

Dear Friends,

Exodus 3: 2-5

Moses is in the wilderness. God is appearing to him in a burning bush. He has turned aside to see this great sight. Sometimes it is worth it to stop and turn aside from the things that usually preoccupy you. It is worth it to give time to gaze, to contemplate, to think deeply.

What is this great sight that Moses sees? Well, it's a bush. There are stories of gods who associate themselves with trees. Trees can stand tall and proud. They can be noble, beautiful and can produce fruit that is good to eat. Bushes tend to be not quite so splendid. God is prepared to be humble. God can be met in that which others think of as lowly. People might look at a bush and wonder what use it is. But God says, "I can work with that. I can be revealed in the things which others write off as being worthless. Everything is valuable and precious to me".

The bush is on fire. That speaks to me of God whose love is a burning, passionate fire which purifies and cleanses. The bush, however is not consumed. It does not need to be fed and it does not destroy. Without being fed it goes on giving heat and light. God does not need to be fed by you. You don't have to be, do or give anything to equip God for God's work. God is self-sufficient. God takes the initiative and from God's grace and generosity come all good things. The fire also does not destroy. God's love is a blazing love, but you will not be burnt, harmed or undone, you will not be brought to destruction or made to perish. God's love may drive you into all kinds of adventures. You may suffer for God's love. But you are always ultimately safe and sound in the love of God.

Moses has turned aside to see this great thing. God sees that and speaks to him. God calls him by name, "Moses, Moses". And God calls you, personally, by your own name.

Moses replies "Here I am". This is the right attitude to adopt, the right response to make to God. It means, "I am fully attentive to you. I am at your disposal. I am ready".

At this point we might expect Moses to rush forwards, to come close to God. We might expect God to say, "Come nearer". That's not what happens. Instead God says, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground".

It's an important reminder. God is always mysterious, always far above and beyond you. It is right for you to feel awe and wonder with God. It is also right to recognise those places which are holy ground. They are precious places where you feel close to God. But don't you also learn that everywhere is holy ground. You have certainly learnt that you don't need to be in a church building in order to worship God. Homes; shops; hospitals; places of work; hospices; prisons; football

grounds; food banks; shelters for homeless people; busy night time town centres; everywhere is holy ground where God may be encountered.

Moses is instructed to remove his sandals on this holy ground. He is to show reverence. But there could be something else in it as well. When guests arrived at the house of their host. They would be greeted at the door and invited to take off their shoes. Then, with their shoes removed, they would be welcomed into their host's home. Maybe our story is God showing hospitality, God saying "Come in. Make yourself at home. I want you to be comfortable with me. You are welcome".

Moses is now ready. God has his attention. He is showing proper reverence. He has been welcomed as a guest. Now, he needs to hear what God has to say to him.

God bless you,

Tony