

The Brickhills and Stoke Hammond

Lent Course 2017

Pilgrims: Meeting God on the journey

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (in her long poem *Aurora Leigh*) suggests that these glimpses of glory are not just a wistful one-off in an otherwise empty desert but are richly available to us always and everywhere, if only we have eyes to see and time to stop:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes

A Prayer

God of wonder,
may we be open to see the signs of your presence
in our everyday lives;
and be ready, like Moses, to turn aside,
to hear you call us by name,
and to know that we always stand on holy ground. Amen.

Next week

3. Isaiah: Who will go for us?

Isaiah 6. 1-8

God of our pilgrimage,
you have willed that the gate of mercy
should stand open for those who trust in you:
look upon us with your favour
that we who follow the path of your will
may never wander from the way of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

2. Moses: Standing on holy ground

Exodus 3. 1-15

These were the Bible readings for Holy Communion on Sunday:

Exodus 3. 1-15

Moses is distracted by a burning bush, and this becomes an encounter with God.

Hebrews 3. 1-6

Moses is described as faithful servant of God, pointing the way to the greater coming of Jesus.

John 6. 25-35

Moses led God's people to manna, 'bread from heaven', in the wilderness, and now Jesus describes himself as the bread of life.

As we meet Moses at the start of Exodus Chapter 3, this is probably at a time of relative calm and stability in his life.

The opening of the book of Exodus (Chapter 1 and 2) tells us of Moses' birth in a very dangerous time, as the Hebrew people were being oppressed by their slave masters in Egypt. You may remember the story of his mother's determination to keep him alive, despite all the dangers and threats, by setting him afloat in the river, and how he was found by the Pharaoh's daughter, and so came to be raised as part of her household.

After his privileged upbringing, Moses had gone back and tried to do something to help his own people, but it had all gone wrong. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew man, and, when he tried to intervene, the Egyptian was killed as a result, and Moses had to flee to another land. There he had settled, and made a new life for himself, with a home and a family.

We cannot know whether he was still troubled by memories of his fellow Hebrews and their suffering in Egypt, or whether he had tried to put all that behind him, and concentrate on his new and secure life. Maybe he had forgotten about it all, until that day when he turned aside from his flocks to look at a bush that was in flame but did not burn.

Some questions for reflection

Can we imagine what Moses might have been thinking or feeling about his life before the encounter at the burning bush?

Here is a view from one writer (Maggi Dawn) in a book of reflections for Lent:

By the time he saw the burning bush, Moses was middle-aged, still living in the desert and still looking after his father-in-law's sheep. I think we could reasonably say that Moses had got into a rut. ... He was just settled in for the long haul ... But it wasn't what he'd dreamed of when he was young and it wasn't his heart's desire.

What is the significance of Moses being called *by name* by God?

According to the custom of the time, Moses is prompted to remove his shoes, because he is standing on holy ground.

What does 'holy' mean to us?

What particular experiences of the presence of God have we had, that we would be happy to share with others?

How can we become more open and attentive to the 'burning bush' moments that may come in our lives?