

Third Sunday in Lent

Year C

RCL

- [Exodus 3:1-15](#)
- [1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#)
- [Luke 13:1-9](#)
- [Psalm 63:1-8](#)

It took a long time for Moses to discover the burning bush. With a lot of help from Hebrew Midwives, his life was saved when he came into this world from the decree in which Pharaoh had ordered that all Hebrew boy babies be killed. His parents hid him as long as possible before lovingly placing him in a basket in the Nile, sending him along on the water in hopes that he would be found and live. Found by Pharaoh's daughter, as the years passed, he grew up Pharaoh's household as her son. After he had grown up, he went out and saw the brutal treatment of his kinsfolk, when he caught an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. He looked to his left and to his right, and seeing no one, he murdered that Egyptian. After word got around of what he did, he fled Egypt into the wilderness. It was in this very wilderness, searching for a new life and identity, that Moses stumbled across God.

Jewish tradition states that the bush had been burning for as long as memory serves- so why did it take so long for someone to discover it? Today, it feels like we're left with more questions than answers after hearing the

scriptures. Or, how about when we look many of thousands of years ahead to the fig tree- why was it taking so long for the fig tree to produce?

When I heard these readings, one of the things I noticed was how they each reflect on time. The first thing that struck me was that, wherever we are in time in our lives, God is present in all of it. Remember what God said to Moses- I have marked well the plight of My people, and have heeded their cry. I am Mindful. Our God is mindful and takes notice of us. And that leads me to a second important piece. How are we mindful with the way we're spending our time? Because the reality is many things take time, a lot longer time than we'd like. And many things can happen in that time- joys and laughter, suffering, natural disasters and horrific atrocities committed by humans. We don't have all the answers to why life goes the way it does, and Jesus doesn't give us an answer today either, but rather, during our lifetimes, God gives Godself. And God showed us this mindfulness, love, and care, when God became human in Jesus, engaged with us as one of us and shared our journeys.

Just like Moses, we are invited to change our hearts and lives. To model our lives in new ways. The Benedictines strive to live in a continuous Lent. Author Kathleen Norris says that this doesn't mean that they should walk around with grim faces, refusing all joy, or withdrawing from people less prayerful than themselves. But rather as these monks free themselves from the worldly noise, they become more as God made them: open to the beauty around them and more hospitable to their fellow human beings, whoever they

may be. How do our lives and the way we look at the events of the world radically change when we lose that willingness to be open, to listen, and to be naturally curious in responding to the world around us instead of reacting?

While we can see God's actions in Moses' life from the beginning, Moses met the Holy and Living God at the burning bush. It radically changed his life and how he would spend his time going forward. His journey and his literal walk through thousands of miles with God began when he turned aside. God told Moses he was on holy ground and asked him to remove his sandals. At the end of his life, the Promise Land did exist, although Moses didn't enter into it. What does the end of the fig tree's life look like? Does the fig tree get cut down a year from the Vineyard Owner's sentence if it doesn't produce fruit? That remains a mystery. Fig trees, on average, take 2 years to produce but some can take as long as 6 years. Maybe it simply wasn't its time to grow just like it wasn't Moses' time until the moment on Mount Horeb. In our sense of time, it was a little behind. Growth and change, for ourselves personally and the world, take time. With the witness of our scripture, our tradition, our experience in life, I believe that God never gives up on us. That the God we know revealed through the stories of our Ancestors and the life of Jesus would give us just one more chance. And one more after that. And for good measure, one more after that. Some years are harder than others. But from the cross and grave there is Resurrection.

When life isn't turning out the way we thought it might, naturally we're drawn inward to protect ourselves from more harm. But if we were able to

turn aside and look outward, we might realize that God has been noticing us all the time. God is present and beside us through each passing day. We can miss God's dream for us when doubts and unanswered questions and closed hearts distract us. Sometimes, it feels like it's time to pack up when what we've tried over the years hasn't worked. It wasn't time for Moses or that fig tree to close up shop, yet but rather to embrace a new way of living. Are there old ways that we cling on to that we need to let go of? Sure. Are there new ways of living that we are being invited into? Absolutely. But really, the real question is, "how do we know when the time is right to let go of the old and take hold of the new?"¹ When we do that work, we may find a new sense of flourishing. A new way to see the beauty not only in the world, but in ourselves. Even when we think there might not be much to work with, God is cultivating something within us and our neighbors. Find the possibility and dwell in that today.

¹ H. James Hopkins. Feasting on the Word.