

Dear Friends,

Exodus 3 1-3

Everywhere in Egypt you can see the poster. At the top in bold capital letters it says "**WANTED FOR MURDER**". Under that there is a picture of someone who looks familiar. We read his name, it says, "**MOSES**".

A lot has happened since we left a baby being brought up by Pharaoh's daughter. What has happened is this. One day the adult Moses went out and saw the oppression that his own people were suffering. One of them was being beaten by an Egyptian person. Moses killed the attacker and hid the body. But the word got out. Pharaoh heard about it and up went the wanted posters. Moses ran. He found shelter with a man who in one account of the story is called Reuel and in another, Jethro. Moses married Zipporah, one of Jethro's seven daughters. They have a son whom they call Gershom.

Then it happens. Moses is just doing his job. He is about his every-day business. That is, he is taking care of Jethro's flock. He takes them deep into the wilderness. He is now far, far away from his people and their suffering. He is also away from his family, from his wife and child. He is alone. It is a solitary place. He comes to a mountain. The mountain is called Horeb, that means something like parched mountain. It's a very dry place. It gets fiercely hot during the day and chillingly cold at night. He is a solitary figure in a fierce, bleak environment. He is alone with his thoughts. Maybe he counts his blessings, he lists the people for whom he is grateful, Zipporah, Gershom, Jethro and his other daughters, Pharaoh's daughter, his sister Miriam, his Mother, those brave midwives Shiphrah and Puah. But does he also have other memories, sad and painful memories. He remembers the man he killed. Did he need to go so far? Did that man have a family? Did he turn a happy woman into a grieving widow and a carefree youngster into a fatherless child? And what about his people who were still going through crushing oppression. Did he have any responsibility for them? Surely there was nothing he could do. He tried once and it just ended badly, it made things worse. No, best to stay where he was deep in the wilderness, out of the way, that was his place.

It was then that he saw it. It was a bush that was on fire. The flames were blazing, but they were not consuming the bush. Moses is curious. He says to himself "I must turn aside and look at this great sight." Moses does not know yet, but we are told straight away that it is God who is being revealed and is meeting Moses in the burning bush.

Where do you meet God? For Moses it's as he's going about his every-day life. The encounter takes place as he's just doing his job. For you too, as you do what you do, as you get through each day, God is there to be met. You need only to give time and attention to turning aside and looking.

Our problem, all too often, is that we don't look. The worries and anxieties of life can take up so much space in the mind that little room is left for God. Some are

unwilling to turn aside and look for fear of what God may ask. Others fear that they are not good enough, that this kind of thing is not for the likes of them. But God really is for the likes of you. God wants to be revealed to you. God wants to call you by name and for you to answer. God wants you as a partner to share in the work of making all things new.

Moses is not only about his every-day life, he is also in the wilderness. Perhaps you too have been through the wilderness, maybe life hasn't worked out how you might have hoped, maybe you feel uncertain about yourself, maybe sometimes you feel a little lonely and unappreciated. Or maybe you have endured life's bleakest experiences that can leave you in a cold, dark wilderness. The story of Moses says that God may be met even in the driest and most dead of places. Whatever your experience, God will encounter you and you will find what Moses found. He was cleansed, purified, purged. Where he was troubled and felt stress, he was given the gift of becoming calm, peaceful and tranquil. He found his calling and was able to take the first step. He was given the assurance that God would be with him for every single step that followed.

But first he had to turn aside and look at the great sight. What did he see? What do you see in this bush that burns but is not consumed?

God bless you,

Tony