache in your soul. Just like Israel at the bottom of the mountain. They resorted to what they knew in Egypt. Your heart will be drawn to try to fill that ache, but in those moments, you have to resist. This can only be done through community, having people who can remind you of your commitment.

For me, it was that spiritual director and many others who said to just make it to the next stream. Stay in your commitments. The deepest work God does is often the slowest work. It's refining and purifying. It's where all those other attachments are being burned away as God does that deep work. Dietrich Bonhoeffer used to tell couples at their wedding,

Today, you are young and very much in love, and you think that your love can sustain your marriage. It cannot. Let your marriage sustain your love. Let your commitment sustain when the feelings of love disappear. Bonhoeffer

What would it look like for that with the Lord? You journey through whatever season you're in to allow your commitment to God, to sustain your relationship with him, not the feelings. That will be a richer form of love.

Rest in His Presence

This is arriving at that next stream and resting in just the little bit that God has given you. It's God removing the hand from Moses that was protecting him, and saying, "You'll see just the back of my glory." We can see just a little bit. We must learn to be more content with the little bits that God may give us in these seasons because it's in those things that God is offering his goodness. A small taste here. A prayer from a friend. A word of encouragement from a co-worker. A little bit there, a moment in worship, where you felt a tinge of God's presence. That's scripture that God brings back to mind. Rest in his presence because the dark night of the soul is not a space in which you need to consume more.

The dark night of the soul is not about striving for more. It's not about doing more. It's about resting in the little bit of God's presence that he may offer. Can you rest in that rather than running to the next mountaintop? Can you sit with God in the valley? St. John of the Cross, in a longer quote, says,

Many souls become addicted to the spiritual sweetness of the devotional life and strive to obtain more and more of it. They pass beyond the limits of moderation and nearly kill themselves with spiritual exercises. They do these things not for God but for themselves, and for this reason they will soon grow weary in them...true spirituality consists in perseverance, patience, and humility. The sin of spiritual gluttony will

prompt them to read more books and say more prayers, but God, in his wisdom, will deny them any consolation because he knows that feeding this desire will create an inordinate appetite and breed innumerable evils. The Lord heals such souls through the aridity of the dark night. St. John of the Cross

What is needed in these times, Church, is not more consumption. It's not more of what we already know is true. What's needed is a contented, patient trust in the God who is doing a slower, deeper work than you could ever imagine. I started this sermon with a quote from Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, in which he said, "No one wants to be here, and yet nobody wants to leave."

That's a pretty good descriptor of the dark night of the soul and it reminded me at the end of that book, a scene with the father with the son. He sits there, and the son looks at the father after they have journeyed quite some time. He says, "What's the bravest thing you've ever done?" The father pauses and spits out some blood, and says, "Getting up this morning."

That is a pretty good description. What if, in the dark night of the soul, the bravest thing you could do is just show up one more day, one more time. The Lord replied to Moses, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." May that be our prayer.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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Catalog No. 1484-22FC