



Go Deeper, 19th November 2023. The Golden Calf

Dear Miners,

I wonder how familiar you are with this story? It's not as popular as many passages, perhaps unsurprisingly. It's not often preached on or turned into assemblies! I have one thought for you that I could barely squeeze in on Sunday, and two questions for you to prayerfully consider

- Carmen Imes writes evocatively of guardrails, of standing at a cliff-top look out enjoying a view of creation safe behind a well-made fence. She compares this to the tabernacle, the construction of which occupies the chapters before this incident. Holy God goes to great lengths to give God's unholy people a way to be with God, ways to reconnect when the relationship goes wrong. The temple/tabernacle is a structure of divine-human reparation, and immediately after being given, the Exodus writers give us a through example of things going wrong and then, ultimately, being repaired. That helps me with understanding this story in its context. It also makes me wonder – what are the guardrails of my spiritual life? What structures help me stay close to God, and to whom God calls me to be?
- Imes also writes of the inscrutability of God in this passage. Did God really burn with anger? Was God ready to destroy God's people? Was God's mind changed? How much of this happened? We can never know. How do you feel about that? I know I am still learning to embrace the discomfort of not knowing God. Am I prepared to sit with that discomfort rather than put God in a box, describe God to my satisfaction and manufacture an empty but safe idol for myself?
- Finally, from the sermon, with whom do you identify? Have you been the people, handling the vastness or absence of God poorly? Have you been Aaron, reacting in panic to peer pressure? Have you ever dared to be Moses and pray with honesty, even when that meant bringing anger to God?

Every Blessing

Rob

Deeper Stuff

My continuing guides through Exodus have been [Dr Carmen Imes, Bearing God's Name](#), and [Pete Enns, Exodus for Normal People](#).

For online articles, see 2 great articles from Working Preacher, by [Anathea Portier Young](#) and [Zina Jaque](#).