

Dear Friends,

Exodus 17: 10-16

Israel has been attacked from behind by the Amalekites. Joshua is leading a group of fighters against those who have carried out this act of aggression.

The battle takes place in a valley. From the valley those who are involved in the action can look up and see Moses standing on a hill. He is holding his staff in his hand. When his hand is raised up high, the Israelites find themselves overcoming the Amalekites and winning the battle. Moses therefore tries to keep his hands raised. But they grow tired. When he falters and lowers his arms the Amalekites grow stronger and it begins to look as though they will take the victory. Something has to be done. A stone is found and Moses sits on it. Aaron and Hur take up positions on either side of him. One of them helps him to keep up his right hand and one of them his left. In this way both of his hands stay steady until the sun goes down. And in the valley Amalek is defeated.

Who defeats Amalek? Well, Joshua of course, he alongside the other fighters are the ones who spill their blood and risk their lives. But what about Moses? Surely his is the crucial contribution. What he does makes all the difference to what happens on the battlefield. But then he can't do that alone. Aaron and Hur share the task by supporting him. The six hands of these three people are able to achieve what Moses two hands cannot achieve by themselves. The answer of course is that they are all important, what each person does matters. We're in this together. We can't do it alone.

And there's more to say about this story. I wonder if you need to have in yourself both a bit of Joshua and a bit of Moses. Joshua is your active side. Joshua gets you off your backside and on to the field where you can you to do your bit, play your part, make your contribution.

But you need a bit of Moses as well. Your Moses side is less concerned about what you do and more about what you are. Your Moses side causes you sometimes to stop all of your activity and take a step back. From that position you can see things a bit more clearly.

Your Moses side also carves out time and space for prayer. Moses is faithful in keeping his hands steady. When he does that it affects what goes on in the valley. In the same way you are invited to keep your hands steady in prayer in the confidence that your faithfulness in this makes a difference. It is one of your ways of sharing with God in bringing transformation to the world and of making all things new. What happens on the hillside of prayer makes a difference on life's playing field.

Your Moses side is also encouraging. When Joshua and his fighters see Moses with his hands held high it gives their morale a boost and strengthens them for their work. You need an inner Moses who can give you that kind of encouragement. I

wonder if you are the kind of person who easily takes negatives to heart. If anyone says anything bad about you, do you find it easy to agree with them? By contrast, if anyone says anything good about you are you quick to brush it away? When you dwell on the negatives and quickly forget all the positives it becomes hard to see just what you have to give. And when you can't see what you have to give then it's no surprise that you don't offer it. You don't even know that it's there to give. This is a great tragedy. You are a unique and special person with so much to give. You are after all God's creation, made in the image and likeness of God. You contain all kinds of treasures which only need to be released to bring joy to thousands of people around you. And if there's a voice inside you saying, "No, that can't be true of me", well, actually I think you are proving my point. You have been quick to hear the negatives and need to hear the positives. You need to strengthen your inner Moses who gives you encouragement.

So, Amalek has been defeated. Amalek had attacked Israel from behind. He has stood for a way of life that takes advantage of those who are the most vulnerable. But what about Moses and Joshua what kind of way of life are they to represent? God is ready to answer that question. God is about to give them the guidance which will help them to make the land where they will live a good land, a promised land. God is about to give them the Ten Commandments.

God bless you,

Tony