



A sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

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30 August 2020

- [Exodus 3:1-15](#)
- [Romans 12:9-21](#)
- [Matthew 16:21-28](#)

I can still recall the Sunday school lesson of Moses and the burning bush, the memory verse that I had to learn: “Moses, Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” Do not come any closer, take off our sandals from off your feet, for the place you are standing is holy ground.”

Moses, now a long way from the Palace where he was brought up as an Egyptian prince by the Pharaoh’s daughter is now found shepherding sheep belonging to his father-in-law, Jethro. One would have expected that if he was destined for something great, then the palace was indeed the right place for him to be. This was not to be for Moses. He lost his place in the palace and is now a simple shepherd. And it is within this ordinary context that something extraordinary happens.

Every day we find ourselves in very ordinary situations – pursuing ordinary everyday tasks. Moses saw what looked like a burning bush – perhaps this was nothing unusual – how easy would it have been for him to keep minding his own business – but he dared to look closer. We read, “So Moses thought, I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up?”

Are we looking? What are we seeing? What are we hearing?

God did not call him over but we read that when the Lord saw that he took the time out to go and look; to go and investigate, God called out to him! “Moses, Moses!”

Are we allowing ourselves to be inquisitive, to be curious? This is the kind of curiosity that will enable us to dwell in the word of God – to notice something different – even if we cannot quite work out what it is! It is human for us to want to be able to make sense of what our senses are saying to us. If it does not fit then we want to glibly dismiss it. But on this occasion, Moses curiosity, made sure he did not excuse it as a mirage, an illusion or just a figment of his imagination. God honoured Moses’ curiosity and he will honour our curiosity too.





This experience became the foundation of Moses' vocational call. 'Take off your sandals from off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' During the lockdown, we pined after our so called 'holy places.' But the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob was revealed to us in our homes and in our community – revealed to us, while we were engaged in the ordinary everyday and mundane tasks of life. The question is whether we allowed ourselves to remain pining after our buildings in a way that has prevented us from hearing and seeing what the Spirit is saying.

“I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, I have heard them crying and I am concerned about their suffering.” You may not remember this, but there was a time when Moses knew of this suffering, there was a time when the injustice he saw filled him with rage – it was as a result of this rage that he struck down one of Pharaoh's men and ended up running away. But somehow, Moses appears to have faded into anonymity, the kind of anonymity that allowed him to forget his passion to address injustice.

The reality is that the hand of God was on Moses from the beginning. After birth his mother hid him, if you can recall the story (Pharaoh had wanted all the male boys to be killed) - his mother made that basket and placed him in the river with his sister Miriam watching over him from a distance so he was saved from the wrath of the Pharaoh; Pharaoh's daughter grew him up as her own. And now, God had a job for him to do, God was calling him back – the seed sown in his heart all those years is now back in focus.

Today, going forward, my prayer is that our eyes and years will be open afresh to God's call. I pray that the things we have learnt during lockdown will not be lost as we seek to go back to what we think was normal but that we will right hear and now hear the words, “I have seen the misery of my people and I have heard them crying.” God want us to be his hands and voice as we challenge these injustices in whatever form it takes. God wants us to call it out. “I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt.” Moses, pretended to be inadequate, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh? What are our excuses? Moses had a job as a shepherd, now he was being called to a vocation. The question is whether Moses





will accept this vocational call and lead the people out of Egypt.

If we are going to accept God's call to a vocation on our lives much is expected from us. We're not being called to be mercenaries, fighting for money. Our Epistle reading captures how we should go forward – it should begin with a deep love and a belief the cause that you are speaking of:

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practise hospitality...live in harmony with one another. Be willing to associate with people coming from a different position to yourself...do not repay anyone evil for evil.”

Our Gospel reading today also reminds us that our vocational call is a costly one:

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be to gain the whole world yet lose your own soul?"

We are told at the beginning of the allocated Gospel reading, “From that time on...” in other words this is a turning point! What will be the turning point in your life?

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