

Dear Friends,

Exodus 3: 6-10

Moses is having a conversation with God. God is doing most of the talking. Not surprisingly Moses is rather overwhelmed. One moment he was living his everyday life shepherding the flocks and the next he was having an encounter with God.

God gives Moses an introduction, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". It is over five hundred years since the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are the early ancestors of Moses' people. Their stories have been remembered and treasured. Moses trembles at the thought that he is encountering the same God who met them. He hides his face. He feels afraid to look at God. Perhaps he remembers how Jacob wrestled with God and said, "I have seen God and I've come out alive". He knows that now he is the one seeing God. He wonders if he will come out alive.

Moses keeps quiet. God has left a space for him to speak, but he is tongue tied. Elsewhere he describes himself as uncircumcised of lips and heavy of tongue. That's how he feels now.

The people remembered the promises that God made in the past, especially the promise that God would be with them. They haven't been feeling that lately. They have been suffering crushing oppression. They have been asking why has God forsaken us? But Moses now hears that God has not been absent but is aware of all that has been happening. God has seen how the people have been abused; has heard their cries; knows about their suffering. God is therefore now coming down to rescue the people and bring them up to a good spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. The milk would have been goat's milk and the honey not that from bees, but a syrup that came from dates. There is food that comes from animals and food that comes from the care of the earth. It is peaceful food. No violence is required to gather it.

The same sadly cannot be said about the land that they are to occupy. God lists six other nations that already live there. The Bible will tell the story of the battle for the land and the campaign to drive out these other nations. The Bible will also tell us about Jesus who says that we have one heavenly father and we are all sisters and brothers. Rather than us imposing ourselves upon others or driving them out, it would be better to work out how we may all live together saying "All are welcome".

God says again that the cries of the Israelites have been heard, their oppression has been seen. What God says next shocks Moses to the core of his being. God tells Moses that he is to go for he is the one being sent to set the people free. What will Moses do? He started well by saying "Here I am, ready, attentive at your disposal". But what will he say now that God has been specific about what he must do, that he must face Pharaoh and bring the people out of slavery?

God bless you,

Tony