

TAKE TIME OUT - Pastoral Retreat

Sunday Scriptures: 18th October 2020 Revd Janice Morgan

Exodus 33:12-23 *Moses seeks assurance of God's presence with His people*

¹²Moses said to the Lord, 'See You have said to me, "Bring up this people"; but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favour in My sight". ¹³Now if I have found favour in Your sight, show me Your ways, so that I may know You and find favour in Your sight. Consider too that this nation is Your people.' ¹⁴He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵And he said to Him, 'If Your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. ¹⁶For how shall it be known that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people, unless You go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and Your people, from every people on the face of the earth.' ¹⁷The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in My sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸Moses said, 'Show me Your glory, I pray.' ¹⁹And He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰But," He said, "You cannot see My face; for no one shall see Me and live." ²¹And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by Me where you shall stand on the rock; ²²and while My glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by; ²³then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

Reflection:

We begin our reflection with Moses reminding God of His promises, 'Bring up this people; I know you by name; you have also found favour in My sight'. These are wonderful affirmations of God's mindfulness and love for Moses. Anyone who serves the Lord God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind, and all their strength ([Deut 6:5](#); [Matt 22:37](#); [Mark 12:30](#); [Luke 10:27](#)) will receive the same affirmation of His mindfulness and love. This is not mere opinion, personal understanding or assumption; this is a Scriptural Truth. Moses was particularly privileged in this given that he lived way before Jesus walked the earth. But what was True for Moses in his day has been confirmed for all God's faithful people today by the life's work and Word of Jesus. *How well does God know your name or you know His? What favour do you think God finds in you or you in Him?*

The faithful remnant of God's people are those who seek His presence, obey His Word, and know His promises. Such was the unshakable faith of Moses, God's faithful servant, throughout the most testing of circumstances. God's response to Moses' pleading is the assurance of His divine presence alongside His people. Here we must consider the Hebrew translation of God's Words, which literally read as, "My presence will go" the words, 'with you' are an addition. The reason God will 'go' to Canaan but not be 'with' or 'in the midst of' Israel is simply due to their un-repentant sin. This is just as True for us today as it ever was. If we are God's people we have no excuse; we know when we have sinned because our conscience tells us so. We do not necessarily need anyone to point it out, although it may be helpful to be prompted, in love, to repent that we might be forgiven. Many are they scrutinising our behaviour for an opportunity to pounce with vilifying accusation. Therefore, not only do God's people need to remain faithful to His Word, but we also need to be seen to be doing so. *Are we demonstrating what we believe? Do we witness the presence of God with and within us? What un-repentant sin might be standing in the way of God's promises?*

Moses makes his petition again, insisting that God not only go to Canaan but also that He: 'go with us' or 'in our midst'. His argument is that no one will accept or acknowledge Israel as being God's people unless they see the presence of God with them. A remote presence will not be enough to distinguish them as 'distinct' or different from the people of the world. Moses has a valid point and one that we would do well to consider for our time, place and circumstance. If the people of the world, that is those outside God's house who don't yet believe, see only a mirror image of secular society with all its wrangling's and failings, why on earth would they be attracted to Christianity? God abhors hypocrisy; Jesus was provoked to anger by hypocrisy; and the Holy Spirit cannot manifest where hypocrisy abides. Truth is what is needed; no playing games with people's minds; no manipulation of fact into fiction; just the integrity of straightforward words and actions. If we are wrong, we need to own up, repent and do our best to repair any damage. If we are right, we need to stand in faith for Truth justice and righteousness. Both these responses need to be carried out in accordance with the Word of God and example of Jesus. This is how we keep the Body of Christ pure and the presence of God with and within us, not remote but intimately entwined. Such was the character and behaviour of Moses that gained the attention and favour of God which developed into an intimate relationship with the One and only True divine presence. *How entwined with your life do you consider the Lord to be? Does your behaviour demonstrate integrity? What image of the Lord do you believe people see in you?*

God accepts Moses' argument and relents, agreeing to his request and reiterating His divine favour and knowledge of his name. Moses then makes another brave request considering, at that time, it was generally known God's presence, let alone seeing His face, caused death! However, Moses is encouraged by the grace and favour God has expressed for him and his request is granted, but only in part. God begins by a reminder of His ultimate authority, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." This is further confirmation of God's name 'LORD' and a restating of the name God gives to Himself in [Ex 3:14](#): "I Am who I Am". God's character, both here and subsequently revealed to Moses later on ([Ex 34:6-7](#)) demonstrate the dimensions of God's compassion and mercy. We too will gain God's favour in granting our requests if we are true to 'The LORD' and true to ourselves. We too will see the magnitudes of God's compassion and mercy demonstrated, if we remain faithful to His Word. *How well do we know the Word of God? How respectful of the Lord's ultimate authority are we? Does our faith encourage us to be brave in making our requests of God?*

Having established His authority, God then proves His grace and favour by allowing Moses to see as much of His divinity as possible whilst at the same time protecting him from any harm. A human could not look directly into God's face or it would cause death (see also [3:6](#) & [Isaiah 6:5](#)). However, Moses will see more of God than he has before; he will see God's back after the fullness of His glory has passed by. This is a very intimate act on God's part for His own hand will cover Moses in divine protection. We too will experience the hand of God's protection if we maintain a right relationship with Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. We may not see His face, we may not even see His back, but we will, 'as sure as eggs is eggs' see His hand move to establish Truth, justice and righteousness in our lives and the people of God. When this is established the Body of Christ will be fully functional and able to reach out to others as the beacon of hope and peace God intends His people to be. *Are we in a right relationship with our Creator Father? What might we need to do to become fully functional as the Body of Christ? Will we see more of God than we have ever seen before? I pray to God Almighty that we can and do. Amen!*

Hymn/Song: Amazing Grace John Newton (1725-1807) *can be found in SoF 19*

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
And He will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Poem: A Heart for God ©Janice Morgan-2012

A heart for God that wavers not to study His Commands,
A mind that seeks to do God's Will whatever life's demands,
A soul that searches for the Truth no matter what the cost,
A life that demonstrates God's law to find that which was lost,
If I should have a heart like this my mind would do God's will,
If I should have a soul like this my life God would fulfil.
Please God I pray; make me this day; to study what You say
and always walk Your way.

Prayer: Julian of Norwich (1343 – *after* 1416)

I learned that love was our Lord's meaning and saw for certain, both here and elsewhere,
that before ever He made us, God loved us, and that His love has never slackened, nor ever
shall; In His love all His works have been done, and in this love He has made everything
serve us, and in this love our life is everlasting; Our beginning was when we were made; but
the love in which He made us never had beginning; in it we shall see God forever; May Jesus
grant us this. **Amen!**
