

Reflection from Revd Jane Braund for Trinity 14

Reading: Exodus 3: 1 - 15

This is a very well known story and to put it in its context, Moses had been born to a Hebrew woman who placed him in a basket on the River Nile to keep him safe after Pharaoh had ordered all the Hebrew baby boys to be killed. Pharaoh's daughter rescued him from the river and ordered that his mother care for him until he was weaned, at which point Moses was taken to the palace to live. He had remained there until he killed an Egyptian who had been beating a Hebrew slave. When it was discovered what he had done he fled for his life and ended up in Midian where he lived for 40 years - marrying Zipporah - Jethro's daughter, having children and caring for his father-in-law's flocks.

Many centuries had passed since the Hebrews had been welcomed into Egypt and during the last 400 years their oppression had grown worse and worse and the cry of the Hebrews had risen up to God. God had told Abraham that there would be 400 years of slavery in Egypt but that they would be brought out to live in a land flowing with milk and honey. And the time had now come and God was on the move!

And so, as Moses was tending the sheep, he saw a bush on fire that was not consumed by the flames and he turns aside to look. And it's interesting that God says nothing to Moses until he knows that he has Moses attention. One of the many questions that this passage causes us to ask ourselves is: How does God get our attention? My attention? How does he...? And honestly....how much attention do we pay to what God is doing? There are many people who have turned to God during this pandemic, but has it caused **us**, you or I to turn our attention to God? Have you turned aside to look and see what God is doing at this time? (Give some time to think about these questions)

And the Lord calls Moses from out of the bush. God knew Moses by name, just as God knows each one of us by name. Do you think he doesn't know your name...he does! And the reply that Moses gives means that God has his full attention - the question is, does he have ours? We often think that God's request to Moses to take off his shoes is to do with holiness yet the truth is that when we read on from this passage and Moses is talking to God, Moses doesn't sound either awestruck or reverential.

There was nothing holy about the ground, it was God's presence there that made it holy. So perhaps taking our shoes off speaks of coming before God just as we are, vulnerable, open to him; but perhaps it also speaks of belonging. How many of you, when you come into a house, take your shoes off? This was the house of God where God was and Moses who had been rejected by the Hebrews; had his life threatened by the Egyptians; and was a foreigner in a strange land looking after flocks of sheep that weren't his, had finally come home. This was his true home - with God. This is where he belonged.

When Jesus in John's gospel chapter 17 tells his disciples that he abides in the Father and the Father in him, and Jesus abides in us and we in him and the Father, they in us, it's speaking of us making our home in him and he making his home in us. Philippians 3: 20 tells us our citizenship is in heaven, because our true home is with God. God wants us to be with him, just as we are, with no pretence, so that he can make himself known to us. At home with the Father, with Jesus, and he with us.

God reminds Moses of the covenant that he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that the covenant is still in place. He hasn't ignored the 400 years of slavery but he has used that time to create a nation - no longer the Hebrew people, but the Israelite nation. They are now ready to take the land that had been promised to them.

All through this pandemic, all through our individual struggles and difficulties, God has been... is... and will be at work even if we don't realize it, or think he has forgotten us, because he is a covenant keeping God. Even when we don't walk in covenant - God does and he is faithful. Just as then he wants to bring people out of oppression, and bring them into a new place, and just as then he looks for those who will work with him to do that - to achieve his purposes. 2 Corinthians 6: 1 tells us that we are co-workers with God and that we haven't received his grace for nothing - there is work to do. God could do everything himself but he has chosen to work with us and through us. Our self-esteem might be low, our feeling of inadequacy might make us query how God could call us or use us, but the answer God gave Moses is true for us too - 'I will be with you'. We are co-workers not lone workers and it's God's work not ours - we just need to be available.

As Moses continues to stall so he asks God his name - God is a title not a name. Do you know God by his title - or by name? (Give some time to think about this)

God says 'I am who I am'. This is why when Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life', 'I am the light of the world', it was so powerful to those listening - he was identifying himself with the one who declared 'I am who I am'. Throughout scripture God reveals himself - 'I am the Lord your God', 'I am the Lord who heals', 'I am a banner over you'. All God's names are gathered up into the one glorious name of Jesus - the name which is given the highest honour, the highest place, seated in risen, ascended glory.

This is the one who calls your name today, this is the one who says I will be with you in all I call you to do. Moses had to go through some dark places until he was ready to be called but God got his attention, and assigned him the role of bringing a nation out from captivity. God calls his people who are attentive and available to him to do that same thing today and we are under a new and better covenant than Moses was, paid for by the blood of Jesus.

As we come into a new time, when things won't be the same, it is time to change the old wine skin for the new. What has been won't be what is needed as we go forward. That doesn't mean our fellowship or love and care of each other changes, but it means our focus and attention needs to be on Jesus and on where he is calling his Church to be. It's time to get real with Jesus, to be those who find our home with him, and to be ready to answer his call and to co-work with him. Amen

And we're going to say together the words of hymn 566. Make it our prayer as we give ourselves to him. Take my life and let it be...