

**Scripture Readings**

Psalm 105:1-11

Exodus 3:1-15

**To be**

Have you ever thought of Moses as a bit of a complainer?  
Have you ever found he questions God a lot on his tasks and roles?  
Do we ever do that?  
Complain I mean?  
Do we ever question God, ourselves and each other?

Have you ever considered why God asks Moses to take off his shoes?  
Where do we usually take off our shoes?

In Canadian culture and many other cultures we take off our shoes as soon as we arrive at home. In scripture we take off our shoes in a holy place like we have come home. When we come into a holy place and time we encounter a homecoming with God. We connect with the image in which we are created and of which we are a part.

To grow personally and spiritually I believe we need to ask a lot of questions, we need to do a lot of examining and discerning. In his journey of life Moses asks a lot of questions of God and the first question he asks is who am I?

You would think by this time Moses would have recognized that he is pretty special – he was born to a generation of oppressed Israelites, he should have been killed at his birth but instead he was rescued by a princess and raised in the palace. And yet when he saw his people suffering he began to fight the system and killed an abusive Egyptian. When the pharaoh heard of it he sought to have him killed but Moses escaped death again. And although he was forced to hide out as an exile in Midian it was there that he found a beautiful wife and began a family.

And it's here where today's story begins.

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

As we know, Moses has had quite the life journey already, and having cheated death numerous times you think he would know that God is on his side and constantly with him.

But no, instead when God speaks to Moses and asks him to help rescue his people from oppression Moses says – who me? Who am I?

I think in this moment God had every right to get a little angry and remind Moses of his laundry list of qualifications. But God doesn't often babble as I do. Instead God says in fewer words – it doesn't matter who you are– I am with you.

It seems to me God is saying Moses it's not about you – it's about what I can do through you and what I have called you to and what you do because I am with you. I could have chosen someone else.

My friend Robin would have God say “I could use a stick of rhubarb if I wanted to but I choose you.”

The fact that I am with you will be sign enough.

And yet, for a person who is afraid to look at God Moses sure seems to have the courage to question him. Because next Moses begins the excuses and questions “they won't believe me...and who am I supposed to say sent me? Who are you? What is your name?” And God responds again rather strangely. I am who I am – better translated as I will be who I will be. The divine name is rooted in the word “to be.”

God is saying you and others will discover me as you journey with me. You will see me in one another, in the journey, in the life you live. Just as you are created in my image, I am a part of you. Exodus 29:46 says “I am the Lord...who brought them out...that I might dwell with them.”

If you want to discover God, if you want to know who God is you are going to have to come along for the ride because we discover God through experiences of God.

The Holy is not confined to our imaginations, God cannot be described in simple words because God is the very essence of being. God is relational, present, alive, limitless and we come to know God as we exist with God. God is who God is when we label The Holy and put her in a box we are guaranteed to get it wrong. We might get glimpses and pieces but never the full picture.

You see whenever a prophet – not just Moses asks God who am I? and/or Who are you? God responds “I am with you.” And that is why Paul says God is in whom we live and move and have our being. God is the Holy presence that journeys with and in us.

Now that might be nice to hear that God is to be and just is and journey's with us but when we get right down to it most of us want a sign, we want more than I am who I am and I will be who I will be. We think perhaps if it were a burning bush explaining this we would understand better.

I have often found myself in discussions where people wonder whether or not God give us signs. And what I have learned is that once we get deep and honest in those conversations almost everyone I talk with has a story of a time when they encountered God (even if at times they question if that is what really happened) and even still we somehow know that even when we don't feel an encounter with God, God is there.

I Believe God sends us signs in a variety of ways. God sends us signs as we send signs to our friends and loved ones. Ever so often we know someone needs to hear "I love you" or "I am with you" and God understands that of us as well. Our friends and loved ones sometimes also need us to say "Pick yourself up" or "I need your help" or "I've got a task for you today" Perhaps that is what our journey with God is like.

Whenever I am asked the question does God speak or give us signs moments in my life pop up clearly. The clearest moment however is a little like this Moses moment. It wasn't a fiery bush by any means but it is as clear as that in my memory. This encounter with God happened in a time in which I was struggling hard with a group of people who were a board of supervisors at my work. This leadership team was asking and requiring of me to be someone entirely different from who I felt I God was calling me to be. The problem was I loved my job, but I could not work within the new policies of the group, so this took me on a very difficult dark journey. And believe me it was dark because I have never been very good at faking being someone I'm not - it eats me up like a corrosive acid.

And so one afternoon I lay in my bed - lights off in total darkness and I began the fight with God. How am I supposed to live like this? How am I supposed to do what they ask? How? No one is going to listen to me, no one will hear my voice and understand, I don't have the kind of authority I need to confront or challenge this crew. Who am I?

Call me crazy but I believe sometimes God speaks to us stubborn ones in an audible voice because I know I heard "Who do you live for? Me or them?" I heard it as clear as if you were standing next to me asking me the question. Like Moses I tried to fight it with a variety of responses but ultimately I knew I needed to be authentic to who I was called to be because I have come to know that as we let go of our fears it is then that we step into the freedom presence.

One of the great comforts I find in this story is that it shows us it is okay to have a human reaction to a spiritual calling. Moses did, Jeremiah did, along with Gideon and Peter and Paul – the list goes on. And I think it is also true that it's okay and we live best if we are willing to glimpse the possibility of having a spiritual reaction to a human calling. As we do we are awakened to the journey we take with The Holy. We see our world and one another as God sees and is. In fact our human calling is God's calling if we truly believe that it is within God that we live and move and have our being.

Like Moses we are likely to complain about the journey and question it almost every step of the way but that does not mean God is not with us and using us with amazing purpose. That time of wrestle I shared with you lead to a hard lot of circumstance in which ultimately I ended my job and began my seminary degree. Because I heard God say "Don't be afraid, I am with you" when I heard the question "who do you live for?"

So no matter how hard the journey may seem. Let's take off our shoes and come home. Come home in the knowledge that we are on holy ground everyday of our lives because God is with us, we are not alone. Take off your shoes and Come home in the knowledge that every day of our lives The Holy is saying "Don't be afraid, I am with you."

Amen