Interceding, Breaking, and Restoring

Deuteronomy 34: 1-12
Reverend Ted Warner
October 25, 2026

Would you give up your personal salvation for the glory of God? Would you …give up …your personal salvation …for the glory of God? I thought a lot about this question since I was a candidate for ordination after hearing of another Presbyterian asked that as he was examined for ordination about a year before I my examination in another Presbytery. Today's text reminds us that Moses did exactly that as a result of interceding for his people.

Now today is Reformation Sunday. As you know, we also celebrate Pumpkin Sunday today. They go hand in hand as Reformation Sunday is a good time to remember the basics of our faith. Jeremy did a fine job with the pumpkin metaphor for Christ to remind us of just that. Christ's work is about interceding on our behalf, entering the world with his human body, taking on all there is to being human, being broken, and then restored. Christ takes our broken world and broken bodies and likewise offers to restore them. Just as we remove the yucky insides of the pumpkins when we carve them, Jesus cleans the yucky stuff from inside of us. But before Jesus walked among us, first, there was Moses, the prophet who made the template for Jesus to follow.

Moses goes up Mount Horeb to the top of Pisgah, where he can see the whole of the promised land. This is as close as he would come. Our NRSV has the Lord say to Moses that this is the land promised to Abraham and you shall not cross it. Sadly, our English versions miss the dialogue as Moses asks God to cross the Jordan to enter the land and God responds being cross with Moses, denying his request.

This goes back to the story of the Golden Calf which we read together in recent weeks. I did not preach on it at the time. If you followed closely, you might have caught that God was ready to destroy the Israelites after discovering this Golden Calf that they worshiped. God offered to start over with descendants of Moses. However, Moses argued with God and interceded for his people. This is not the Lord that delivered the Israelites from Egypt. You did not deliver them only to destroy them now. This is not in your character. You made a promise to them. Moses convinced God to change his mind. The Lord continued his promises and faithfulness to his chosen people.

However, Moses, in turn would not enter the promised land. He was assured the Israelites would make it there, he got to see a breathtaking view of the land flowing with milk and honey. The story of Moses ends at the death of Moses somewhere in Moab.

God chose Joshua to take over as the new prophet, leading the Israelites to the promised land in what would be a major military campaign. Moses had already laid hands on Joshua to commission him for service to the Lord. As a result of Moses laying hands on him, Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, and the Israelites willingly followed his lead.

The great early theologian, Origen, wrote the *Homily of Jesus*, referring to Joshua taking over for Moses. Origen interpreted this through Christian eyes, seeing Jesus fulfill the work that was begun in Moses. Joshua replacing Moses was a symbol of Jesus ultimately fulfilling the law and the prophets.

Furthermore, when we see the template of Moses interceding for the Israelites, we are reminded of Jesus interceding for all the nations. Through Christ's death and resurrection, Jesus conquers sin and death once and for all and gives us hope and our salvation.

This is good news for us. Here in Hornell and the wider Canisteo Valley, we know something about perseverance and restoration. Ours is a community that has weathered economic changes, flooding, personal losses, and seasons of uncertainty. Yet time and again, we have seen neighbors helping neighbors, churches opening their doors, volunteers lending a hand, and people refusing to give up on one another. In many ways, that is what Moses was doing for Israel. He refused to give up on his people, even when they had lost their way. And that is what Christ continues to do for us. When our communities are discouraged, when our families are strained, when we are tempted to place our trust in modern-day golden calves of success, security, or self-sufficiency, Christ intercedes for us and calls us back to the promises of God. He reminds us that restoration is always possible because God has not given up on us.

So perhaps the question is not whether we would give up our salvation for the glory of God, but whether we are willing to follow the One who already did. Moses was willing to stand in the breach for his people. Joshua was willing to lead God's people into an uncertain future. Jesus was willing to take upon himself the brokenness of the world so that it might be restored. And now Christ calls us to do the same in our own time and place: to pray for our neighbors, to stand with those who suffer, to seek the good of our community, and to trust God's promises even when we cannot yet see their fulfillment. For the good news of the gospel is that God's story does not end with brokenness. Through Christ, what is broken is healed, what is lost is found, and what is dead is raised to new life. Thanks be to God. Amen.